



Canine Kicks!

by: CJ Adams

After driving a short distance down the legendary road connecting Big Sky to Ennis, I reach the iron gate restricting access to the private wilderness of the Moonlight Basin Ranch. I veer next to the intercom, preparing to contact security to grant me access, when a young couple in a new Audi open the gate and pull through. As they drive by and wave, I realize I have a decision to make; contact security or rally through the gate Renegade style! I pause momentarily, opting for the nonconformist route and head for the gate.

While directly underneath, the black iron gate began to descend as I realize my momentary hesitation had led to the impending doom I currently face. I crush the accelerator, propelling me through unscathed as the menacing gate slams close.

Once inside, I drive past the Spirit of the North team who are busy preparing for my upcoming adventure. I continued on, eager to explore this area few have seen. After spending a short time taking in the breathtaking scenery, I realize the time and began to

make my way back to the pack.

Jim, head of Spirit of the North Dog Sled Adventures, greets me immediately. He introduces his son JJ and the rest of the crew, his rustic charm emanating as he recounts the history of dog sleds. The guests, ranging from a 2 year old Scottish boy to a couple in their 60's, begin to arrive as the sleds are readied. While Jim explains to us how to operate the sleds, the rest of the crew begins to secure the ganglines and picketlines. Seeing this, over one hundred dogs erupt in a deafening chorus of Bark and Howl. They have obviously done this before and live only to pull the sled another day.

Suddenly Jim grabs one of the dogs by its harness, lifting its front paws from the ground, instructing us on how to secure our dogs to our sleds. Excited, we scramble to fasten our teams, adrenaline rushing through our veins as the dogs keep all lines taught, struggling to dart across the valley.

The well-bred Huskies, some mixed with bloodhounds for power, others with Greyhounds for speed, spot the deer across the meadow. They instantly break from the rest of the sleds, racing across the valley in pursuit of the escaping deer and repeatedly smashing the sled and I against rocks and trees along the way. As the deer gracefully bounds from one rock ledge to the next, my pulse quickens as the dogs race toward the chasm between. Thoughts of plummeting with the sled, hundreds of feet to the granite floor below, begin to fill my head as I await the failed attempt to cross the crevasse.

"No Mr. Adams, I can assure you that will never happen. All our dogs are very well trained and they don't react to wildlife or any other distractions." Jim says laughingly, snapping me out of my fantasy. "These ravenous beasts!" I think as I man my sled "Who is to say what thoughts race through their primitive minds!"



"Alright" yells the first team, releasing the brake on the sled as the dogs bolt down the trail in a flash. The second team follows closely behind, then the third, the fourth, and now me. I release the brake and the dogs lunge forward, nearly ejecting me from the back of my sled.

As we race along the trail, I long to be able to capture and retain the stunning vista views of Moonlight Basin Ranch for eternity. All at once the sleds come to a halt in front of me as the teams assemble for a snack break. After devouring our cookies and coco, we make our way back to our sleds, the occasional guest deviating from the trail and tumbling into feet of fresh powder. We remount our sleds, yell "Alright!" and are on our way back.

This half day, eight-mile loop, sled dog adventure is a one of a kind opportunity and a great experience for all ages. You can take advantage of the instruction, assembling and operating your own team, or just show up, sit in the sled and enjoy the ride. So, before the snow disappears for another year, call Spirit of the North at 406-995-3424 or visit HuskyPower.com to arrange this unforgettable adventure for you, your family and friends!

Visit BozemanPassage.com for the complete Outdoor Recreation Guide and check back frequently for more adventures to Upgrade Your Outdoor Portfolio!

