

The Best of Montana & Wyoming

A mix of the rugged Wild West, the even more rugged Rocky Mountains, and a few almost-modern cities—or what we might call overgrown cow towns—make the states of Montana and Wyoming a delightful vacation spot. This is especially true for people who savor outdoor adventures, but it's also the case for those looking to discover a part of the United States that many of us have seen only in the movies and on television (and that's a rather distorted view). Here you'll find some of the most breathtaking scenery in America; a vast array of wildlife that not only thinks it owns the place, but actually does; and even some first-class Western-style lodges, restaurants, and museums.

Following are what we consider some of the best experiences in Montana and Wyoming, highlights to help you begin planning your trip.

1 The Best Vacation Experiences

- **Glacier National Park (MT):** The best vacation spot in Montana is also the most obvious one. By the standard of other crowded national parks, this spectacular country is virtually undiscovered. See chapter 5.
- **Yellowstone National Park (WY):** It's the crown jewel of American parks, and it remains the prime attraction in the Rocky Mountains. This unique park offers visitors an extraordinary combination of wilderness, wildlife, and geothermal wonders. See chapter 11.
- **Grand Teton National Park (WY):** The Grand Tetons are an excellent short course in Rocky Mountain parks for travelers with less time: magnificent peaks rising from the Snake River plain, alpine lakes, wildflowers, and wildlife, in a relatively small park that can be seen in a few days. See "Grand Teton National Park" in chapter 12.

2 The Best Outdoor Adventures

- **Exploring the Bob Marshall Wilderness (MT):** The 1.5-million-acre Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex in northwest Montana is one of America's most spectacular wild places. Lace up your hiking boots, tie on your bandanna, and take to the high country in Montana's northwest corner. See section 7, "The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex," in chapter 6.
- **Enjoying the Yellowstone Backcountry (WY):** Outfitters from ranches around Yellowstone National Park will take you into the deep wilderness that surrounds the busy attractions at the

park's center, and there you'll get a flavor of the wild as rich as the Rockies can offer. If you have experience, you can go on your own—paddling

Yellowstone Lake, backpacking along Slough Creek, or telemark skiing the powder around Shoshone Lake. See chapter 11 for details.

3 The Best Wildlife Viewing

- **Glacier National Park (MT):** The experience of watching wildlife amid the imposing terrain of Glacier National Park is tough to beat. With a little energy, you can see mountain goats, moose, elk, and other native animals in their natural habitat. Keep a good distance, and be aware of any and all bear restrictions and regulations—the grizzly is the park's unofficial mascot. See chapter 5.
- **The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (MT):** Just south of Glacier, in the Bob Marshall Wilderness

Complex, roam a full complement of Rocky Mountain wildlife—although you have to wander into the backcountry to find it. See section 7, “The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex,” in chapter 6.

- **The Lamar Valley (WY):** You can see wildlife in many parts of Yellowstone, including the meadows across from the Old Faithful complex. But the richest trove of wildlife is in the park's northeast corner, in the valley nicknamed “The Serengeti of North America.” See chapter 11.

4 The Best Winter Vacations

- **Skiing at Big Sky and Moonlight Basin (MT; ☎ 800/548-4486 or 877/822-0430):** In 2005, Big Sky and Moonlight Basin connected their trail systems, making for a combined 5,300 acres of terrain—the largest ski area in the country. See p. 227.
- **Wintering at Old Faithful (WY):** The chilly season in Yellowstone is increasingly popular, and it's bound to be even more so now that the Old Faithful Snow Lodge has been transformed into a handsome, comfortable facility. You can take a Snowcoach

into the park, or cross-country ski or snowshoe to the Lonestar Geyser and other attractions. See p. 303.

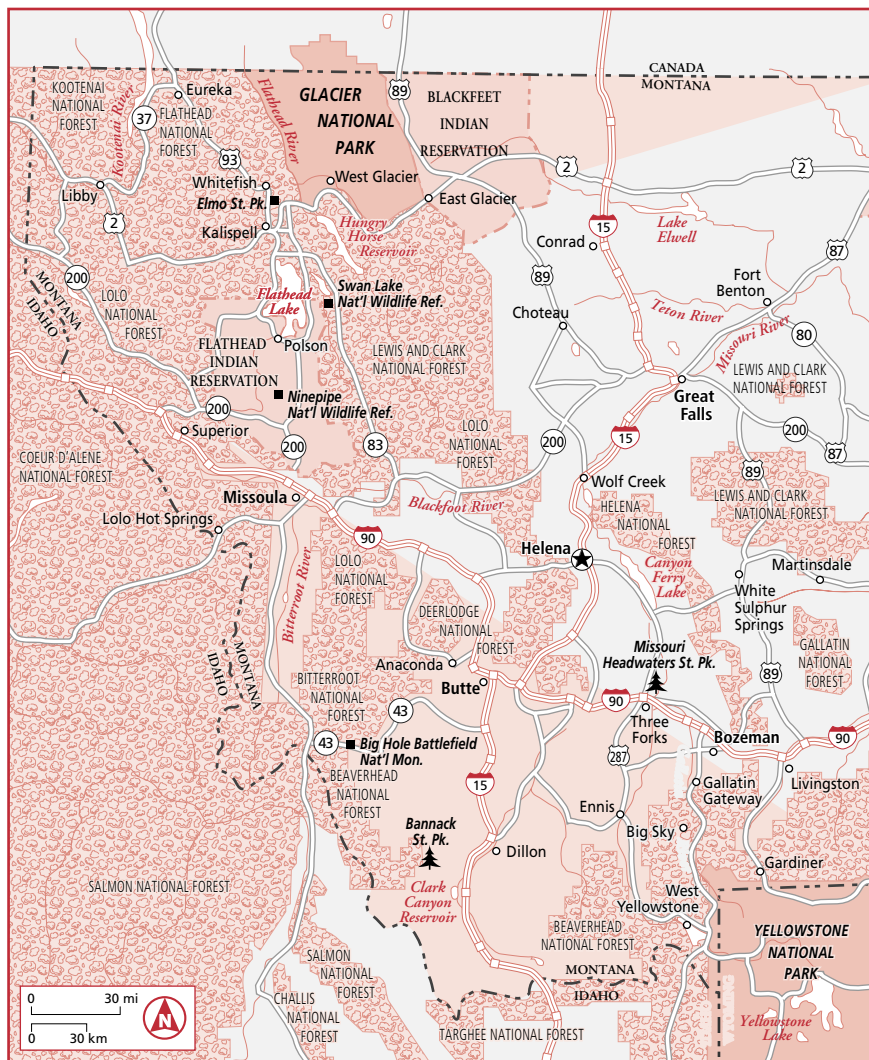
- **Skiing at Jackson Hole Mountain Resort (WY; ☎ 307/733-2292):** Jackson Hole offers a vertical drop that will take your breath away. There are a variety of ways to get to the bottom, from double black diamonds to intermediate slopes. Skiers who like a challenge should come here and mix the visit with some ballooning, tours of the elk refuge, and other adventures. See p. 311.

5 The Best Hotels & Resorts

- **Many Glacier Hotel (Glacier National Park, MT; ☎ 406/892-2525):** The best thing about Many Glacier, apart from its elegant mien, its friendly service, and its cozy rooms, is the setting, along Swiftcurrent Lake and in the shadows of Mount Grinnell and Mount Wilbur. See p. 82.

- **The Pollard (Red Lodge, MT; ☎ 800/765-5273):** You can join Buffalo Bill on the guest register at The Pollard, a historic spot that proves that a hotel doesn't need to sprawl all over the place to set the highest standard of comfort and elegance. See p. 238.
- **Old Faithful Inn (Yellowstone National Park, WY; ☎ 307/344-7311):** If you

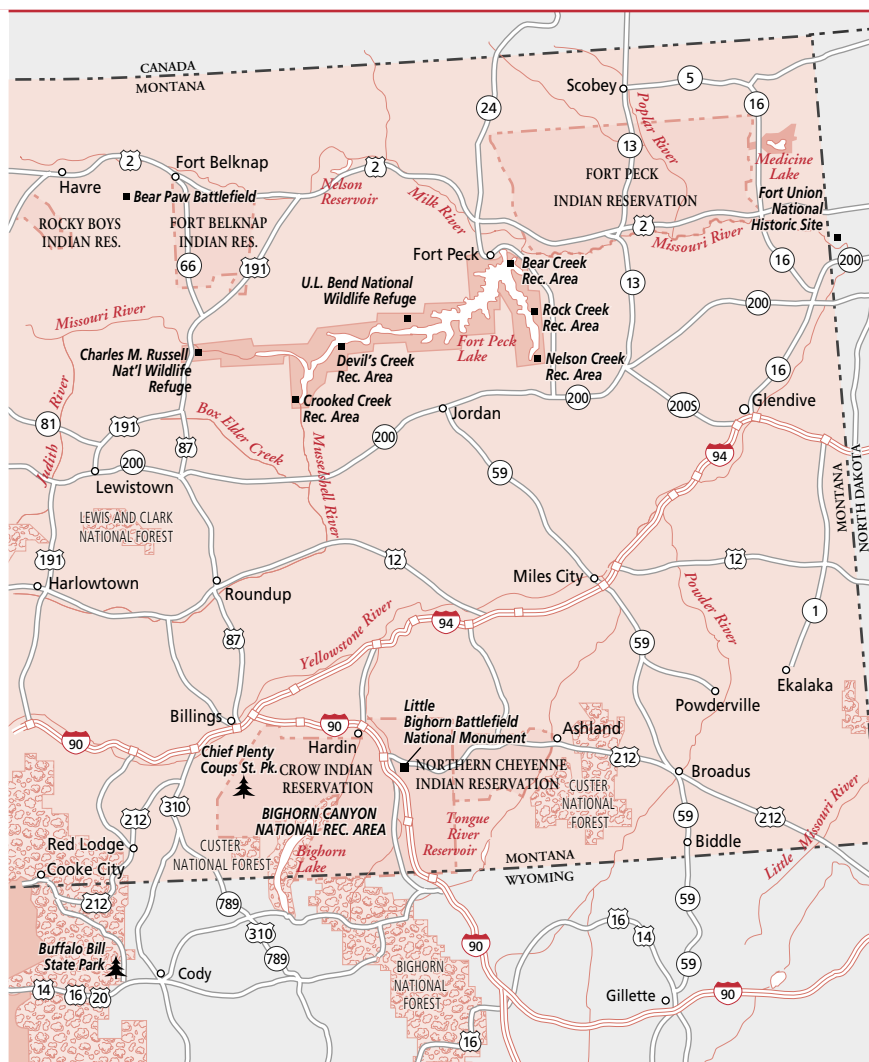
Montana



ever wonder whether there is really art in architecture, look at the way the rustic simplicity and monumental structure of this inn make a perfect fit just across the way from one of nature's most astonishing creations. A lattice of logs climbs to an 85-foot

ceiling. You can find peace in the upper balconies, or join the convivial crowds around the big stone fireplace below. See p. 305.

- **Four Seasons Resort Jackson Hole** (Jackson, WY; ☎ 307/732-5000): The newest—and most deluxe—

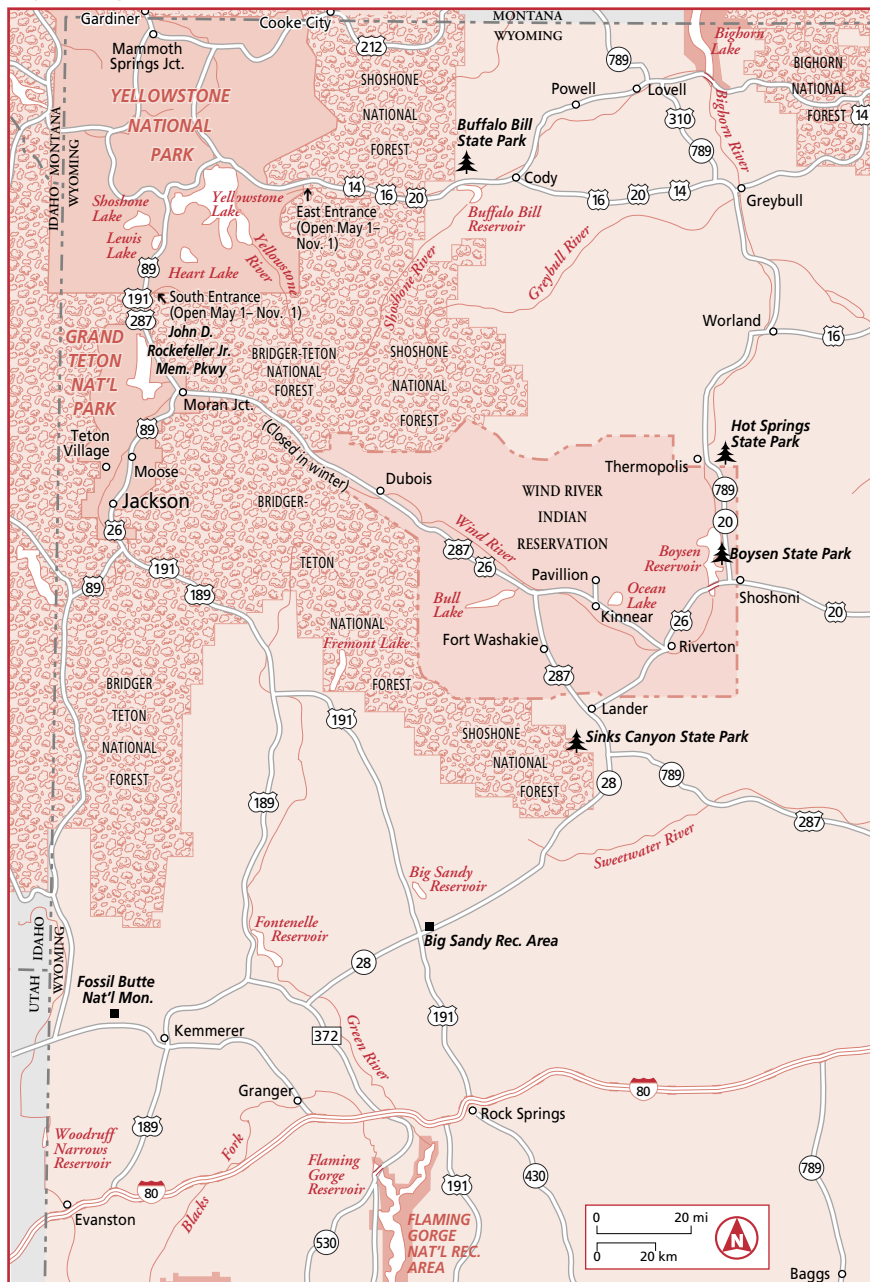


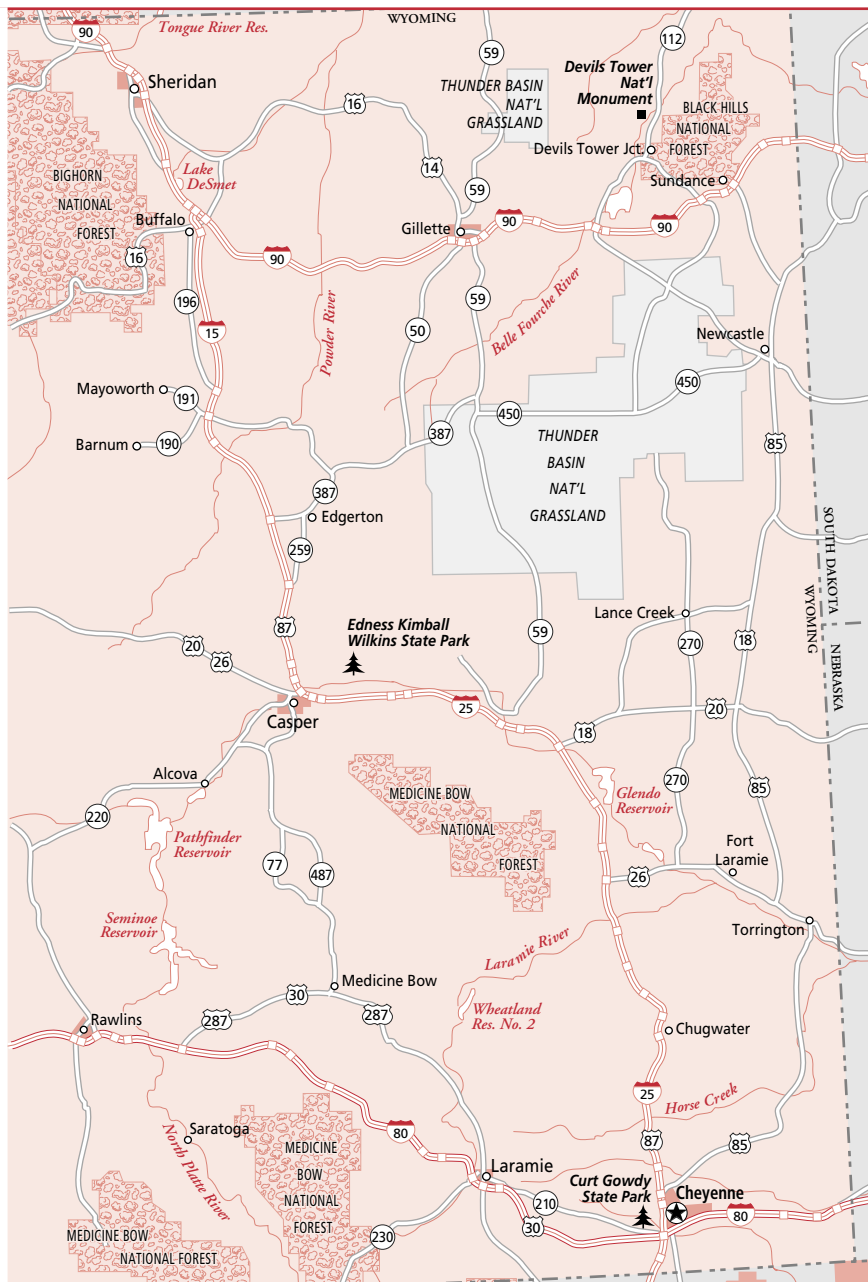
lodging option in Teton Village, the ultrastylish Four Seasons opened in December 2004 and immediately set a new standard for ski-in, ski-out luxury. See p. 320.

- **The Occidental Hotel** (Buffalo, WY; ☎ 307/684-0451): Born as a tent in

1878, The Occidental has burned to the ground and been lost in a poker game in its storied history. After 8 years and \$1.2 million of restoration, the grand hotel reopened in 2002. See p. 380.

Wyoming





6 The Best Guest Ranches

- **Triple Creek Ranch** (Darby, MT; ☎ 406/821-4600): This place is wonderful. It's pretty much the perfect guest ranch, where guests are pampered like European royalty, and the prices reflect it. It has all the traditional dude ranch activities, as well as a pool and a fitness room. See p. 110.
- **Lone Mountain Ranch** (Big Sky, MT; ☎ 800/514-4644): Lone Mountain Ranch is a winter and summer resort that has views into the Spanish Peaks Wilderness Area. In winter there are 45 miles of cross-country trails over terrain that will challenge every level of skier. In summer, you can ride,

hike, fish, or simply relax and eat in the popular restaurant. There are bird walks with naturalists and forays into Yellowstone. See p. 230.

- **Lost Creek Ranch** (Moose, WY; ☎ 307/733-3435): Positioned next door to a national park and possessing a beautiful view of the Tetons on one side and the Gros Ventres on the other, Lost Creek layers on the comforts and activities. You can ride, hike, swim, fish, float, play tennis, shoot skeet, play billiards, and eat gourmet food. Regulars return every year. There are only 10 cabins, but if you can get a reservation, it's worth it. See p. 322.

7 The Best Bed & Breakfasts

- **The Garden Wall Inn** (Whitefish, MT; ☎ 888/530-1700): This delightful B&B, built in the 1920s, is full of charm—all of the furnishings are period antiques, including claw-foot tubs and Art Deco dressers. Gourmet breakfasts include specialties like wild huckleberry crepes. See p. 137.
- **The Sanders B&B** (Helena, MT; ☎ 406/442-3309): Built in 1875, this historically important B&B has been beautifully restored. You'll relax on original furniture under the eyes of portraits hung by the original owner, U.S. Sen. Wilbur Fiske Sanders. See p. 156.
- **Lehrkind Mansion** (Bozeman, MT; ☎ 800/992-6932): Located in the Historic Brewery District, the Lehrkind Mansion looks like something out of a fairy tale. Everything, from the rare 1897 Regina music box in the parlor to the many original fixtures in the bathrooms, is period—with the exception of the hot tub. See p. 219.

- **Charley Montana Bed & Breakfast** (Glendive, MT; ☎ 888/395-3207): This majestic neoclassical mansion houses a top-flight B&B in what was once the palatial, 26-room abode of rancher Charles Krug. See p. 258.
- **Bentwood Inn** (Jackson, WY; ☎ 307/739-1411): This B&B is an architectural marvel: a 6,000-square-foot log mansion with 43 corners. See p. 319.
- **The Mayor's Inn** (Cody, WY; ☎ 888/217-3001): This two-story A-frame, built in 1905 for Mayor Frank Houx, is now one of Cody's best B&Bs. The fully licensed bar on the enclosed back porch is the perfect spot to unwind. See p. 359.
- **Spahn's Big Horn Mountain Bed and Breakfast** (Big Horn, WY; ☎ 307/674-8150): With a 100-mile view from a secluded peak tucked amid the Bighorn Mountains, this rustic hideaway features a massive three-story living area and rooms decorated with country quilts and lodgepole furniture. See p. 377.

8 The Best Restaurants

- **The Tupelo Grille** (Whitefish, MT; ☎ 406/862-6136): Whitefish's best restaurant specializes (surprisingly) in spicy New Orleans-style food: the Cajun Creole combo (a platter of shrimp Creole, crawfish étouffée, and chicken and sausage jambalaya) is a specialty. See p. 142.
- **The Dining Room at Chico Hot Springs** (Pray, MT; ☎ 800/468-9232): The vegetables served here are grown at the resort's own greenhouse. The game is raised here, and it's served expertly, along with beef, lamb, and other Rocky Mountain staples. Portions are generous and beautifully presented. See p. 235.
- **Park Street Grill and Cafe** (Gardiner, MT; ☎ 406/848-7989): Adding a dash of zest to the staid meat-and-potatoes dining scene, the menu here is a refreshing mix of Italian entrees,

fresh seafood, and chicken, pork, and beef dishes. For dessert, the huckleberry crème brûlée is out of this world. See p. 270.

- **The Blue Lion** (Jackson, WY; ☎ 307/733-3912): This is an old stalwart, still serving some of the best food in the region, with delicious game dishes like grilled elk loin in peppercorn sauce, and fresh seafood flown in daily. See p. 323.
- **Jenny Lake Lodge Dining Room** (Grand Teton National Park; ☎ 307/733-4647): The five-course dinners here (from prime rib of buffalo to smoked sturgeon ravioli) are so good you might be distracted from the spectacular scenery just outside the window. You may be roughing it in the park, but you'll need to dress properly at this establishment. See p. 344.

9 The Best Fly-Fishing

- **The Madison** (MT): Brown trout aren't native to this area, but no one's asking them to leave—on this popular river running from Yellowstone National Park into Montana, they're the big attraction. The Madison converges with its "holy trinity" counterparts, the Jefferson and Gallatin, near Three Forks, but lots of anglers fish it

around Yellowstone. See chapters 9 and 11.

- **The Snake** (WY): It seems somehow fitting that the menacing-sounding Snake River is home to a feisty strain of cutthroat trout, making it one of the most satisfying Western rivers to fish. See chapter 12.

10 The Best Golf Courses

- **Old Works** (Anaconda, MT): Jack Nicklaus has created a course that is as much fun to play as it is beautiful to look at. The course wonderfully integrates the rocky bluffs, the historic nature of the old copper-processing sites, and prairie grasses and sage. See p. 162.
- **Teton Pines** (Jackson, WY): You won't find a more beautiful view from any

golf course in the country—except maybe the neighboring Jackson Hole club—with the granite Grand Teton looming over every shot. See p. 313.

- **The Powder Horn** (Sheridan, WY): Under the majestic Bighorn Mountains, this gorgeous 27-hole course mixes Scottish-style golf, wide-open fairways, and some serious target practice. See p. 375.

11 The Best Museums

- **Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center** (Great Falls, MT; ☎ 406/727-8733): This offers a great perspective on the “Corps of Discovery,” from its conception back East to its endpoint at the mouth of the Columbia River at the Pacific Ocean. Films, lectures, and demonstrations are among the offerings. See p. 192.
- **Museum of the Rockies** (Bozeman, MT; ☎ 406/994-2251): The centerpiece of this first-rate museum is the fabulous dinosaur exhibit. The exhibit, which is in the midst of a makeover, is shaping up to be one of the premiere paleontology attractions in the world. See p. 217.
- **Buffalo Bill Historical Center** (Cody, WY; ☎ 307/587-4771): An art museum, a firearm gallery, the memorabilia of the West’s great showman, and exhibits about the Plains Indians comprise the finest museum in the Rocky Mountains. See p. 356.
- **National Historic Trails Interpretive Center** (Casper, WY; ☎ 307/261-7700): This excellent facility uses state-of-the-art exhibits to give us modern travelers an idea of what life on the “road” was like to the emigrants who passed through here in the mid-1800s on the Oregon, Mormon, California, and Pony Express trails. See p. 387.

12 The Best Performing Arts & Cultural Festivals

- **International Wildlife Film Festival** (Missoula, MT; ☎ 406/728-9380): This film festival has become a required festival for international filmmakers who specialize in wildlife. It goes for a week in early to mid-May, and includes panel discussions and workshops, as well as screenings of the world’s best wildlife films. See p. 97.
- **Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering** (Lewistown, MT; ☎ 406/538-5436): Held each year in mid-August, this is a rhyming good time for the bowlegged and horse-drawn set. In addition to a healthy dose of range rhyme, there are arts-and-crafts shows, and booths full of leather. See p. 200.
- **Cheyenne Frontier Days** (Cheyenne, WY; ☎ 800/227-6336): The “Daddy of ’em All,” Cheyenne Frontier Days is a 10-day Western spectacle of parades, rodeo, dances, and concerts. It’s safe to say that this is the most vivid demonstration of Western hospitality you’ll encounter in the modern world. See p. 396.