

# CONTINENTAL DIVIDE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL DAY & OVERNIGHT HIKES: *IDAHO & MONTANA*

Photo by Steven Shattuck





# CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL COALITION VISIT IDAHO & MONTANA!

## Day & Overnight Hikes on the CDT

### THE GEM STATE AND THE TREASURE STATE

Montana, known as “The Treasure State” and “Big Sky Country,” and Idaho, “The Gem State,” offer many wonderful Continental Divide Trail (CDT) experiences! The trail meanders along the southern border of Montana and eastern border of Idaho and extends for 1,012 miles through the two states, running through the present-day and ancestral lands of numerous Native American tribes including the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Ktunaxa, Eastern Shoshone, Lemhi Shoshone, Shoshone-Bannock, Salish Kootenai, and Tsuu T’ina tribes.

In these states you’ll find mountain goats, grizzly bears, wolves, and bald eagles, as well as douglas fir, lodgepole pine, aspen, lady-slipper, buttercups, beargrass, and glacier lilies.

We’ve put together this list of the best day and overnight hikes on the CDT in Montana and Idaho for you to explore some of our favorite parts of the trail! Hikes in this guide are listed from south to north.

**WILDLIFE:** Idaho and Montana have both black bears and grizzly bears, each with distinct characteristics and behaviors. We recommend learning more about best practices while hiking in bear country. If you plan on hiking, make sure you are prepared with bear spray.

**MOUNTAIN WEATHER:** Snow can stay in the high mountains long into the summer. Remember that you likely won’t be able to get to the higher trails during the winter and spring. Additionally, mountain weather can change drastically and unpredictably. Be prepared for cold weather even if you’re hiking in the summer.

**NAVIGATION:** Download the CDTC mapset at <https://continentaldividetrail.org/maps>. The Guthook Guides phone application also provides a trail map and user-friendly, crowd-sourced waypoint information for the entire CDT

### HIKE TYPES:



OUT AND BACK



POINT TO POINT



LOOP

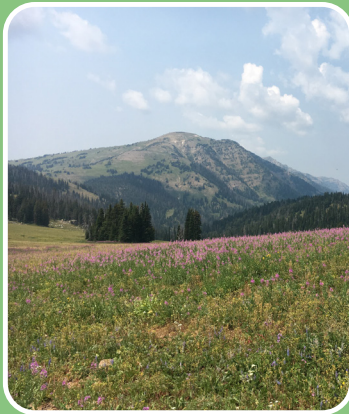
### Did You Know?

- Montana is home to two National Parks and seven other National Park Service sites. Idaho is home to one National Park and six NPS sites.
- Glacier National Park is the only place in the U.S. where you can find a triple divide. At the triple divide, water flows to three oceans: the Arctic Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean.
- Glacier National Park in Montana has 250 lakes within its boundaries.
- Idaho’s state bird is the mountain bluebird and the state fruit is the huckleberry.
- Montana’s state tree is the ponderosa pine and the state flower is the bitterroot.
- Idaho produces more than potatoes! It is also known as the lentil and pea growing capital of the world.



## Centennial Mountains & Blair Lake

**Length:** 14 miles  
**Difficulty:** Difficult  
**Closest Town:** West Yellowstone, MT



THE CENTENNIAL MOUNTAINS ON THE MT-ID BORDER. PHOTO BY MATT BERGER

Enjoy spectacular views from the Continental Divide to the Island Park Caldera along the Montana-Idaho border, follow Hell Roaring Creek, where anglers can cast for trout on their way to Blair Lake, and visit the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, declared by many to be the most beautiful national wildlife refuge in the country. The rugged Centennial Mountains, rising more than 9,000 feet above the Centennial Valley wetlands, provide a dramatic backdrop for this extremely remote refuge. The best time to hike is July through September when snow is melted and the creeks are passable.

If you want to spend time at the refuge, there is a shorter hike option. Instead of going to Blair Lake, follow signs to Lillian Lake, cross Hell Roaring Creek, and climb into beautiful open meadows and forested groves. Cross Hell Roaring Creek a second time before Lillian Lake appears above you as you climb a little higher.

**Directions from West Yellowstone, MT:** Follow US-20 for 12 miles west to the junction with MT-87. Travel northwest on MT-87 for 5 miles and turn south at the Sawtell historical marker/Forest Service Rd 55/Henry's Lake Rd. Follow the paved road around the west shore of Henry's Lake, turning left onto FS Road 53 and then immediately right onto Red Rock Pass Road/FS Rd 58 (an improved dirt road). Follow Red Rock Pass Road for approximately 5 miles to signs marking Red Rock Pass at the Montana-Idaho border. The trailhead and the trail will be on your left but dispersed camping and parking is available on both sides of the road (44.598418, -111.520566). For equestrian users, note that parking may be difficult for a horse trailer.

**Maps:** USGS 7.5 quadrangles: Mount Jefferson, Upper Red Rock Lake, and Slide Mountain; USFS: Targee National Forest, Island Park/Ashton. CDTC Map Set: Maps 301 and 302, Sections MT02 and MT03.

**For More Information:** Bureau of Land Management Dillon Field Office: (406)-683-2337. Targhee National Forest, Dubois Ranger District: (208)-374-5422.



## Lemhi Pass towards Goldstone Pass

**Length:** Variable  
(2 miles - 8 miles)  
**Difficulty:** Moderate  
**Closest Town:** Tendoy, ID; Dillon, MT



LEMHI PASS. PHOTO BY THOMAS GATHMAN

In 1805, the Lewis & Clark Expedition crossed the Continental Divide at Lemhi Pass. At the present-day National Historic Landmark, the CDT intersects with the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail. Hike north, climbing upward back and forth across the Montana-Idaho border and through pine forests with panoramic views. There is no pre-determined turn around point; for a moderate hike, turn around after 2-3 miles and head back toward Lemhi Pass. At the trailhead, enjoy a picnic lunch at the Sacajawea Memorial Area, which honors the countless contributions of the Native interpreter and mother who served in Lewis and Clark's expedition.

**Directions from Tendoy, ID:** Take Tendoy Ln west for 0.2 miles then turn right onto State Rd 28 S. Continue for 0.2 miles, turn left onto Agency Creek Rd/Chief Tendoy Rd and continue for 8.2 miles. Continue onto Lewis and Clark Hwy for 3.5 miles. Turn right onto Warm Springs Rd to find the trailhead. Agency Creek Rd is not suitable for trailers or vehicles over 26ft. However, Lemhi Pass is accessible from the Montana side and has trailer parking if this impacts you.

**Directions from Dillon, MT:** Travel 17.6 miles on I-15 S and take exit 44 for MT 324. Continue for 22 miles before turning right onto Lemhi Pass. Drive for 12.2 miles and turn left onto Warm Springs Rd for parking.

**Maps:** USGS 7.5 quadrangles: Lemhi Pass; USFS: Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Dillon. CDTC Map Set: Map 323, Section MT08.

**For More Information:** Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Dillon Ranger District: (406)-683-3900.



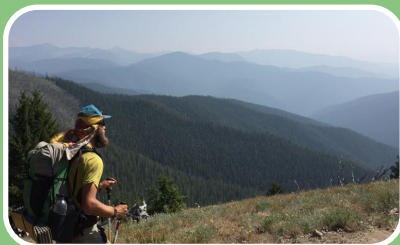


## Big Hole Pass to Three Mile Ridge

**Length:** 10.8 mile

**Difficulty:** Moderate

**Closest Town:** Gibbonsville, ID



NORTH OF BIG HOLE PASS. PHOTO BY ZACH VANDERPLATE

Starting at Big Hole Pass, traverse north on the crest for 5.7 miles, turn left off the CDT onto Nez Perce Ridge Trail and make your way down toward Threemile Creek. Shortly after leaving the CDT, you will encounter a trail junction. Turn right onto Three Mile Ridge Trail (#124) and follow it down 4.5 miles to the trailhead just east of Anderson-Threemile Rd. This hike is ideal as a point-to-point if you can drop a car at either end.

**Directions from Gibbonsville, ID:** Drive north on Dahlenega Creek Rd for 3 miles. Turn left onto Forest Rd 80 and pull into the parking area. If you can park two cars, leave one here at the Threemile Creek trailhead (45.561587, -113.868852). Once dropping a car, continue on Dahlenega Creek Rd for 5.9 miles. At the top of the pass, there is a parking area on the right where you can pick up the CDT. Horse trailers are not recommended due to limited parking and turn-around areas.

**Maps:** USGS 7.5 quadrangles: Big Hole Pass and Gibbonsville; USFS: Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Wisdom. CDTC Map Set: Maps 337 and 338, Section MT11 and MT12.

**For Other Information:** Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Wisdom Ranger District: (406)-689-3243.



## CDT from Chief Joseph Pass

**Length:** Variable (2 miles - 6 miles)

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Closest Town:** Wisdom, MT



NORTH OF CHIEF JOSEPH PASS. PHOTO BY THOMAS GATHMAN

Chief Joseph Pass, on the border of Idaho and Montana in the southern end of the Bitterroot Mountain Range, reaches 7,264 feet. Heading north on the CDT from Chief Joseph Pass, the trail meanders through a sparse forest. The trail is relatively evenly graded for the first 3 miles and winds its way along the ridge. There is no pre-determined turn around point; make an out-and-back hike with a distance that works for you. As you walk the CDT along this section, notice the web of trails, marking cross-country ski routes. Across MT-43 to the south is Lost Trail Powder Mountain downhill ski area.

**Directions from Wisdom, MT:** Drive west on MT-43 for 25 miles before turning right into a parking area at the top of a pass at an elevation of 7,264 feet. At the pass, there is a large parking area and space for horse trailers. The CDT takes off to the north midway across the parking lot,

**Maps:** USGS: 7.5 quadrangle: Lost Trail Pass; USFS: Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Wisdom; CDTC Map Set: Maps 340 and 341, Section MT13.

**For More Information:** Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Wisdom Ranger District: (406)-689-3243.



TRAVERSING A SNOW PAN NEAR MOUNT TINY. PHOTO BY DAHN PRATT



## Upper Seymour Lake on the CDT

**Length:** 13.7 miles

**Difficulty:** Moderate

**Closest Town:** Anaconda, MT



VIEWS ON THE WAY TO UPPER SEYMOUR LAKE. PHOTO BY WHITNEY LARUFFA

This well-maintained section of the CDT weaves through lodgepole pine forests to Upper Seymour Lake, a crystal-clear lake nestled in a striking cirque. The hike is not too challenging, with minimal elevation gain until the final 1.5 mile climb up switchbacks to the plateau. This can be a great hike to bring dogs on; there are lots of water crossings. Note that the trail runs through a wilderness area, where dogs must stay on leash. Enjoy a refreshing dip in the water or bring your fishing rod along to catch rainbow and cutthroat trout. The lake is a popular place to camp, so if you don't want a long day hike, this can be a great overnight backpacking trip. There is an option to continue along the CDT and extend your hike to Goat Flat, following the switchbacks for 2 miles and gaining 1,200 feet in elevation above the lake. As you reach the plateau of Goat Flat, mountains unfold in every direction.

**Directions from Anaconda, MT:** Take MT-1 south for 3 miles before continuing onto MT-569/Deep Creek Rd. After 18 miles, turn right toward Seymour Lake Rd/FR 934. Stay on Seymour Lake Rd for 2.4 miles, keep right at the fork and then continue 1.4 more miles. Continue onto Seymour Creek Rd for 3 miles before reaching the Seymour Lake trailhead (45.991161, -113.182981). While there is space for a horse trailer, turn around could be challenging if the parking area is full. There is a USFS campground at Lower Seymour Lake about 1/2 mile south of the trailhead.

**Maps:** USGS 7.5 quadrangles: Storm Lake, Mount Evans, and Lower Seymour Lake; CDTC Map Set: Map 348, Section MT15.

**For More Information:** Montana Office of Tourism: [visitmt.com](http://visitmt.com); Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Wisdom Ranger District: (406)-689-3243.



## Warren Lake

**Length:** 19 miles

**Difficulty:** Difficult

**Closest Town:** Anaconda, MT



WARREN LAKE. PHOTO BY VALERIE MANNE

This lake has multiple entrance options, but we suggest hiking from the West Fork Fish Trap Creek trailhead (FS trail 130). The incline is gradual for the first 7.5 miles, as the trail passes through lush forests and crosses several small creeks. Keep an eye out for two well-marked intersections. At the second intersection, the trail connects to the CDT. At about 7.5 miles in, on the CDT, the trail picks up elevation, making it steep at times. Continue about 2 miles up to a ridge with views down onto Warren Lake and the surrounding Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness. From the ridge, hike down 0.1 miles to reach the lake. Note that in wilderness areas dogs should be on leash and bikes are not permitted.

**Directions from Anaconda, MT:** Take MT-1 south out of town and turn right onto MT-569. Continue for 22 miles before turning right onto MT-43 W. Continue for 7 miles and turn right onto Calvert Creek Rd (FR 1223). Continue for 5.2 miles until you reach FR 1279. Turn right and continue for 2 miles until you reach the trailhead on your right (45.902314, -113.336653). There is limited parking and no trailer turn around.

**Map:** USGS 7.5 quadrangles: Warren Peak and Long Peak; USFS: Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness Map; CDTC Map Set: Map 346, Section MT15.

**For More Information:** Visit the Montana Office of Tourism, West Fork Fishtrap Creek Trail page: [visitmt.com/listings/general/national-forest-trail/west-fork-fishtrap-creek-trail.html](http://visitmt.com/listings/general/national-forest-trail/west-fork-fishtrap-creek-trail.html); Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness: (406)-683-3900.





## Limekiln Hill

**Length:** 10 miles

**Difficulty:** Moderate

**Closest Town:** Butte, MT



ON THE TRAIL TO LIMEKILN HILL.  
PHOTO BY VALERIE MANNE

The CDT going south from Pipestone Pass has a fairly gradual ascent the whole way until the last part, which is quite steep. The trail passes through pine forests with several views of Butte and the Highlands. Stop to observe Butte at the first viewpoint, and you'll find an old mining hole with quartz around it. After this first view, there is another viewpoint in approximately 0.5 miles where you can see the Highlands. You will then continue for another 2.75 miles or so through varying pine forests on the CDT. Eventually, the trail intersects with an old road. You can follow the CDT as it winds through the forest, or take the road that leads south with amazing views of the surrounding mountain ranges - the Tobacco Root Mountains, Anaconda Range, Flint Range, Highlands - and Butte.

**Directions from Butte, MT:** Take I-90 E for 4 miles before taking exit 228 toward Continental Drive. Turn right onto Mt Highland Drive and immediately take a left at the first cross street onto Continental Drive. Continue for 4 miles and take a left onto MT-2 E. Drive for 4.6 miles before reaching the CDT at Pipestone Pass. The parking area, with enough space for horse trailer parking, will be on the right. To reach Limekiln Hill you will head south on the CDT.

**Maps:** USGS 7.5 quadrangle: Pipestone Pass; USFS: Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Butte; CDTC Map Set: Map 357, Section MT17.

**For More Information:** Backyard Montana website: [backyardmontana.com](http://backyardmontana.com); Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Butte Ranger District: (406)-494-2147.



## MacDonald Pass to Tenmile Creek via Switchback Ridge

**Length:** 6.7 miles

**Difficulty:** Moderate

**Closest Town:** Helena, MT



VIEW FROM MACDONALD PASS.  
PHOTO BY KURT VALITON

From MacDonald Pass, follow the CDT south for about 3.2 miles as it meanders along the ridgeline until you reach the junction with the Switchback Ridge Trail (#348). Turn left (east) and continue down Switchback Ridge Trail for 3.5 miles until you reach Rimini Rd and the Tenmile Picnic Area. The trail follows Tenmile Creek down the open ridge and continues through sections of loose rocks and switchbacks. Moose Creek Campsite, just down the road from the picnic area offers a great spot to spend the night and explore more trails in the area. This is a popular mountain biking trail, so if you're hiking, be aware that bikers may come fast down the trail. If you go at the right time of year, the wildflowers on this hike are amazing.

**Directions from Helena, MT:** To Ten Mile Picnic Area, head west on US-12 W/Euclid Ave for 9.2 miles. Turn left on Rimini Rd and continue for 3.5 miles until you reach the picnic area. To MacDonald Pass, take US-12 W/Euclid Ave from Helena and continue for 15.2 miles. Turn left onto Vista View and you will find parking and the CDT trailhead. While parking is limited, there is room for trucks and trailers.

**Map:** USGS 7.5 quadrangles: MacDonald Pass and Black Mountain; CDTC Map Set: Maps 369 and 370, Sections MT 19 and MT20.

**For More Information:** Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, Helena Ranger District: (406)-449-5201. Moose Creek Campground: (406)-449-5490.

**For trail shuttles:** Helena's Trail Rider program picks up at the Moose Creek Cabin and drops off at MacDonald Pass on Sundays: [helenamt.com/bike-helena](http://helenamt.com/bike-helena). Call Vigilante Shuttles Thursday through Sunday to schedule a ride from MacDonald Pass: (406)-475-2704.



HELENA - LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST. PHOTO BY AMANDA WHELOCK



# Lewis and Clark Pass via Alice Creek Trail

**Length:** 2.4 miles  
**Difficulty:** Easy  
**Closest Town:** Lincoln, MT

This scenic, family-friendly trail celebrates the rich pioneer and Native history of the area. This pass is where Merriweather Lewis crossed the Rocky Mountains on his return back east, and where Native American tribes would cross over the Divide into the plains of Eastern Montana. Starting from the Alice Creek Trailhead, follow an old road until the trail begins to climb (about 0.3 miles into the hike). Eventually, hikers will come to a junction with the CDT, where there is a large sign marking the historical significance of the site. Sweeping views of the East Rocky Mountains and lush fields of wildflowers make this even more of a bang-for-your-buck day hike.



A TRAIL CREW AT LEWIS AND CLARK PASS. PHOTO BY SEAN JANSEN

**Directions from Lincoln, MT:** Take MT-200 E/Main St for 10.2 miles. Turn left onto Alice Creek Rd and continue for 8.6 miles until you reach the trailhead. Unless full, the trailhead has parking and turn around space for trailers.

**Maps:** USGS 7.5 quadrangle: Blow Out Mountain; USFS: Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, Lincoln; CDTC Map Set: Maps 381 and 382, Section MT23.

**For More Information:** Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, Lincoln Ranger District (406)-362-4265.



# Triple Divide Pass - Glacier National Park

**Length:** 14.5 miles  
**Difficulty:** Difficult  
**Closest Town:** East Glacier Park, MT

Do not be intimidated by the name of this section in the eastern part of Glacier National Park. Although you gain 2,380 feet in elevation, this is a doable day trip with ample opportunities for wildlife viewing. Triple Divide Pass derives its name from the hailing mountain to the west. Triple Divide Peak is a one-of-a-kind juncture of the continent's drainage. From its slopes, water drains to the Pacific, Atlantic, and Arctic Oceans. Note that bikes are not permitted on most trails in the park.



WINTER AT TRIPLE DIVIDE PASS. PHOTO BY DAN VARDAMIS

**Directions from East Glacier Park, MT:** Drive on MT-49 N (not plowed in winter) for 11.4 miles and take a slight left onto X-18203, which turns into US-89 N. Continue for 4.8 miles. Turn left onto Cut Bank Creek Rd and drive 4.9 miles to the Cut Bank Campground and Triple Divide Cut Bank Trailhead. Parking is relatively limited, but there should be trailer turnaround space in the campground.

**Maps:** USGS 7.5 quadrangles: Squaw Mountain, Kiowa, and Cut Bank Pass; Trails Illustrated #215; CDTC Map Set: Maps 411 and 412, Section MT38.

**For More Information:** NPS, West Glacier National Park: (406)-888-7800.





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PHOTO BY KEVIN LEAGUE