

Stepping Out of Bounds Crazy Horse to Billings and Beyond

Lynette Reagan-20th AVA Biennial Convention Committee Member

Seems like we just flipped the calendar for 2016 and already we are planning for 2017! Yes we are—making plans for the 20th AVA Biennial Convention in Billings, Montana. The main convention activities will be in Billings, but the travel to and from Billings offers trails, history and beautiful scenery.

We are encouraging travelers to begin their Convention adventure at the Crazy Horse event, June 3-4. This is NOT a convention event, but it certainly is the perfect way to begin your travels with the 10K trail up to the monument, meeting the many other walkers (usually over 10,000 walkers) and enjoying the beautiful countryside in South Dakota.

When you leave Crazy Horse, the first convention event on Monday will be 191 miles west in Buffalo, Wyoming. Yes, we go to Wyoming and then into Montana—easy-peasy! This trail parallels Clear Creek along rolling trails with small rock gardens and trees that smell like butterscotch. You will pass an old rundown historic power plant and head into the mountains where the trail turns around at one of the other trail heads.

The second convention event on Tuesday is 92 miles from Buffalo at Crow Agency, Montana, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. This national monument memorializes the site of the Battle of the Little Bighorn which took place on June 25-26, 1876 between the US Seventh Cavalry Regiment led by Lt Col George Custer and the Sioux and Cheyenne under the political and spiritual leadership of Sitting Bull.

After the historic battlefield experience, we will drive to Billings, Montana 75 miles away. Get ready for three days of convention activities (fun, fitness and friendship) with three trails in and around Billings! The reservation line is open now open at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center. Their telephone number is 406-248-7151, or you can make your reservation online at <http://billingshotel.net>. Use **AVA617** promo code to get the convention rate. The Convention activities will be Wednesday evening, Thursday and Friday.



The Billings events will include:

* Brewery Walking Tour – Sip and nosh your way along the state’s only Brewery Walking Tour. The downtown loop is an easy walk and includes potential stops at six different breweries and one micro-distillery. “The brewery tour is a snapshot of what Billings has to offer: locally made products, authentic Montanan cuisine, and cultural attractions showcasing our history,” says Billings native Kelly McCandless, leisure sales manager for Billings’ Convention and Visitors Bureau. As part of the President's Walk on Thursday evening we will be going past many of the pubs that make up the tour. Partaking is optional.

*One of the Billings trails will be along the Yellowstone River, the longest free-flowing river in the United States. As the name implies, The Yellowstone River goes through Yellowstone National Park as well as Billings. The river offers many different views of itself, from calm, tranquil, slow moving water to rushing rapids.

*Our third event will be a stretch of trail on Swords Rimrock Trail high over the city along the limestone bluffs. There are fantastic views of the mountains beyond. On a clear day, five mountain ranges are visible. Billings has 39 city parks and more than 500 geocache treasures in the city alone.

After the convention festivities are complete, the next stop will be Red Lodge, Montana, 61 miles away. This beautiful little town lends itself to a scenic walk in town, around the upper rim and along the River. They have a beautiful historic district, lots of little shops and restaurants to enjoy along the trail. While visiting and designing the walk, we saw one of the town moose relaxing in the field and we had to wait for the wild turkeys to move along in front of us.

Leaving Red Lodge, your last Convention event will be 63 miles away in Cody, Wyoming. In Cody, you will be able to enjoy five museums in one—The Buffalo Bill Museum! Tracing its

roots to 1917, the Buffalo Bill Museum is the flagship museum of the Buffalo Bill Center of the West. First opening its doors to the public in 1927 in a log cabin in downtown Cody—Buffalo Bill Museum’s focus is on the life and times of William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody (1846 – 1917), the noted guide, scout, frontiersman, showman, actor, entrepreneur, town founder, and American icon.

That is a quick summary of where the events for the 20th AVA Biennial Convention will be and the distances between the cities. Come join us for this awesome western adventure! Go to the convention website (<http://2017AVAConvention.org>) for more details and convention information.