



Meet Me In **MONTANA**

BY SUSAN SIMS, PUBLISHER

Big Sky Country in Southwest Montana has lots to offer Fido and his family with its vast horizons and abundant landscape. The outdoor enthusiast will feel right at home as many properties can facilitate a fishing or whitewater trip, or arrange for horseback riding for you and your family.

A recent trip with our two tail-wagging “Directors of Barketing”—Zoey and Mattie—included tours of three Fido-friendly properties. All of them offered beautiful Montana sunsets and welcoming breezes.

The Bar N Ranch

The Bar N Ranch is located roughly six miles west of West Yellowstone, Montana, only 10 minutes from the west entrance of Yellowstone National Park.

Resident wildlife and breathtaking views compliment the rustic, yet elegant surroundings. Jetted spa tubs, wood-burning fireplaces, private outdoor hot tubs and wireless internet are only a few of the added distinctions that highlight your stay.

The South Fork of the famed Madison River meanders through the 200-acre ranch, offering private access to guests of the ranch. Zoey and Mattie enjoyed frolicking off-leash with resident dog, Ranger.

If you ask the locals, they will probably tell you that fall is their favorite time of year to visit southwest Montana.

The weather's great, the aspens are turning yellow, there's fabulous hiking and excellent fishing (some say the best of the year), and you'll feel like you have the entire state to yourself.

Breakfast is included and served in the lodge. Choices include hearty French toast and simpler fare. We were lucky to have dinner reservations as it turned out that the lodge was booked for the entire weekend. Travelers and guests look forward to the cuisine that is served in the rustic lodge dining room. Try the prawn and pear

salad for starters and make the difficult choice for entrée. Your well-behaved dog is allowed to stay alone in the cabin, so no need to rush your dining experience.

Spend the day in Yellowstone where your dog is allowed within 100 feet from the paved roads. While in town, search out the Nordic trail where you and your dog can hike in all seasons but winter. (www.rendezvouskitrails.com)

Next stop, the Rainbow Ranch

Located in the heart of Big Sky country and on the banks of the Gallatin River, the Rainbow Ranch Lodge is an intimate Montana guest ranch offering world-class luxury with relaxed elegance, personalized guest service and unrivaled ambiance.

The Fido-friendly Riverside Log Cabins overlooking the Gallatin River are a fisherman's paradise. Ideal for a romantic getaway for two or a fly fishing retreat for 10, the cabins range from two to five bedrooms and are all just a stone's throw from the Gallatin River.

We were ensconced in the Cougar, one of



The Bar N Ranch cabins

the cabins on the river. We relaxed on our private porch in two Adirondack chairs while Zoey and Mattie rested beside us. There were horses on property and 'the girls' kept their eyes peeled for any excitement, but other than that, they were both content to rest by the river and listen to the quiet while we took in the beauty of the Gallatin National Forest across the river.

All riverside luxury rooms offer comfort and amenities with 1,000-thread count, Egyptian cotton sheets and down comforters on hand-crafted lodge pole beds with whirlpool baths and rosemary-lavender bath salts, satellite television, wood burning river rock fireplaces and individual decks overlooking the Gallatin River.

Owner Patrick Hurd converted this former fishing camp into a fantastic retreat that features one of the best restaurants in the area. We enjoyed a fancy feast of pan-seared breast of duck and cast iron-charred Ahi tuna along with a bottle of local wine from the well-stocked wine cellar. During dinner, we also enjoyed listening to the fisherman at the nearby table talk about 'the one that got away.'

Last stop, Brackett Creek cabin, Bozeman, Montana

Before we left home for our trip to Montana, we received by mail a wonderful packet of

information from the folks at Mountain Home, Montana Vacation Rentals. In the packet were informative pieces of places to see while staying

at one of their properties. This was such a useful packet that we have saved all the information for our next trip to Montana.



Brackett Creek cabin at Mountain Home Rentals



Mattie tests out the relaxing qualities of the porch at Rainbow Ranch.

The Brackett Creek two-bedroom cabin is located at the edge of the Gallatin National Forest and sits on 118 acres in a secluded location between Bozeman and Livingston. There is a lawn area leading down to Brackett Creek and a small stream meanders through the front yard.

The home has a large deck and was a perfect spot for all of us to watch for wildlife and birds. We did see wild turkeys strutting up the driveway one morning. Thankfully, Zoey and Mattie were still sleeping at the time.

We walked up the hill behind the cabin and greeted grazing horses each morning. The horses soon became accustomed to seeing us and would walk towards us as if to greet us themselves.

With access to miles of hiking/biking/horseback-riding trails and fishing on Brackett Creek, the only trouble you may find is in not having enough time to enjoy it all.

If you ask the locals, they will probably tell you that fall is their favorite time of year to visit southwest Montana. The weather's great, the aspens are turning yellow, there's fabulous hiking and excellent fishing (some say the best of the year), and you'll feel like you have the entire state to yourself. So, make Montana your next travel destination for you and your dogs. You will come home with enough memories to last a lifetime. And if you are like us, you might just start planning your next trip to Montana as soon as you get home. **F**

IF YOU GO

BAR N RANCH

890 Buttermilk Road,
West Yellowstone, MT 59758
(406) 646-0300

www.bar-n-ranch.com
Full Breakfast included.
Resident dog: Ranger

Seven one- and two-bedroom Fido-friendly cabins.

Dogs not allowed in main lodge.

Private outdoor hot-tub.

Room rate: \$227+

Pet fee: \$15 nightly for two dogs.

Dogs are permitted in ranch cabins only and they ask that no cabin house more than 2 dogs at any one time.

RAINBOW RANCH LODGE

42950 Gallatin Rd.
Gateway, MT 59730
1-800-937-4132

www.rainbowranch.com
Continental breakfast included.

Room rate: \$195+

Pet fee: \$30 per dog per night.

Located in Big Sky, Montana, 12 miles north of Yellowstone National Park and five miles south of Big Sky Ski Resort on Highway 191, the Rainbow Ranch offers luxury lodging and fine dining in Big Sky, Montana. Stay at the Rainbow Ranch Lodge and riverside log cabins for your Montana vacation, fly fishing retreat, Montana destination wedding or honeymoon.

The award-winning wine collection of over 10,000 bottles is Montana's largest. Stored through the iron gates and weeping river rock archways of their cellar, "The Bacchus Room," the wines frame an intimate setting for private parties and wine tasting for groups up to 14 people. Once you arrive at the Lodge, be sure to ask Patrick for a Bacchus Room tour.

BRACKETT CREEK CABIN—MOUNTAIN HOME MONTANA VACATION RENTALS

Three night special \$740+

Dogs allowed with permission.

Beautiful, private forest setting up Bridger Canyon—over 100 acres bordering National Forest service land. Hiking or mountain biking from your back door—and skiing just minutes away!

Two bedrooms and one full bath, approximately 1,200 square feet. Brackett Creek Cabin can accommodate up to four guests. Cozy living room (with beautiful rock fireplace).

MOUNTAIN HOME MONTANA VACATION RENTALS

P.O. Box 1204
Bozeman, Montana 59771
1-800-550-4589
www.mountain-home.com

SERVICES AVAILABLE

The rental rate includes a weekly cleaning. Additional housekeeping, as well as catering services, and grocery shopping, can be arranged with a bit of prior notice.

ACTIVITIES NEARBY

Besides hiking and mountain biking right out your front door, there is skiing at Bridger Bowl Ski area just minutes away. Fishing, horseback riding, golf, skiing, tours of Yellowstone National Park and more is available. The towns of Livingston, Gardiner and Bozeman have an amazing array of shops and restaurants as well.

CLOSEST TOWN AND AIRPORT

It's about 30 to 35 miles to Livingston, 20 miles to Bozeman and 30 miles to Bozeman's Gallatin Field airport. Yellowstone National Park is an hour and a half away.



Rainbow Ranch