



# Yellowstone *River* Valley

It's More Than Just a Park



**W**hen people think of Montana, most think of Yellowstone National Park. When people think of Yellowstone National Park, most think of stunning natural beauty. The beauty does not stop at the park's borders.

"It's not like Yellowstone is surrounded by a privacy fence enclosing all the natural wonder," Philip Land, owner of United Country - Land Brokers Real Estate, said. "Within an 80-mile radius of the park, the scenery is spectacular. The entire Yellowstone River Valley is one of the most beautiful places on the planet." In fact, the valley provided the backdrop for two Robert Redford movies: *The River Runs Through*



*It and The Horse Whisperer.*

Here, just as when Lewis and Clark explored, the water is clear and plentiful. Native rainbow and cutthroat trout rise and fall in crystalline pools as anglers try to entice them with carefully crafted flies. Mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, mountain lion roam the mountainsides providing ample opportunities for hunting with bow, rifle and camera. Migratory waterfowl fill the spring and autumn skies. In the flats and meadows, pronghorn antelope, Hungarian partridge and pheasants abound.

Wildlife share the outdoors with adventurers who love to ride horses, hike, camp, mountain bike and enjoy water sports on local reservoirs





in the summer. The winter, which is surprisingly mild thanks to the Chinook winds, brings snowmobiling and skiing at any one of the area's three alpine ski destinations: Red Lodge, Bridger Bowl and Big Sky.

For people who want to experience the Big Sky country without giving up big city convenience, the Yellowstone River Valley is ideally located. For instance, Big Timber, the county seat of



Sweet Grass County, is halfway between Billings, Montana's largest city, and Bozeman, home of Montana State University. The town's 1,800 residents are only an hour's drive from either city and their plentiful amenities.

"Big Timber is an agriculture town with a sophisticated attitude," Land, who has lived in Big Timber for eight years, said. "We have members of historic ranching families working alongside newcomers to ensure that the town thrives. We've got a good mix of people who have been

here forever and people who got here as soon as they could." The new residents come from the West Coast, the East Coast and the deep South.

Despite this influx of cultural influences, western hospitality is alive and well, Land said. "After the Civil War, Montana was settled largely by displaced Southerners, who wanted a chance to start over," he said. "When they came west, they brought their meager possessions and their famed hospitality. Over time, the Southern "drawl" has been replaced by Western inflections, but the importance of welcoming people into the community and treating them with respect has not been diminished."

Unlike the areas immediately adjacent to Bozeman and Billings, the small towns in the Yellowstone River Valley aren't growing in unprecedented booms with sub-divisions devouring the landscape. Instead, people are moving in and moving out at a constant rate, creating fairly stable populations and the opportunity to consolidate land holdings as well as divide them, Land said.

"In our area, we see as many people combining small tracts to create larger ones as we do those who are buying large tracts and sub-dividing them," he said. "Right now, the property inventory is diverse. It includes everything from single family residences to 100-acre ranchettes to multi-section spreads."

The Yellowstone River Valley offers a myriad of property options at a reasonable price.

"Eight years ago, when my wife and I began searching for our own Rocky Mountain ideal,



we found that this area of Montana offered the lifestyle we loved at prices that were affordable," Land said. "Since then, this area has been discovered and prices have risen, but they are still reasonable for what a purchaser gets. I often tell people that 'The best time to have bought real estate in Montana was 20 years ago, but the next best time is now.'"

He continued, "People come to Montana for a variety of reasons, but they stay because they love the land. It is truly Big Sky country where you have sweeping views and plenty of elbow room. In Montana, you can walk tall rather than build tall." ❖

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*For more information about life in the Yellowstone River Valley, contact Philip Land with United Country - Land Brokers Real Estate at 406 932-6892.*