Great Falls, Montana, was founded in 1863 to become a transportation hub to exploit the hydroelectric power of the Missouri River’s waterfalls for which the city was named. The Missouri drops over 500 feet in a series of rapids and 5 waterfalls as it cuts through the city. Lewis and Clark were the first known white explorers to visit this area in 1805, and their expedition took nearly a month to portage around the falls.

Great Falls offers many opportunities for cultural experiences. The Charles M. Russell Museum features the work of famed western artist and Great Falls resident Charles M. Russell; the work of other western artists; the Browning Firearms Collection; and The Bison: American Icon, Heart of Plains Indian Culture exhibit. Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art has indoor and outdoor exhibits of contemporary art with a focus on local artists. The Children’s Museum of Montana provides educational opportunities that feature hands-on exhibits. The History Museum explores the history of Cascade County and offers temporary exhibitions on topics ranging from Montana history to local art. The Ursuline Center’s Heritage Museum displays a treasury of Native American artifacts, antique furnishings, and musical instruments and presents the history of the Ursuline Sisters and their role in Montana’s history. Galerie Trinitas is a religious art museum on the University of Great Falls Campus and features the works of Sister Mary Trinitas Morin, a former art professor.

The 341st Space Wing (Malmstrom) Museum focuses on the history of Montana’s only Air Force Base. Montana Veterans Memorial honors and recognizes veterans from all branches of U.S. military service.

Located in the downtown area, the Mansfield Center at the Civic Center is a major venue for cultural events in this region. The Mansfield Center is home to the Great Falls Symphony; orchestra, adult and youth choirs, Great Falls Community Concerts, ballet, Youth Orchestra, the Broadway Series, The Russell Exhibition and Sale (a three-day western art experience), comedians, and other entertainers.

Centene Stadium hosts the Symphony’s Summer Pops concerts and other concerts. The Four Seasons Arena at Montana ExpoPark hosts a variety of events and concerts as well as the Montana State Fair, which includes nightly shows and free entertainment in the park.

The Great Falls Municipal Band performs summertime concerts in the Gibson Park Bandshell.

**Neighborhoods**

Downtown Great Falls contains a historic residential district of homes built between the late 19th and early 20th centuries in styles that include American foursquare, Greek Revival, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival. In addition, some historic buildings have been converted into mixed use condominiums and apartments on upper levels of street-level commercial buildings.

The Fox Farm on the southwest side was developed in many stages and consists of several subdivisions. Most of the homes were built during the 1950s through the 1970s in many architectural styles that range from single-level, split-level, and tri-level homes to custom-built homes. Newer subdivisions were built within the last 10 years. The private Meadowlark Country Club and 18-hole golf course lies along the eastern boundary of Fox Farm along the Missouri River.

Most newer developments have been or are planned for the northwestern side of Great Falls. Some segments of the Skyline neighborhood were built on the hillside beginning in the 1960s and other areas were built in the 1990s. Housing styles consist primarily of ranch-style homes, but some two-story styles are available. The West Ridge development is located at the top of the hill on the next flat. Construction of this neighborhood began in the 2000s and is ongoing. Homes are a mix of single-story and two-story styles. Another planned development is Thaniel Division, where construction has recently begun.

**Parks and Recreation**

Great Falls has 57 developed parks and 9 undeveloped parks, a community recreation center, 18-hole municipal golf courses, outdoor swimming pools, and basketball and tennis courts. The city also maintains the Electric City Water Park, Morony Natatorium (indoor pool), Warden Park Frisbee Golf Course, and Riverside Railyard Skateboard Park. Great Falls IcePlex is the community’s indoor ice rink.

Gibson Park offers the most amenities and features live music during summer months at the Bandshell. The park is home to the Historic Vinegar Jones Cabin (the city’s only building remaining from the first year of the original town site). Gibson Glass, 3 commemorative statues, flower gardens, a walking path, playground equipment, basketball courts, and a pond for outdoor skating in winter months.

Elk’s Riverside Park borders the Missouri River. Park amenities include the Riverside Railyard, play equipment, tennis courts, horseshoe pits, and open space. This park connects to the River’s Edge Trail, which extends nearly 60 miles on both sides of the Missouri River and includes paved and dirt segments. Located adjacent to Great Falls, Giant Springs State Park is the largest fresh water springs in the United States. The park provides opportunities for bicycling, birdwatching, fishing, hiking, and wildlife viewing.

First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park preserves the archaeological site where Native Americans stampeded buffalo over the cliff for at least a thousand years before Lewis and Clark’s expedition. The site consists of a mile-long sandstone cliff with remnants of drive lines at the top and 18 feet of compacted buffalo remains below. The park has an interpretive trail and a Visitor Center with buffalo culture exhibits, a storytelling circle, an outdoor amphitheater, and traditional game fields.

The nearby Lewis and Clark National Forest spreads across 13 counties and 7 mountain ranges, with recreational amenities that include scenic drives, hiking, off-highway vehicle riding, horseback riding, camping, snowshoeing, skiing, snowmobiling, hunting, and fishing. The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center, which is located in Great Falls, portrays the daily experiences of the expedition in 1805 and the environment and native peoples of the area.

The Great Falls is home to the Voyagers (baseball team) and also to the Montana Pro Rodeo Circuit Finals.

**Education**

Great Falls Public Schools District educates more than 10,200 students in 15 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, 2 high schools and an alternative high school.

Higher education is available at the University of Great Falls, a Catholic university that offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

Great Falls College Montana State University offers associate degrees and certificates in business, health care, technology; and several trades, as well as transfer programs to other universities.

**Health Care**

Great Falls is served by the following hospitals:

- Benefis Health System: 530 licensed beds (293 acute care, 146 beds in long-term care, 71 in assisted living, and 2 beds at Peace Hospice of Montana)
- Great Falls Clinic Medical Center: 20 licensed acute care beds

**City Stats 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Population</td>
<td>59,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Statistical Area Population</td>
<td>82,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita personal income, Great Falls, MT, USA</td>
<td>$41,163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>