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Get Your Adventure on in Alberton

by Megan Hill

“Here we go!” our guide shouted over the din of a class III rapids. We were headed directly into the thrashing, broiling heart of the Clark Fork River with only a river rescue board—a sort of beefed-up boogie board used in rescue operations—separating us from the action. We’d kick our way through the gullet of legendary waves with foreboding names like Boateater and Fang. The boards often catapulted us over the biggest waves, leaving us momentarily airborne before smacking back down into the water, breathless and laughing.

Just a few minutes earlier, we’d donned wet suits, flippers, neoprene booties, and helmets, and leapt into the frigid river for a half-day “riverboarding” trip with Montana River Guides. It’s a rare chance to meet the rapids head on—literally. The sport, which isn’t offered by your average guiding outfit, flings you face-first down the same rapids tackled by much larger and sturdier whitewater rafts and kayaks. And it’s the thrill of a lifetime.

Montana River Guides is based out of the small town of Alberton, wedged in the pink-walled Alberton Gorge carved by the Clark Fork just 30 minutes west of Missoula. The main draw

is the water. Whether you’re paddling, riverboarding, standup paddle boarding, flyfishing or just taking a dip on a scorching summer day, Alberton has you covered.

Montana River Guides offers the aforementioned paddling trips, while companies Double Up Outfitters and Fishes Eddy O organize guided flyfishing trips in the area. A perfect end to a day on the river is a giant burger, a pint of cold Montana beer and live music at the rustic River Edge Resort, a few steps from the Clark Fork.

You won’t be here long before you notice the ever-present blaring of the train; after all, Alberton was founded as a railroad town. This important aspect of the area’s history is on display at the Alberton Railroad Museum and celebrated at the annual Railroad Day, held on the third Saturday in July. The day kicks off with a pancake breakfast followed by a schedule of live music, face painting, games and lots of family-friendly fun. There are also numerous food and craft vendors set up throughout the festival.

For more information about getting your adventure on in Alberton, go to glaciermt.com/Alberton or albertonmontana.com. 🌊