



Montana Heritage Center FAQ

Planning Your Visit

What are your hours?

- **Montana Heritage Center:** Monday-Wednesday & Friday: 9am-5pm | Thursday: 9am-6:30pm | Saturday: 10am-5pm | Sunday: 12pm-5pm
- **Gift Shop:** Monday-Wednesday & Friday-Saturday: 10am-5pm | Thursday: 10am-6:30pm | Sunday: 1pm-5pm
- **Norm's Café (seasonal hours):**
 - Fall/Winter: Monday-Wednesday & Friday: 8am-3pm | Thursday: 8am-5pm | Saturday: 10am-3pm | Sunday: Closed
 - Spring/Summer: Monday-Wednesday & Friday: 8am-4pm | Thursday: 8am-5:30pm | Saturday: 10am-4pm | Sunday: 12pm-4pm
- **Holidays:** Open year-round except Christmas Day and Thanksgiving Day

How much does admission cost? Admission is free and open to all visitors.

Where are you located? 225 North Roberts Street, Helena, MT 59601 (across from the State Capitol Building)

Where can I park? Free parking is available in nearby lots or on the street wherever spaces are available and not marked as reserved. Accessible parking is available in the north lot (near the prominent building overhang) and the east lot (near the Sovereign Nations Arbor). Street parking is also available near the west entrance. Please note: the roundabout at the east entrance is for drop-off and pick-up only.

Is the Montana Heritage Center accessible? Yes, the building is fully ADA accessible with elevators and ramps throughout. Accessible restrooms are available, and wheelchairs can be provided. Service animals are welcome; other animals are not permitted inside the building.

Are strollers allowed? Yes, strollers are welcome in all gallery spaces.

Is there storage for coats and bags? Yes, a coat rack and storage lockers are available in the Central Commons.

Can I take photos in the galleries? Yes, photography is allowed. However, flash photography and tripods are not permitted.

Are guided tours available? Guided public tours of the museum galleries will begin in February 2026. In the meantime, visitors are welcome to explore on their own. Tours of the State Capitol and Original Governor's Mansion (currently closed for repairs) continue to be offered. For more information, visit mths.mt.gov/education/Tours.

Can school groups or other groups schedule visits? Yes! Groups are welcome to visit during regular hours without reservations. For scheduled group visits and educational programming, visit mths.mt.gov/education/Tours. Additional details about group tour options will be available in February 2026.

Where can I eat? Norm's Café, operated by The Dive Bakery, offers baked goods (cinnamon rolls, scones, crepes, cookies), lunch items (sandwiches, salads), and fresh coffee with indoor and outdoor seating available.

Are pets allowed? Service animals are permitted inside the building; other animals are not allowed indoors. Pets are welcome outdoors on the Habitats Trail and surrounding Capitol complex grounds.

About the Montana Heritage Center

What's the difference between the Montana Heritage Center and the Montana Historical Society? The Montana Heritage Center is the facility that houses the Montana Historical Society (MTHS). MTHS operates several programs including the museum, library and archives, outreach and education, publications, the State Historic Preservation Office, and administrative services. The Heritage Center serves as the central location for these programs and includes museum galleries, a reference room, and other public amenities.

How big is the facility? The new addition is 70,000 square feet, and the renovated Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building is approximately 95,000 square feet, for a total of 165,000 square feet.

When did the Montana Heritage Center open?

- **December 2, 2025:** Ribbon cutting ceremony
- **December 3, 2025:** Regular hours began
- **June 25-28, 2026:** Grand Opening Celebration (a community-wide event in partnership with Visit Helena, Helena Chamber of Commerce, and local organizations)

Who designed and built it? Designed by Cushing Terrell (principal architects: David Koel, Anthony Houtz, and Martin Byrnes). Built by Sletten Construction Companies.

Gallery and exhibit design partners included Main Street Design, Cinnabar, RLMG, Electrosonic, Clearwing, and Zone.

Galleries & Exhibits

What can I see at the Montana Heritage Center?

- **Homeland Gallery:** Montana history from the Ice Age to present day across 7 time periods, plus a children's gallery and Sovereign Nations exhibit
- **Charles M. Russell Gallery:** Art and life story of the legendary cowboy artist
- **Changing Gallery:** 5,000 square feet showcasing rotating exhibitions from MTHS collections (can be divided into 3 sections for multiple exhibits)
- **Big Medicine:** The famous white bison on the second floor of the historic building (on loan from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes)
- **Gift Shop:** Montana and Indigenous-made products and western history books
- **Habitats Trail:** An outdoor interpretive trail representing Montana's diverse landscapes
- **Sovereign Nations East Entrance Arbor**
- **Smudge Room:** A quiet space near the Homeland Gallery for smudging and contemplation
- **Outdoor Amphitheater**

What's currently showing in the Changing Gallery? The inaugural exhibit features the Poindexter Collection of Mid-Century Modern Art, including works by Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Robert DeNiro Sr. This exhibit is planned to remain on display for at least one year.

How often do exhibits change in the Changing Gallery? Exhibitions rotate on a case-by-case basis depending on the collection and conservation needs. Check our website or contact MTHS for current exhibition information and upcoming shows.

Does the larger building mean more artifacts on display? Yes. The expanded space allows MTHS to display collections that haven't been publicly shown before, particularly in the Changing Gallery. The galleries also incorporate many new voices and stories from throughout Montana's history than before.

Is the Library and Archives open? The Library and Archives reference room will open to the public in spring 2026.

Events & Rentals

Can I rent space for an event or host a party here? Yes! Available spaces include:

- **Big Sky Hall:** Up to 250 guests (divisible into two rooms)
- **Meeting Rooms:** Up to 90 guests (divisible into two rooms)
- **Central Commons:** Up to 450 guests
- **Additional spaces:** Historic lobby, catering kitchen, and atrium

All venues include state-of-the-art AV equipment with an on-site AV specialist. Tables, chairs, and setup/breakdown services are included. You may choose any licensed and insured caterer (no in-house catering). Reservations are now being accepted for business events, parties, and special occasions.

What other public programs do you offer? The facility hosts community events, lectures, presentations, and provides access to educational resources and archival materials through Big Sky Hall, classrooms, and the Library and Archives reference room.

How can I stay informed about upcoming events and exhibitions? Sign up for our mailing list to receive updates about events, exhibitions, and programs at the Montana Heritage Center.

Funding & History

How was the project funded? The \$107 million project was funded through:

- \$60 million in private donations and grants (from over 1,300 donors)
- \$41.5 million in state funds via the Montana Museums Act (1% lodging tax, no property taxes)
- \$5.5 million in bonds

Major donors: Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation (\$25M), Norm Asbjornson (\$10.4M), and BNSF Railway (\$5M). [Full donor list](#)

Why did the project cost more than initially estimated? Master planning began in 2010, with final plans in 2019-2020 and construction starting fall 2020. Costs increased due to state-of-the-art multimedia exhibits added to original plans, inflation, and pandemic-related supply chain and labor issues. All additional funding came from private sources at no cost to taxpayers.

What are some unique design features?

- The north face overhang evokes Chief Mountain in Glacier National Park
- Lower stonework from Harlowton, MT; upper stonework matches capitol campus buildings
- Boulders from the Boulder Batholith (donated by Steve and Laura Marks; transportation/installation by Dennis and Priscilla Dickert)

Tribal Partnerships

How were Montana's Sovereign Nations involved? MTHS worked closely with a Tribal Stakeholders Group representing every tribal nation in Montana to ensure culturally sensitive and appropriate presentation of tribal art and artifacts. Their input influenced design decisions including the smudge room and the Arbor at the east entrance.

Collections & Preservation

How does the new building help preserve collections?

- New power plant ensures proper temperature and humidity control
- Enhanced security system
- New fire suppression system

How many items are in the MTHS collection? MTHS safeguards over 62,000 pieces of art and artifacts, which must be properly rested and stored for preservation. The Changing Gallery allows more of these items to be shared with the public on a rotating basis.

Supporting MTHS

What other initiatives is MTHS working on? The Montana History & Civics Education Endowment is raising \$10 million in private funding to bring schoolchildren from across Montana to explore the State Capitol and Montana Heritage Center. The program launched fall 2025; field trips begin spring 2026. \$3.5 million has been raised to date.

How can I support the Montana Heritage Center?

Become a Member Join MTHS and enjoy benefits including a subscription to *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, 15% off purchases at the gift shop, and access to our newsletter. [Learn more about membership](#)

Volunteer or Become a Docent Help with tours, events, and general visitor services. [Explore volunteer opportunities](#)

Make a Donation Support the work we do through a financial contribution to the Society. [Make a donation](#)