



Blaze the Bold New Frontier... Montana

*By Philip Land
with The Land Brokers*

Montana has nearly 150,000 square miles of prairie, farms, ranches, streams, and mountains—all spectacular scenery and adventure land—leading to an abundant opportunity to enjoy



nature, be free of the “asphalt jungle”, and to be enterprising. Montana is extraordinary in so many ways with its ever changing terrain, the varied ecosystems and parks, and the assimilations of diverse people that populate the regions of the state.

Even though Montana’s name is derived from the Spanish word for mountain, only one-third of the state is mountainous. The state may be described as being comprised of the western mountain ranges and the eastern

prairies providing a diverse range of geography and uses of the land. The Rocky Mountains in Montana are comprised of several ranges that offer elevations of 3,500 to over 12,000 feet

above sea level. These elevations create a variety of weather systems that can produce up to 10 feet of snow, yielding hunting and other recreational opportunities and providing water sources for the myriad of mountain streams and rivers that flow through the lands.

The beautiful valleys that divide the mountain ranges throughout the state range from narrow crevices to wide, broad floors, most so memorable that the names are well known across the region. Much of the western region,



especially west of the Continental Divide, is heavily forested with more than two dozen species of trees.

The eastern half of the state has a distinct character of its own and is comprised of lakes, rolling hills, badlands, and prairies. The prairies provide for a thriving livestock industry and bird hunting habitats. The diversity of nature is found in these productive areas—sage, willows, cedars, berries, and the ubiquitous hardy cold season grasses. These regions provide the backdrop and legacy of the Western traditions associated with the great trail drives that brought cattle and cowboys from Texas to Montana after the Civil War.



The contrast of the mountains and the plains is brought into focus on the Rocky Mountain front. This remarkable area is so dramatic with its walls of peaks and expansive valleys filled with endless plains of grass and wheat. The colors of the brilliant blue skies and golden and green grasses mix to produce a tapestry



of nature that is as blended as the people who live in this land. The western region is home to the incredibly beautiful Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. Glacier Park is known for its majestic chiseled peaks, whereas Yellowstone Park is comprised of fascinating thermal wonders from subterranean volcanic activity, such as the Grand Prismatic Spring.

Economically, Montana generally proceeds on a more even keel than many parts of the nation, not experiencing turbulent swings between wild highs and lows. This is exemplified by the recent economic downturn in the U.S. economy that was preceded by booms in the financial and housing markets. Montana weathered these highs and lows better than most states, emerging with a balanced state budget.

The tough economic time the nation has experienced over the past five years was slower to affect Montana, but when it did, the real estate market came to a virtual halt. As with most of the country, sales were almost non-existent. The situation in Montana was less harshly felt in the quality ranch/recreational market, but

the prices for many properties that were not in this category decreased substantially. There were fewer sales, but the quality properties were held by strong hands that clearly were willing to weather the cyclical wave.

Investors are again looking to place their assets in top-notch real estate to hedge against the possible impending inflation that



may come after this recent cycle. Sales are beginning to rebound on premium properties. According to prominent south central Montana real estate firms, the segment of the market that lagged is getting refocused in the \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000 range—focusing more on modest ranches and recreational parcels rather than trophy homes. This is the market where people feel there is a window of opportunity for purchasing power.

While agriculture remains king in Montana, business development beyond tourism is a high priority at both state and local levels. In some cases, people migrate and bring their own jobs, often made easier through advances in information technology and high-speed Internet. A case in



point is the company Shenandoah Solutions, Inc. that develops high technology systems for the U.S. Navy and private sector. The company moved from Virginia to Montana 5 years ago, and the company president had this to say: “I was born and raised in Virginia, a beautiful state in its own right. But growth over the years turned the rural area in which I lived largely into subdivisions and the agricultural orientation of the county disappeared. Montana reminds me of how that county was when I was a kid growing up.”

Another example of “grow where planted” is a small Montana company focused on manufacturing; specifically the metal fabrication industry. The Montana office of King Machine is bullish on the continued growth of Montana’s diverse and independent manufacturing sector, ranging from heavy equipment/mining components to extremely pre-



cise medical instruments. Manufacturing growth will remain strong with the continued expansion of the petroleum sector while the western side of the state continues to be the new firearms manufacturing mecca. Additionally, strong manufacturing exists in archery products, lasers, semiconductor equipment, alternative energy, and recreational products. Montana is on the map of world-class manufacturing as it continues to draw entrepreneurs from all parts of the globe. The business climate is ripe for expansion while the lifestyle appeals to the next generation.

Montana’s rich heritage of independence,



abundance of natural resources with natural gas, coal, oil, and wind energy, and wide-open space lead to fertile ground for today’s entrepreneurs and investors. Few states offer the diversity of choices for lifestyles, business, friendly environments, and strategically valued land acquisitions. From the smaller agricultural-oriented communities to more populated cities (around 100,000 people or less), Montana beckons the creative, adventuresome, and investment-savvy entrepreneurs. Come join us to see what Montana has to offer to those who seek what the future holds! ❖

Written by Philip Land, The Land Brokers in Big Timber, Montana; with contributions from David Viers in Livingston, Montana; and photography by Loretta Hurley in Big Timber, Montana.

This spectacular, 620-acre, pristine ranch is five miles from Big Timber and has unparalleled views of the eastern slopes of the Crazy Mountains with two year-round creeks, wildlife and upland birds. The 7,200-square-foot trophy house boasts many custom features such as an exquisite new gourmet kitchen with Viking appliances, floor-to-ceiling field stone fireplaces and three-car garage. The fully restored, authentic homestead cabin overlooking a stocked trout pond, a 44x96 metal building and a four-stall horse barn with tack room/office complete the package. \$2,500,000.

Diamond 'S' Ranch

Montana ♦ Sweet Grass County ♦ Big Timber



Slot-I Ranch

Montana ♦ Sweet Grass County ♦ Big Timber

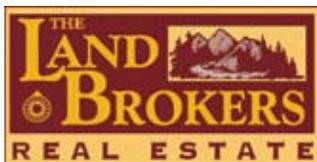
With 948 deeded acres (1.5 sections) and terrain that varies from rolling grass-covered hills to steep rimrock buttes and natural pastures, Slot-I Ranch provides an unparalleled working ranch with 360-degree mountain views. Livestock water has been thoughtfully developed, along with two large ponds and seasonal spring-fed creeks. A newly remodeled main residence, built in 2006, wonderful guesthouse, great equipment building, working corrals and a barn complete this panoramic parcel. \$2,370,000.

Mile High Valley Ranch

Montana ♦ Sweet Grass County ♦ Big Timber



Only minutes from the fabulous Crazy Mountains and the spectacular Big Timber Canyon Falls, this 276-acre property has total privacy and tranquility. The newly remodeled, three-bedroom, three-bath, ranch-style home with covered wraparound porch offers breathtaking views of the Crazy Mountains, Absaroka Beartooth Range and the Yellowstone River Valley. An oversized three-car garage with ample storage and the original barn and corrals add to the quiet setting. \$895,000.



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