

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO: GLACIER NATIONAL PARK, MONTANA



There's a reason Glacier National Park is on practically every Top 10 list involving national parks ever created: this place is amazing. But it's even more amazing when you experience it as the locals do. Ready to plan your trip with a guide from the inside? Let us help. We are Glacier Guides and Montana Raft, and since 1983, we've been your Glacier National Park experts.

Glacier Guides and Montana Raft | Glacier Guides Lodge | Glacier Guides Guest House
www.glacierguides.com | 406-387-5555 | info@glacierguides.com



TOP TEN ADVENTURES IN AND AROUND GLACIER NATIONAL PARK



#1 HIKING OR BACKPACKING

We could never choose just one hike. But with 734 miles of hiking trails, you're sure to find the trail that suits your group's abilities and desires. Glacier Guides was chosen by the National Park Service as the exclusive backpacking guide service in Glacier National Park. Join us for a half, whole, or multiple day hiking experience. Scheduled trips leave daily.



#2 WHITEWATER RAFTING OR FLOATING

The most refreshing way to see Glacier National Park? From the rivers that make up its borders, the North and Middle Forks of the Flathead, a Wild and Scenic River. From lazy floats to intense whitewater rapids, there's something for kids, grandparents, and adrenaline junkies, too. Call Glacier Guides and Montana Raft to set up your perfect paddling adventure! We rent boats, inflatable kayaks, stand up paddleboards, zayaks, and river gear, too.



#3 INTERPRETIVE BOAT TOUR

Kids and adults alike will be blown away by the views of Glacier National Park from the middle of one of its beautiful lakes. Glacier Park Boat Co.'s historic boats and their captains' fascinating commentary on geologic, anthropologic, and historic aspects of the park make this an experience we recommend to everyone. Many Glacier, St. Mary, Two Medicine, and Lake McDonald area launches.



#4 BIKING ON THE GOING-TO-THE-SUN ROAD

We offer interpretive, guided biking on the Going to the Sun Road in the spring, before the iconic road opens to vehicle traffic. However, even after the road opens, family friendly biking opportunities in Glacier are everywhere. Vacation can be the perfect time to teach your kids to bike. You have time, they have time, the pace of your crazy life is on slow vacay mode, and there is probably ice cream available every half mile or so. Ride the Gateway to Glacier Trail directly into Glacier National Park from the Glacier Guides and Montana Raft office. We rent bikes and carriers too!



#5 HORSEBACK RIDING

Horseback trail rides for 1 hour, 2 hours, half and full days are available at Apgar, Lake McDonald, Many Glacier, and West Glacier through Swan Mountain Outfitters. There is a long standing history of horseback riding in and around Glacier Park. The first park visitors arrived via the Great Northern Railroad and then spent days, and sometimes even weeks, touring the park. They camped along the way at tent camps or backcountry chalets that were set approximately one day's horseback ride apart from each other. You and your kids will love this classic Montana experience!



#6 FLY FISHING

The fly fishing in Montana really is as fabulous as you've heard. Whether you're an expert or a novice, we'd love to help you catch a fish on the incredible Wild and Scenic Flathead River. We offer top notch guides and gear, and Fly Fishing School, too.



#7 RENTING A ROW BOAT, CANOE, PADDLEBOARD OR KAYAK

At Glacier Guides and Montana Raft, we rent paddleboards, inflatable kayaks, and other river gear. We can recommend other companies who rent trustworthy vessels, too!



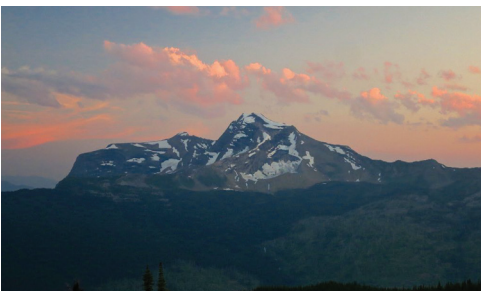
#8 CROWN OF THE CONTINENT DISCOVERY CENTER

There is something for everyone here -- you can check out the beautiful interpretive center and learn more about Glacier National Park. You can order up a perfectly pulled shot of espresso or ask for a double shot of whiskey. The gift shop here pulls together the most beautiful artists in the valley - if you're looking for Montana Made treasures, look no further. There's delicious, locally made Sweet Peaks ice cream ... and a free petting zoo for your kids! Or your goat loving great-aunt, who knows? You can rent a mo-ped or go for a horseback ride, too.



#9 OVERNIGHT ADVENTURES

If you like to hike but don't want to carry a pack, you should book a Hut Hike with Glacier Guides and Montana Raft. Reachable only by trail, Granite Park and Sperry Chalets are both National Historic Landmarks constructed by the Great Northern Railway. Sperry offers a traditional full service stay, while Granite Park currently operates as a self service hiker hostel. Not into backpacking or hiking to a chalet? Overnight rafting is for you! You can enjoy Montana's star studded skies without having to carry a thing. It's a National Historic Place, National Historic Landmark, and Historic Civil Engineering Landmark that you don't want to miss. Give us a call to set up your overnight adventure! 406-387-5555



#10 DRIVE THE GOING-TO-THE-SUN ROAD

Pack a picnic and your camera, and plan to leave early in the morning or early in the evening. That timing will allow you to enjoy less traffic, optimal wildlife viewing, and the best light for photography. Highlights of the road include Bird Woman Falls, Weeping Hall, Hidden Lake trail from Logan Pass, Jackson Glacier Overlook, and Sunrift Gorge.

If you're looking for ideas outside of the West Glacier area, check out our website or give us a call - as Glacier National Park area experts, we love helping you create the perfect trip. 406-387-5555

YOU'VE CHOSEN YOUR ADVENTURE: HERE'S YOUR PACKING LIST

WEATHER

It's not always snowing here! But it can in any month of the year.

Newsflash - Glacier National Park is located in the mountains of Northwest Montana. In fact, we're so northwest that we share a border with Canada! And actually, that border delineates Glacier National Park in the U.S., and Waterton National Park in Canada. Together, the two parks are designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and collectively called Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park.

Anyways, our point is that we're located in mountains bordering Canada. That means the weather here is variable, and although our summers can be incredibly warm and sunny, snow is ALWAYS a possibility here! So, pack accordingly.

TEMPERATURE	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Avg Max Temp °F	28.5°	34.7°	41.9°	52.9°	69.1°	77.2°	80.2°	78.1°	67.6°	52.7°	37.3°	30°
Avg Min Temp °F	14.9°	18.8°	22.9°	29.7°	37.1°	43.7°	47.2°	46.3°	38.8°	31.8°	24.9°	18.4°



PRECIPITATION	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Avg Precipitation Amount	3.4"	2.37"	1.86"	1.81"	2.57"	3.28"	1.75"	1.64"	2.06"	2.33"	3.1"	3.3"
Average # of Days with Precipitation	17	13	13	11	13	13	9	9	9	11	15	17
Average Snowfall	39.6"	22.5"	14.5"	3.5"	0.4"	0.2"	0"	0"	0.1"	2"	17.2"	37.5"



TOP TEN ESSENTIALS FOR GLACIER NATIONAL PARK ADVENTURES

One of Montana's many quirks is that there really aren't any rules here. Anywhere you go, you can walk in the door in your dusty boots or your wet sandals and you'll be welcomed. You don't need anything fancy out here. Bring your open mind and prepare for the adventure of your life!



Reminder: Glacier is part of the Glacier-Waterton International Peace Park -- if you want to see the Canadian side of the park, be sure to pack your passport!

- ☐ **1** - Layers! Synthetic base layers, fleece, rain jacket and pants, gloves, and a warm hat.
- ☐ **2** - Sunglasses, sun hat, sunscreen.
- ☐ **3** - Your itinerary, downloaded or printed. And a map. Cell service is unavailable in many areas of the park. Prepare accordingly.
- ☐ **4** - Water bottle and coffee cup. Leave no trace in everything that you do.
- ☐ **5** - Hiking boots and river sandals are the only shoes you'll need.
- ☐ **6** - Camera for capturing your adventures. Battery powered cell charger if you rely on your phone as your camera.
- ☐ **7** - Bear spray. It works. You can't carry it onto a plane. You can buy it almost everywhere in our corner of the world, including at our outdoor store.
- ☐ **8** - Long or zipoff pants, for cool mornings and horseback rides.
- ☐ **9** - Daypack, to comfortably carry all of the above in.
- ☐ **10** - A laid back attitude. You're on vacation. Inhale. Exhale. Montanahhhhhhhh.

Pro Tip: You can buy or rent almost everything on this list at the Glacier Guides and Montana Raft office! From baby backpack carriers to bear spray to base layers, we've got you covered.



APRÈS ADVENTURE: WHERE TO EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY!

BEST APRÈS WITHIN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK



WEST SIDE

Lake McDonald Lodge - order a Montana microbrew and their locally sourced charcuterie plate in the charming bar, then wander out to the back porch and make yourself at home while you gaze at Lake McDonald, the largest lake in the park.

EAST SIDE

Many Glacier Hotel Bar's Huckleberry Margarita or Huckleberry Lemonade -- order at the bar, walk your drink out to The Porch. Turn your phone off and gaze at Swiftcurrent Lake, and the incredible glaciated mountains and valleys of the Many Glacier valley. Are you in Switzerland or the U.S.? It can be hard to be sure at times. If you're looking for fine dining, it's hard to top the entrees or the views from the historic, meticulously restored Many Glacier Hotel Dining Room.

BEST APRÈS JUST OUTSIDE OF GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

WEST SIDE

Glacier Distilling - Coram - With more than 20 small batch spirits on their shelves, Glacier Distilling Company provides a unique experience into the world of distilling. Visitors can customize tasting flights to sample the award winning spirits straight, or sip delicious craft cocktails on the outdoor patio. Tastings - Cocktails - Bottle Sales

Polebridge Mercantile - Polebridge - huckleberry bear claws, huckleberry macaroons, and chocolate chip cookies.

Belton Chalet - West Glacier - How do we choose between the Hawaiian Poke Bowl and the Montana Emu Tartare? We don't. We sit on the deck and order all that and more!

Northern Lights Saloon - Polebridge - Friday Night Pizza Night - artisanal pizza, locally sourced, bursting-with-freshness salad, and a fully stocked bar. Eat outside on the picnic tables. What else is there in life?

Wandering Gringo - West Glacier - awesome burritos in a quirky food truck.

Glacier Grill - Coram - affordable family dining, with great salads, burgers and pizza.

Freda's - West Glacier - after your whitewater rafting trip, grab a cold beer and sit on the front porch at the local watering hole.

Glacier Guides and Montana Raft Dinner Raft Trip - West Glacier - Whether you're looking for wild whitewater or a family friendly scenic float, ending it with dinner at Glacier Guides and Montana Raft makes the perfect dinner option. We have a wonderful kitchen staff that prepares all our food, including your choice of steak, chicken, salmon, or zucchini boats. We try to use locally sourced and organic items whenever possible, too.

EAST SIDE

Serranos - East Glacier - We dream of their chile rellenos - three green chiles stuffed with jack cheese, dipped in a batter, pan fried, covered with cheese and relleno sauce - in the off season. Great margaritas too!

Johnson's of St. Mary - St. Mary - schedule your east side pilgrimage for Sunday. Drive the Going-to-the-Sun Road and go for a hike. Arrive in St. Mary in time for homemade, fried-chicken-with-all-the-fixins-Sunday-dinner! Johnson's has been serving it up family style since 1957.

Glacier's Edge Cafe - Babb - great salads and burritos, but we're fondest of their breakfast burritos. You'll be ready for that big hike in Many Glacier, and probably have half of it leftover for lunch.

Two Sister's Cafe - near Babb - a real chef cooks here. Let her delight you with amazing nightly dinners, drinks, and desserts. Huckleberry heaven!



GLACIER PARK AREA: WHERE TO REST YOUR HEAD



Glacier Guides Lodge in West Glacier, Montana



MOST INCREDIBLE LODGING WITHIN THE PARK

TIE -- Granite Park Chalet and Sperry Chalet! - Experience the wonder of the star studded Glacier National Park skies without the heavy backpack or tent.

1st Runner Up: Many Glacier Hotel. Make your reservations at least one year in advance, and make them for lakeside. You won't regret it, as long as you remember to pack your earplugs.

MOST UNUSUAL YEAR ROUND

Isaak Walton - fantastic dining room for everyone, and for train enthusiasts, don't miss their cozy bar with train wreck memorabilia. You can even stay in a locomotive or caboose!

BEST FOR COUPLES

Glacier Guides Lodge - West Glacier - 12 room B+B style lodge - modern, clean, eco-conscious. Rated #1 on Trip Advisor. Delicious breakfast included with your stay!

MOST HISTORIC

The Belton Chalet - West Glacier - gorgeously restored and well appointed chalet and cabins. Don't miss their dining room!

BEST CAMPGROUND

West Glacier KOA - named the Best KOA Kampground in North America in 2017!

BEST FOR FAMILIES

Glacier Guides Guest House - Spacious house that sleeps 8-12 comfortably with all the amenities of home. Located 1.5 miles from the west entrance to Glacier National Park. Foosball table and big yard!

MOST UNUSUAL

North Fork Hostel - off grid living in locals' favorite off-the-grid Polebridge, Montana.

OPEN YEAR ROUND

Historic Tamarack Lodge - Hungry Horse - Convenient lodge and cabins open year round. Dining, drinks, and great coffee!

BEST CABIN RENTALS IN WEST GLACIER

Going to the Sun Chalets - located just a mile outside of West Glacier, these cabins are gorgeous. Several different options to accommodate parties of 2 to 11 people.

BEST CABIN RENTALS ON THE EAST SIDE

Park Cabin Co - located between Babb and St. Mary, at Duck Lake. Modern, spacious cabin lodging for couples and families.

BEST LAST MINUTE SOLUTION

The Reclusive Moose - quiet location, easy Flathead River and Polebridge access. Just a few minutes outside West Glacier.

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK RX: EXTEND YOUR VACATION

Got an extra day to spend near Glacier? Here's what we would do in Whitefish, Columbia Falls, Bigfork, and Kalispell.



WHITEFISH

Breakfast at [Loula's](#) for slap-yo-mama-good grits and a mouth watering lemon-raspberry stuffed French toast creation. Adventure at [Whitefish Mountain Resort](#) during the day -- go for a hike or check out their Alpine Slide and Aerial Adventure Park attractions. If you'd rather be biking, rent a bike from [Glacier Cyclery](#) or [Great Northern Cycles](#) and head on out to the [Whitefish Trail](#) or to [Whitefish Lake](#). On a hot day, swimming at City Beach and then ordering Mango Habanero Sorbet at lakeside [Sweet Peaks](#) ice cream shop will really hit the spot.

In the late afternoon, sample cold local beer at [Bonsai Brewing Co](#) or [Great Northern Brewing Co](#). If spirits are more your style, you can't miss [Spotted Bear Spirits'](#) handcrafted vodka, gin, and artisanal cocktails, like their limoncello-with-blueberry-and-sage-shrub based Rambling Blues.

In the evening, stop by [Tupelo Bar + Grill](#) for delectable small plates like Elk Meatloaf Sliders. If you're in the mood for classic bar fare, head straight to the locals' beloved [Great Northern Bar](#). The Northern, as it's called, is a full

bar with a great summer deck, ping pong, and is completely kid friendly till about 9pm. You can often catch live music at the Northern.

WHERE TO STAY

[Resort - The Lodge At Whitefish Lake](#) - Whitefish's only lodging with a AAA four diamond award. Amenities include spa, restaurant, boat dock, pool. Right on Whitefish Lake!

[Bed & Breakfast - The Garden Wall](#) - If you're looking for luxury and charm, and would also like to be within walking distance to downtown Whitefish, look no further than The Garden Wall!

[The Firebrand](#) - Urban sophistication and service combined with an atmosphere of adventure, in the heart of downtown Whitefish.



COLUMBIA FALLS

In Columbia Falls, start your day where the locals eat, with perfect americanos and pastries -- and hot breakfast, too! -- at [Montana Coffee Traders](#) or the delightful [Uptown Hearth](#). After breakfast, take advantage of Columbia Falls' ideal location for exploring the northeast corner of the Flathead Valley. Visit the [Hungry Horse Dam](#), go hiking in the [Flathead National Forest](#), or take a drive up the gorgeous North Fork Road to quirky locals' favorite [Polebridge](#). If it's golf or a relaxing spa afternoon you're looking for, be sure to book a time at [Meadowlake Resort](#).

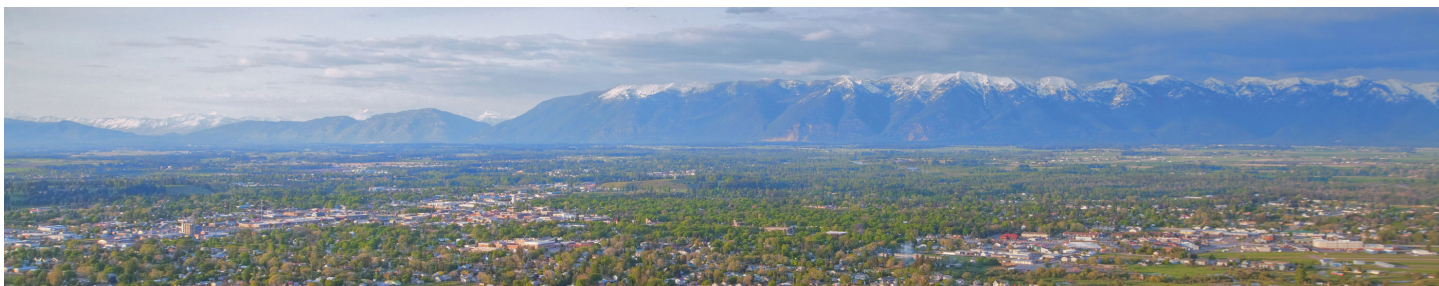
In the late afternoon, head back to Columbia Falls and check out [Backslope Brewery](#). You don't have to love craft beer to love this microbrewery - it's the local's favorite spot for ginger lemonade and bowls like this one: forbidden black rice, sesame kale, pan seared brussels, pepita, sweet potato. Yum! For finer dining, don't miss [Three Forks](#) for perfect steaks and unusual, locally and seasonally sourced dishes like pumpkin risotto. If it's pizza your

crowd is clamoring for, [North Fork Pizza](#) will hit the spot - although we love the Huckleberry Hot Wings as much as the pizzas! There's great bar food and outdoor cocktails across the street at the Gunsight Bar and Grill, too.

WHERE TO STAY

[Cedar Creek Lodge](#) - Brand new in 2016, the Lodge is next to a charming park for children and the local swimming pool. It's also right across the street from the locals' favorite Community Market, a can't miss activity if you're staying in Columbia Falls on a Thursday night.

[Travel Inn Glacier](#) - Charming economy lodging with Montana hospitality, just 11 miles west of Glacier!



KALISPELL

Get your morning started right with breakfast at local favorite [Sykes Diner](#) - their specials are wacky in the most wonderful way, and you can't beat the price on their 10 cent coffee! After breakfast, lace up your hiking boots and head for [Lone Pine State Park](#). With 7.5 miles of forested trails and breathtaking views of the entire Flathead Valley, Lone Pine offers an away-from-it-all experience just five minutes from town. The Visitor Center has exhibits about local wildlife including bears, wolves and raptors and provides creative outdoor classes for children. If it's biking you're after, [Foy's to Blacktail Trails](#) has a myriad of options for all abilities.

There are several great museums worth checking out in Kalispell, including the [Museum at Central School](#) and the [Hockaday Museum of Art](#). Later in the day, try the German inspired Two Ski Brewski Pilsner at [Kalispell Brewing](#)

[Co.](#), the sours at [Bias Brewing](#), the hefeweizens at [SunRift Beer Co.](#), or the saison at [Sacred Waters Brewing](#). For dinner, we love the trending-to-wards-upscale burgers at [Hop's](#) or the pizza and peanuts-on-the-floor down home ambience of [Moose's](#).

WHERE TO STAY

[Kalispell Grand Hotel](#) - Historic hotel in the heart of downtown Kalispell. Within walking distance to restaurants and local shopping. They serve delicious afternoon cookies too!



BIGFORK

If you're here for breakfast, don't miss the Huevos Montana at the [Pocketstone Cafe](#) -- and if you have kids in tow, don't miss their gummy-worm-festooned hot chocolate!

If you're looking for an easy day hike, check out the 2 mile long gravelled [Swan River Nature Trail](#), which looks down upon the Wild Mile of the Swan River. Head into town from Montana 35 on Grand Drive and keep going straight past Electric Avenue and the Bigfork Inn. The trailhead's at the top of the short hill. We also recommend going on a boat tour of Flathead Lake or renting a kayak to discover its many wonders -- and islands -- for yourself. Sitting on the deck at [The Raven](#), gazing at the expanse of incredible, sun dappled [Flathead Lake](#), you might forget you're even in Montana. You might feel like you're at the beach. But one bite of the Spring Bok Ranch Yak Meatloaf, topped with Flathead Cherry BBQ Sauce, will remind you that Montana will surprise and delight you at every turn.

In the mood for incredible sushi? Don't miss tiny, fabulous [Sake To Me](#) - be sure to make a reservation! Enjoying the Montana distillery and brewery tours? Be sure to try a Farmer's Daughter at the [Whistling Andy Distillery](#), featuring their signature cucumber gin, house rosemary infused lemonade, and fresh cucumbers. At [Flathead Lake Brewing](#), order a Centennial IPA, generously hopped with the Centennial variety in honor of the 100-year anniversary of Glacier National Park.

WHERE TO STAY

[Marina Cay Resort](#) - Within walking distance to downtown Bigfork, which boasts great restaurants and unique shops.



[Waterton, Alberta, Canada](#) - While visiting the Canadian side of Glacier Waterton International Peace Park, be sure to have afternoon tea at the iconic Prince of Wales Hotel. If you have kids along, check out the free splash park. While in Waterton, you have to hike up Bear's Hump for the incredible view back into the U.S.! Get any gear

you may have forgotten at Tamarack. For great pizza, definitely grab a slice at Pizza of Waterton.

[Where to Stay](#): charming Baypoint, on gorgeous Waterton Lake.

GETTING TO THE LAST BEST PLACE: GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

Glacier National Park is open 24 hours per day, 365 days a year, although some roads within the park close seasonally due to weather. Glacier is a huge park, encompassing over a million acres, and has many access points. West Glacier is the easiest of these points, with the most amenities available, and year round access.



TRANSPORTATION

BY AIR

Glacier Park International Airport - only 45 minutes from West Glacier! - is served by Delta/Sky West, United, Alaska Airlines/ Horizon Air and Allegiant.

BY TRAIN

Amtrak's Chicago to Seattle/Portland Empire Builder trans-American train makes stops twice daily in East Glacier, West Glacier, and Whitefish.

BY CAR

Driving Distances to West Glacier:

Seattle - 10 hours, 550 miles

Butte - 4 hours, 244 miles

Great Falls - 3 hours, 199 miles

Whitefish - 40 minutes, 30 miles

Spokane - 4 1/2 hours, 272 miles

Bozeman - 5 hours, 343 miles

Browning - 1 1/2 hours, 71 miles

Calgary - 6 hours, 277 miles

Missoula - 2 3/4 hours, 136 miles

Helena - 3 1/2 hours, 214 miles

Kalispell - 45 minutes, 33 miles

Banff - 6 hours, 310 miles



COMING FROM CANADA?

Click here for the most up to date border crossing information.

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