



T Yellowstone Art Museum

401 N. 27th St. in downtown Billings. 256-6804.
<http://yellowstone.artmuseum.org>

There is no lack of cultural experiences in Billings. The Yellowstone Art Museum resides in the restored old jailhouse, and over the years it has acquired a reputation as one of the finest contemporary art museums in the Northern Rockies. The large permanent collection offers an array of some of the most important artists working in the west. The temporary galleries show interesting exhibitions of international acclaim, and change throughout the year. The museum also features different educational programs and classes for all ages.

More than a snapshot, more than a picture, the Yellowstone Art Museum is a rich tapestry of the visions and voices that make up the West. It has quickly acquired a reputation as the finest contemporary art museum in the Northern Rockies. With a Permanent Collection of more than 1,900 pieces and temporary galleries which house exhibitions of international acclaim, the museum represents the most comprehensive resource in this region for the appreciation of 20th Century art.

The museum's Permanent Collection encompasses a wide range of aesthetic experiences. The Montana Gallery is home to some of the most important artists currently working in the West. With sculpture by Deborah Butterfield, paintings by Ted Waddell, and drawings by Bill Stockton, the Montana Collection represents a thorough cross-section of today's most interesting visual expression.

The Virginia Snook Collection, in the gallery of the same name, is the largest publicly held collection of author and illustrator Will James' work in the United States. It extends the museum's scope and broadens its appeal to visitors who identify with the traditions of the west. Also included in the Snook Collection are works by C.M. Russell, Joseph Henry Sharp, and other notable historic artists. *Source: Museum brochure*

ON THE TRAIL OF LEWIS AND CLARK

It is on this stretch that the only physical evidence of the Lewis and Clark Expedition can be found. Clark reached a large sandstone landmark he named Pompey's Tower after Sacajawea's son. Here he carved his name and the date and climbed to the top of the tower. His carving can still be seen today.



Big Ice Cave is one of the favorite destinations in the Pryors. A picnic area is only a short distance from the cave.

WILD HORSES AND MORE!

Pryor Mountains

In the extreme southeast corner of Carbon County you'll find one of the last remaining herds of wild horses in the country. The 44,000 acre Pryor Mountains National Wild Horse Range was set aside by the Secretary of the Interior in 1968.

Theories of where these horses originated are varied. Some believe they are descendants of those brought to the region by Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century. Others believe they are escaped from domestic herds of local ranchers. Probably, they are a mix of both. Common mustang social units form around a dominant stud, his harem of mares, and their foals.

Getting to them isn't easy, but the trip is worth it. The best route through Montana is via Hwy 310 south out of Laurel. Follow that for 50 miles to Warren. Another 20 miles of gravel road will put you in the canyons of the Pryors.

If you want to go the whole way on paved road, continue on past Warren to Lovell, WY. Just on the east side of town you'll see the turnoff to Hwy. 37. Follow this to the Bighorn Recreation area. If you are more adventurous you can take the turnoff to Barry's Landing.

While exploring this area, watch for Bighorn sheep. They have been restocked in the Pryors and are plentiful.

Keep your eyes open for teepee rings left by ancient tribes. If you look hard enough, you may find pictographs or other archeological evidence of civilizations past.

There is also an abundance of caves here. Big Ice Cave is the most notable. These caves are usually gated and closed off to prevent vandalism. However the Forest Service does conduct weekend tours of Big Ice Cave during the summer. Access these caves from Warren on a long gravel road. When (if) you reach the caves continue on for a short distance to Dry Head Vista. Here you will find a spectacular panorama of the Bighorn Canyon area dropping away for over 4,000 feet.

For access to these caves and additional information about them, contact the Custer National Forest Supervisor's Office in Billings.

Write to them at 2602 1st Ave. N., Billings, MT 59103 or call them at (406) 657-6361.

The Pryor Mountains Are Unique

The Pryor Mountains were named after Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor of the Lewis and Clark Expedition which traversed the nearby Yellowstone River Valley in 1806. The Pryor mountain range is actually an extension of the Bighorn Mountains but is separated from the Bighorns by the Bighorn Canyon.

The Pryor Mountains are unique in many ways. Some of the more notable aspects are the rainfall/snowfall zones and related vegetation from the southern foothill regions to the highest points in the mountain range. Annual rainfall varies from less than five inches in the foothills to twenty inches in the high country. Most of the southern portion of the Wild Horse Range is northern cold desert country.

Differences in rainfall/snowfall contribute to the most diverse plant community in Montana. As you move from the southern desert portion to the upper, lush, sub-alpine portions of the Pryor Mountains, you can see the progression of desert, low bushes to fir trees and grasses. In between these zones is a gradation of plant species. In addition, the bladderpod and Shoshonea are two examples of rare and sensitive plants that are found in the Pryors.

For centuries, the Pryors were home to small bands of Native American people. The warm, dry southern slopes provided a favorable environment during the harsh winter months, while the high elevation lands were occupied at other times of the year. This environment provided a variety of both plant and animal foods. Bighorn sheep, mule deer, bison and elk provided meat and skins while berries, roots and possibly ants supplemented diets.

Hard stone deposits called chert, exist in the Pryors and were used by Native Americans to make projectile points and scraping tools. In fact, the Crow Indian tribe used to refer to the Pryors as the "Arrow-head" mountains.

The Crow Tribe considers many sites within the Pryors sacred. Cultural resources are protected by federal law on public lands and should be left as found for scientific investigation and enjoyment by future visitors.

Excerpted from BLM pamphlet.