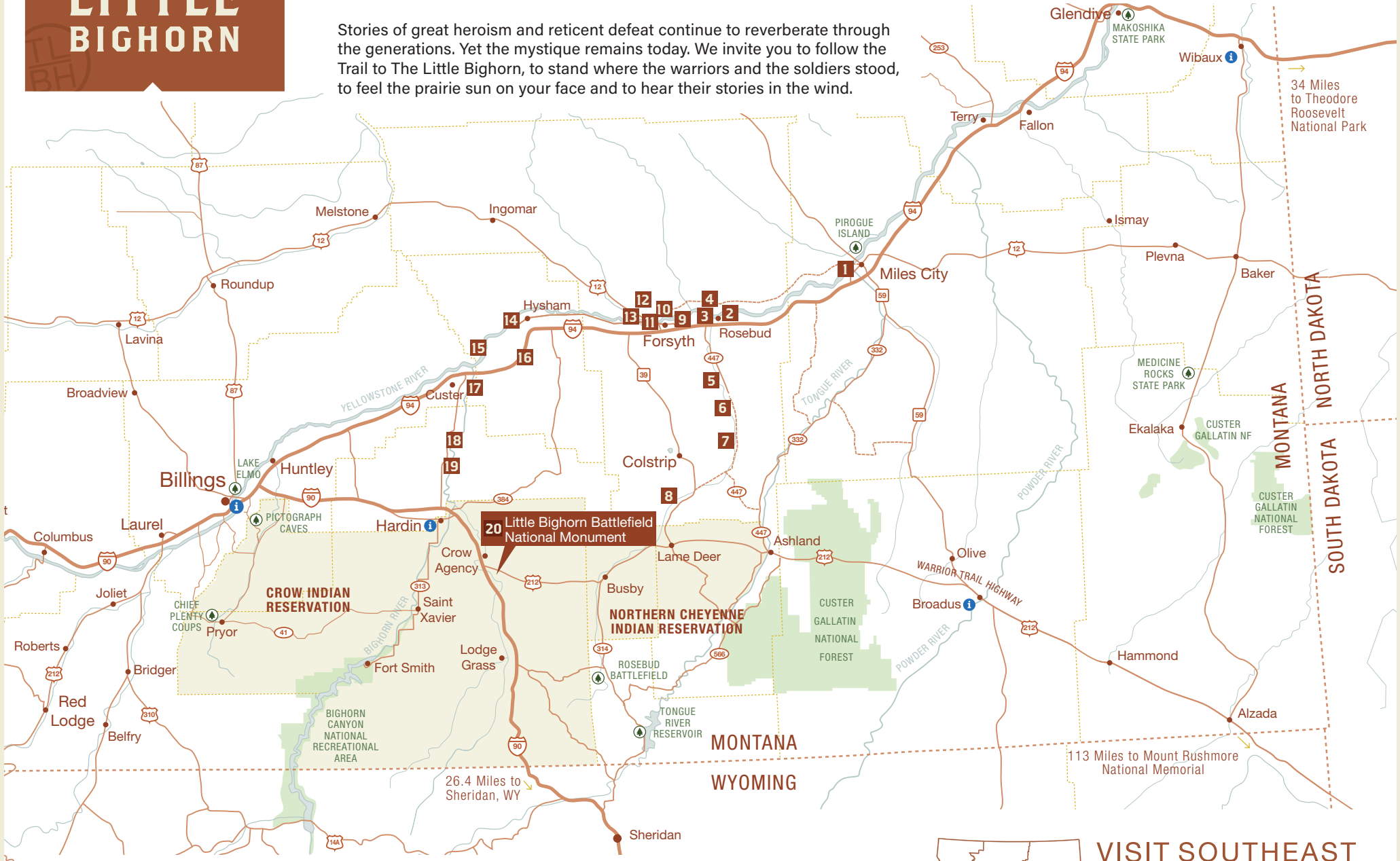
SOUTHEAST MONTANA'S

TRAIL TO THE LITTLE BIGHORN

OUT HERE, WE HAVE A STORY TO TELL.

This map will lead you on a historic journey following the movements of Lt. Col. Custer and the 7th Calvary during the days, weeks and months leading up to, and immediately following, the renowned Battle of Little Bighorn were filled with skirmishes, political maneuvering and emotional intensity – for both sides. Despite their resounding victory, the Plains Indians' way of life was drastically, immediately and forever changed.

Stories of great heroism and reticent defeat continue to reverberate through the generations. Yet the mystique remains today. We invite you to follow the Trail to The Little Bighorn, to stand where the warriors and the soldiers stood, to feel the prairie sun on your face and to hear their stories in the wind.



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1 CUSTER'S FIRST FIGHT

August 4, 1873 • WaterWorks Museum – Miles City

Lt. Col. Custer's skirmish at the confluence of the Tongue River, across from the present-day Miles City, was first of several during the summer of 1873. The 7th Cavalry was assigned to Col. David Stanley to protect the Northern Pacific Railroad surveyors.

2 SCOUTING SOUTH OF YELLOWSTONE

May 15, 1876 • N. of I-94, Exit 106 – Rosebud

A scouting party, led by Lt. James H. Bradley crossed the Yellowstone River near the present-day Rosebud and proceeded to high ground to the south for a better vantage point. Moving southeast, Crow scouts detected smoke – the presence of a large Indian village – from the Tongue River Valley.


NATHAN SATRAN

3 THE SEVENTH PASSES IN REVIEW

June 22, 1876 • Longhorn Restaurant – Rosebud

At noon on June 22, 1876 the 7th Cavalry began its ill-fated march to the Little Bighorn. Twelve companies paraded before Gens. Terry, Gibbon and Custer as officers exchanged final salutes. Gibbon reminded Custer, "Don't be greedy, wait for us," to which Custer reportedly replied, "No, no I won't."

4 READY TO MARCH

August 8, 1876 • Far West Yellowstone River Access – Rosebud

A few days after the Battle of Little Bighorn, Gen. Alfred Terry moved the decimated 7th to Fort Pease on the Yellowstone, waiting nearly a month for 12 companies of infantry, which arrived via steamers and totaled 1,800. The march up Rosebud Creek began August 8, 1876.


NATHAN SATRAN

5 CUSTER CAMPSITE

June 22, 1876 • Rosebud Creek, Mile Marker 10 on Hwy. 447

On June 22, 1876 Custer's command marched 10 miles south along Rosebud Creek to this site, where they camped for the night. There was dramatic dialogue during Officer's Call and later in the scout's camp.

6 THE RENO SCOUT

June 10 – 19, 1876 • Rosebud Creek, Mile Marker 24 on Hwy. 447

Gen. Terry wanted to be certain that the "winter lodges" had not moved south and east, even though Gibbon's scouts had earlier located the big village on the Rosebud. Major Reno's scouts found an abandoned campsite along the Tongue River, estimated at 400 lodges and a thousand warriors, along with a wide trail heading west toward the Rosebud.

7 MEETING ON THE ROSEBUD

August 10, 1876 • Snider Creek Junction on Hwy. 447

Although both Gens. Terry and Crook withdrew in the aftermath of the Rosebud and Little Bighorn Battles, they were only a hundred miles apart. In August 1876, while following month-old Indian trails, the commands met by accident along Rosebud Creek.

8 CUSTER CAMPSITE

June 23, 1876 • Rosebud Creek and Hwy. 39, south of Colstrip

Having marched 33 miles up Rosebud Creek, Lt. Col. Custer and the 7th camped at this location, near where Sitting Bull had his vision of "many soldiers falling into camp," two weeks prior. Despite passing evidence of several large Indian camps, at this point Custer still believed the Indians' force to be 400 lodges and 1,500 warriors.

9 HUNTING PARTY GONE WRONG

May 23, 1876 • East Rosebud River Access, Forsyth

On the morning of May 23, 1876 three hunters from the Montana Column were ambushed by Lakota along the bluffs along the Yellowstone's north side. All three were killed in a short, intense fight. The men were hunting without permission, although Col. Gibbon allowed the practice.

10 CAPTAIN CLIFFORD'S BOATS

May 15, 1876 • West Rosebud River Access, Forsyth

When the Montana Column arrived at the abandoned Fort Pease in mid-April, 1876, Col. Gibbon found several rowboats, which were made serviceable. Despite high spring runoff, the boats proved useful for scouting parties and courier missions down the Yellowstone River.

11 RAILROAD SURVEY

Summer of 1873 • Marcyes Park, Forsyth

During the early 1870s the Northern Pacific Railroad began surveying along the north side of the Yellowstone River. The still-powerful Lakota controlled the land south of the river. As result, the survey crews required military protection each summer. Custer skirmished with the Lakota on two occasions in August, 1873.

12 LITTLE PORCUPINE CREEK CAMPSITE

Mid-May, 1876 • Hwy. 12 – 1 mile NW of Forsyth

Following a downpour of rain and hail, the Montana Column spent five days at this campsite, waiting for roads to dry. It was near this site that Lt. Bradley's scouting across the Yellowstone originated along with Gibbon's unsuccessful attempt to cross the river during high spring runoff.

13 TERRY AND GIBBON

Late June, 1876 • Lion's Springs, Hwy. 10 – 1 mile W of Forsyth

The Montana Column marched up the Yellowstone, beginning June 21, 1876. On June 26, command received word of Custer's defeat. As the Column approached the battlefield area, the villages dispersed south toward the Bighorn Mountains. On June 27 the Column reached the Little Bighorn Battlefield.


NATHAN SATRAN

14 FORT PEASE

1875-76 • Central Park, Hysham

Fort Pease was established in June of 1875, a few miles below the mouth of the Bighorn River by Bozeman businessmen seeking trade with the Crow tribe. The fort, which was built in favored tribal hunting grounds, was under attack by Lakota warriors much of the winter of 1875-76. It was abandoned in March 1876 but used as a staging area over the following weeks.

15 PEASE BOTTOM FIGHT

August 11, 1873 • Howery Island, Hysham

A series of skirmishes between Custer and the Lakota occurred along the Yellowstone River during the summer of 1873 when the 7th Cavalry was assigned to protect the Northern Pacific Railroad surveyors. The result of these skirmishes – the warriors fleeing in the face of a cavalry attack – was the basis for assumption with fatal consequences three years later.

16 TULLOCK'S CREEK

June 25, 1876 • Bighorn Post Office, Bighorn

As late at mid-June, 1876, the military considered Tullock's Creek as a possible location for the big Indian village. On June 25, Gen. Terry led his command a few miles up Tullock's Creek before turning southwest and slowly crossing extremely rough country to the Bighorn River. Terry's command arrived at the confluence of the Little Bighorn on June 26, as planned.

17 CROSSING THE YELLOWSTONE

April, 1876 • Junction City Memorial Park, Custer

As the Montana Column marched down the south side of the Yellowstone River, Col. Gibbon's most immediate concern was crossing the river to the north before reaching the Bighorn River. His command was ordered to patrol the Bighorn on down to the Powder River, preventing any movement to the north.

18 CAPTAIN BALL'S SCOUT

April, 1876 • General Custer Bighorn River Access – Hwy. 47, N. of Hardin

In April of 1876, Capt. Ball was ordered to scout along the Bighorn River as far south as the ruins of Fort C.F. Smith. The scouting party found no current signs of Indians but did stop and observe an area along the Little Bighorn that would eventually serve as a base for over 1,000 Lakota and N. Cheyenne lodges.


NATHAN SATRAN

19 GRANT MARSH

1876 • Grant Marsh Bighorn River Access – Hwy. 47, N. of Hardin

The steamboat, *Far West*, piloted by Capt. Grant Marsh, was one of several steamboats chartered by the U.S. government to support the 1876 military campaign. In the aftermath of the Battle of Little Bighorn, Capt. Marsh made a record run down the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers carrying the battle's wounded along with news of Custer's defeat to a stunned nation.


NPS PHOTO BRANDON BLACKBURN

20 LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT

Interstate 90/Frontage Road • Crow Agency, MT

Situated on a high ridge above the Little Bighorn River, the very soil seeps with intense passion from the soldiers who stoically followed orders and the warriors who gave their all to save their people's nomadic way of life. Listen to the story from a park ranger, a tour guide or in a private telling while standing within the circular Indian Memorial.

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