



CONTACT: Crystelle Fogle, MBA, RD 406-947-2344

MT Department of Public Health & Human Services

July 2009

Active Staycations: Cool Ways to Enjoy Healthy Montana Fun

There are lots of really good reasons that so many Montana families are taking a staycation this summer and staying close to home for vacation. Staycations are a great way to save money - and still have a ton of family of family fun. Staycations can also help reduce family stress in these tough times, both by helping the budget and by limiting long, noisy hours in a car or the hassles of airplane travel.

"Montana is the perfect place for an active staycation," says Suzie Eades, Operations Director for Big State Games. "Just think how many people travel hundreds or thousands of miles to take a vacation here. We've got it all - hiking, biking, boating, fishing, and more - practically right in our backyards."

Active staycations are the polar opposite of sit-on-the-couch-and-play-video-games. Eades and her Eat Right Montana colleagues have some super tips on making any Montana staycation - from a long weekend to a whole week - as adventurous and spontaneous as out-of-state travel.

- **Start with a map of Montana (online, in an atlas, or the highway map available at visitor centers).**
- **Decide the maximum distance you want to travel in a day (5, 10, or 50 miles, for example).** Draw a circle on the map of your chosen distance in all directions.
- **Make a family list of all the places and events within the circle that you would like to visit.** If you need help finding things to do, go to http://visitmt.com/regions_towns/ for a searchable database.
- **Write each of the destinations on a piece of paper and put them into a hat or bag.**
- **Pick one fun destination every time you need a place to go.** Give all family members a chance to pick the place-of-the-day, the picnic-of-the-day, and how to make the day as active as possible.

Here are three of Montana's premier summer events - all with wonderful opportunities for active fun:

- **Montana Shakespeare in the Parks (www2.montana.edu/shakespeare/):** Make your evening active by arriving early, saving a space for the performance, and then exploring the area on foot or on a bike.
- **National Folk Festival, July 10-12, Butte (www.nationalfolkfestival.com/2009/):** Attendees at this free event can rock and roll (and even take some lessons) at the Montana Tourism Dance Pavilion.
- **Big Sky State Games, July 17-19 (www.bigskygames.org/bssg.html):** You can still register for some BSSG events, including a 5K Run and a Fitness Walk. Spectators can enjoy active fun by exploring local parks and trails. Bring smart shoes and visit http://bikenet.org/maps_and_more.php for a map.

"There are lots of staycations you can enjoy without getting in the car," notes Eades. "Kids and adults love scavenger hunts and obstacle courses. One of my favorites is neighborhood Olympic games with a variety of wacky races (three-legged, egg-on-spoon, etc.) or 3-point basketball in a driveway."

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana's monthly packets can be downloaded for free at www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm