

# Northern Montana and Idaho Resorts

## Your own private Montana/Idaho

BY PEPPER RODRIGUEZ

We all know that a voyage of a thousand miles begins with a simple step. So, how about a road trip of 2,551 kilometres? Well, as I found out, it begins with agreeing to an assignment that took me from Calgary clear thru the vast, rolling plains of north Montana, across the Continental Divide to the evergreen forests and lakes of northern Idaho.

It is fertile land for resorts and vacation properties, with the wide range of four-season outdoor recreational opportunities: from whitewater rafting, canoeing, kayaking and water skiing, not to mention fly fishing along its winding rivers and placid lakes, to hiking, horseback riding, ATV adventures and just plain old relaxing among its forested hillsides and grasslands.

These two northern states near the border with Canada have some very established resort communities like Coeur D'Alene in northern Idaho and Whitefish and Kalispell in northern Montana. But the towns that interested me were the ones that have flown largely under the radar, and these include Belt and Bigfork in Montana and Sandpoint in Idaho, where you can still get the full flavour and character of the area's culture without missing the adventure.

### THE RANCHES AT BELT CREEK

» [www.theranchesatbeltcreek.com](http://www.theranchesatbeltcreek.com)

The pioneering spirit of Big Sky Country is alive and well at The Ranches at Belt Creek, the only resort community of its kind in the Great Falls area of northern Montana. A luxurious compound of high-end log cabins that lets owners enjoy the rugged handsomeness of the rolling prairie grassland that surrounds it.

If ever there was a small town that personified "Home On the Range," then it's got to be Belt. It is where the deer and the antelope play, and much more, which is why the Ranches is the perfect staging base for hunting or fishing expeditions.

It's 880 acres with Belt Creek running through its gently rolling prairies, it is a land tailor-made for enjoying the great outdoors. But what makes life at the Ranches even more appealing is the terrific concierge service that they offer buyers and visitors.

"Our five star concierge service makes travel, recreation and living easy at Belt Creek. Regardless of your level of experience, we can arrange for a great day hiking, horseback riding, rafting, fishing, hunting, skiing,



Dover Bay



The Ranches at Belt Creek

snowmobiling or golf. We can also provide professional guides, qualified instructors, as well as all necessary equipment, horses or transportation if requested," says the Ranches' Cathy Bessette.

### MARINA CAY

» [www.marinacay.com](http://www.marinacay.com)

Lakeside living has never been more luxurious than at the Marina Cay Estates in Bigfork, Montana, where days seem to just drift by in a wave of fun and pleasure.



Marina Cay Estates

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Marina Cay is a unique northern Montana resort complex, located on Bigfork Bay and overlooking scenic Flathead Lake, the largest body of water east of the Mississippi. It has a very family-friendly vibe with amenities and recreational opportunities that guarantee fun for all ages.

Its Marina Cay Estates portion is positioned as high end, top quality condominiums and townhomes aimed squarely at the upper end of the market. "Although we've had fewer sales because of the soft market, we've been able to keep our prices as we continue to focus on offering the best quality homes out there," says managing director, Fred Sterhan.

Marina Cay Estates offers resort condominiums at full and fractional ownership for single-level and townhome-style units. Buyers can choose from 14 different floor plans with sizes ranging from 1,220 square-feet to 2,600 square-feet. Prices for full ownership start at \$649,000 while fractionals are available from \$199,000.

#### DOVER BAY

» [www.doverbayidaho.com](http://www.doverbayidaho.com)

Living by the lake just seems so wistful, tranquility surrounds you and nature is all around. This spirit of equanimity is what Dover Bay is all about. Just minutes away from Sandpoint, Idaho, Dover Bay can take you miles away from the busy city life. Touted to be the best-

designed residential waterfront community in the whole state, Dover Bay simply delivers on this promise.

The brainchild of Ralph Sletager, Dover Bay encompasses 285 acres of forest, lakes, open meadows and elevated sites, with more than 18,000 feet of waterfront bordering Idaho's scenic Lake Pend Oreille.

Part of what makes Dover Bay special is that it isn't just a resort meant for the enjoyment of an exclusive few, but something the whole community can enjoy. "There wasn't a lot of public access on the lake, now Dover Bay allows everyone to be able to use the boat launch, marina, market and café," says Alex Sletager, Dover Bay's operations manager.

Dover Bay certainly has something for everyone with 11 different neighborhoods, that at build out will have some 500 homes. Condos, cabins, bungalows, cottages in a wide range of architectural styles befitting the natural landscape are already available for ownership and some rentals as well.

At Dover Bay you can expect luxury amenities in a waterfront neighborhood with outdoor recreation for each season. The city of Sandpoint is just one and a half mile away, which you can reach by car, through a winding bike path or by boat from its full-service, 274-slip marina. ■