

Glacier Country MONTANA

Recreational Vehicle Itinerary A loop tour from Glacier Park International Airport

Day 1: Glacier National Park

Pick up your RV at J & L Rentals (one mile north of Glacier Park Int'l Airport) – and depending on your arrival time J & L will pick you up at the airport. You can provision your RV in Columbia Falls (3 miles/3 minutes from J & L Rentals) before heading into West Glacier, the gateway to Glacier National Park (18 miles/19 minutes).

Visit the small village of West Glacier before heading up the Going-to-the-Sun Road, truly one of the most scenic drives in the lower 48. From West Glacier you can experience a whitewater rafting trip or a guided fishing trip on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River -- one of the first in the country to become one of the “Wild and Scenic River” systems.

Travel to the grand Lake McDonald Lodge (8 miles/14 minutes from West Glacier) where you can hop aboard a Red Jammer Bus for a tour of the 52 mile Going-to-the-Sun Road. The historic soft-top tour buses were introduced in the 1930s and have since been recently restored and outfitted with propane engines as a gift from the Ford Motor Company. The Red Bus drivers provide an entertaining commentary about the park's flora and fauna, its history, geology and glaciology. RVers might consider participating in more than one of the many Red Bus Tours available, especially since the Going-to-the-Sun Road is closed to private vehicles longer than 21 feet or wider than 8 feet. The tours are reasonably priced and run from 2.5 – 9.5 hours. Pick-up available to area RV Parks and campgrounds.

You may choose to overnight at Lake McDonald Lodge, Apgar Campground or Sperry Campground in the park, or an outside RV park.

Try the Belton Chalet for a gourmet dinner in the lovely dining room; restored to its 1910 style as a railway hostelry.

IF YOU GO:

- J & L RV Rentals • (406)329-4934 • www.jandlrvrentals.com
- Going-to-the-Sun Road • (406) 888-7800 • www.nps.gov/glac/
- West Glacier • (406) 888-5403 • www.westglacier.com
- National Park Service • (406) 888-7800 • www.nps.gov/glac
- Glacier Park, Inc. • (406) 892-2525 • www.glacierparkinc.com
- Glacier Raft & Outdoor Center • (800) 235-6781 • www.glacierraftco.com

EATS:

- Lake McDonald Lodge • (406) 888-5431 • www.glacierparkinc.com
- Belton Chalet • (406) 888.5000 • www.beltonchalet.com

Day 2: East Glacier

From West Glacier travel the park's southern boundary along Highway 2. Visit Essex (27 miles/23 minutes from West Glacier), home to the historic Izaak Walton Inn that once housed winter snow removal crews for the Great Northern Railroad. Today, it's a lovely inn and restaurant enjoyed especially by railroad buffs. A few miles from Essex, watch for the Walton Goat Lick pull-off (.5 hour self-guided exhibit). Mountain goats graze and lick the

mineral-laden rock of an exposed river bank cliff at this site. And you will definitely want to check out the impressive architecture of the Glacier Park Lodge in East Glacier, the grand hotel built by the Great Northern Railway in 1912 (28 miles/25 minutes from Essex).

For lunch try Serrano's Mexican Restaurant Inn in East Glacier (a few blocks from the Glacier Park Lodge).

Stop by the St. Mary Visitor Center for a wealth of park information (31 miles/30 minutes from East Glacier). The east side of the park offers wonderful day hiking opportunities and interpretive boats tours; available at Two Medicine Lake, St. Mary Lake, and Swiftcurrent Lake at Many Glacier Hotel. You may enjoy combining a boat tour and a day hike to destinations like Grinnell Glacier. Stop by the activities desk in the Many Glacier Hotel for information (21 miles/30 minutes from St. Mary).

You will enjoy an overnight stay at Many Glacier Lodge, Many Glacier Campground, or nearby RV parks outside the park. Check out David Walburn's show at Many Glacier Lodge; a blend of wonderful music, scenic photography, and slides of historic paintings. They combine rich and colorful narratives that bring his stories to life. A truly unique Montana experience not to be missed!

IF YOU GO:

- Izaak Walton Inn • (406) 888-5700 • www.izaakwaltoninn.com
- National Park Service • (406) 888-7800 • www.nps.gov/glac
- Glacier Park, Inc. • (406) 892-2525 • www.glacierparkinc.com
- Glacier Park Boat Co. • (406) 257-2426 • www.glacierparkboats.com

EATS:

- Serrano's Mexican Restaurant • East Glacier • (406) 226-9392 • www.serranosmexican.com
- Park Cafe • St. Mary • (406) 732 4482 • www.parkcafe.us
- Johnson's Cafe • St. Mary • (406) 732-5565 • www.johnsonsofstmary.com
- Two Sisters Cafe • Babb • (406) 732-5535 • twosistersofmontana.com

You may add an additional day:

From Glacier Park drive north across the Canadian border to visit the Prince of Wales Hotel (43 miles/50 minutes from St. Mary), a rustic grand hotel built in 1927. The Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park was established in 1932; the first international Peace Park to commemorate the bonds of peace and friendship between the US and Canada. The conjoined park is now a United Nations World Heritage Site.

Climb aboard the wooden-hulled 1927 International for a boat tour down Waterton Lake, across the border by water, to Goat Haunt (2 hour cruise). Try "High Tea", British style, as you contemplate the beautiful setting -- overlooking Waterton Lake and Waterton townsite in Alberta.

IF YOU GO:

- Prince of Wales Hotel • (406) 892-2525 • www.glacierparkinc.com
- Waterton Inter-Nation Shoreline Cruise Co • (403) 859-2362 • www.watertoncruise.com

Day 3: Montana Scenic Loop

Head south on Highway 89 for a scenic drive down the east side of the magnificent Rocky Mountains, and discover what the Blackfeet call the "Backbone of the World". The alpine beauty begins to fade into a Montana of high plains, wide open spaces, and small towns that cater to locals and travelers curious enough to spend time in them.

The first stop is Browning (29 miles/29 minutes from St. Mary), the largest city of the 1.5 million-acre Blackfeet Indian Reservation. Exhibits of cultural artifacts at the Museum of the Plains Indian are among the finest in the West. The Blackfeet Heritage Center and Art Gallery and the Lodgepole Gallery and Tipi Village feature traditional and contemporary arts and crafts. If you visit during the second week in July, don't miss the dancing, drumming, rodeo action and tipis at North American Indian Days.

Stop in Bynum (58 miles/50 minutes from Browning) and search for dinosaur fossils the Two Medicine Dinosaur Center. Experience the small town charm of Choteau (14 miles/13 minutes from Bynum) and be sure to stop in at Allen's Manix Store in Augusta (26 miles/25 minutes from Choteau) before crossing back over the Rockies into Lincoln (82 miles/1.25 hours from Choteau). As you pass through Ovando (27 miles/25 minutes from Lincoln) check out Trixi's Antler Saloon for a look into the past.

IF YOU GO:

- Browning • (406) 338-2344 • www.browningmontana.com
- Montana Scenic Loop • (406) 466-5784 • www.montanascenicloop.com
- Two Medicine Dinosaur Center • Bynum • (800) 238-6873 • www.tmdinosaur.org
- Montana's Russell Country • (800) 527-5348 • russell.visitmt.com

EATS & SLEEPS:

- Montana Scenic Loop • (406) 466-5784 • www.montanascenicloop.com

Day 4: Seeley-Swan Valley

Continue along the Montana Scenic Loop until you arrive at the Clearwater Junction (9 miles/9 minutes from Ovando); travel north on Highway 83 through the Seeley/Swan Valley. Pinched between the east slope of the Mission Mountains and the west slope of the Swan Range, the Seeley-Swan is a series of pristine mountain lakes among dense stands of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and larch.

Experience Alpine Artisans' Tour of the Arts, a unique, self-guided tour of artist studios and galleries. The tour leads you on an enchanted journey where you'll have the opportunity to meet artists and watch them immersed in their passion. Download a printable version of the for the Artists' Studios, Galleries and Cultural Museums, their contact information and driving directions.

Your final destination today is Bigfork (74 miles/65 minutes from Seeley Lake), located on the northern shores of Flathead Lake -- the largest natural freshwater lake west of the Mississippi. This quaint Western village was chosen as "One of the 50 Great Towns of the West," designated as "One of the 100 Best Small Art Towns of the Nation," and was listed in National Geographic's Guide to Small Town Escapes, which is no surprise given its gourmet restaurants, fun shops, local character, and beautiful natural surroundings.

You may enjoy a Naturalist Hike along the Swan River Nature Trail, a level trail that follows the "wild mile" on the Swan River. The trailhead is at the east end of Grand Avenue, a couple blocks up the hill past the Bigfork Inn.

IF YOU GO:

- Seeley Lake • (406) 677-2880 • www.seeleylakechamber.com
- Bigfork • (406) 837-5888 • www.bigfork.org
- Alpine Artisans • (406) 892-2525 • www.alpineartisans.org

EATS:

- The Double Arrow Resort • Seeley Lake • (406) 468-0777 • www.doublearrowresort.com
- Echo Lake Café • Bigfork • (406) 837-4252 • echolakecafe.com
- ShowThyme! • Bigfork • (406) 837-0707 • www.showthyme.com

SLEEPS:

- Wayfarers State Park • Bigfork • (406) 887-2715 • www.fwp.mt.gov

Day 5: Whitefish

You'll enjoy the beautiful drive to Whitefish (33 miles/34 minutes from Bigfork). The October 2009 issue of Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel Magazine picked Whitefish as one of the *10 Coolest Small Towns in America*. This charming small town is nestled at the base of Whitefish Mountain Ski & Summer Resort and only 25 miles from Glacier National Park.

Downtown Whitefish is perfect for leisurely strolls from galleries and shops to eateries. Shopping is near the top of any Whitefish to-do list. Must-stop places for one-of-a-kind finds line Whitefish's downtown on Central Avenue.

History buffs will enjoy the Great Northern Railway Depot. Here, Amtrak trains still come and go in the same fashion as the early models that brought tourists to Glacier. Through collections that span from fur trapper times to the early days of skiing, the Stumptown Historical Museum tells the story of how the logging camp of Stumptown became Whitefish.

Check what's playing at the O'Shaughnessy Center and the Whitefish Performing Arts Center at Central School while in town, Whitefish's two remarkable performing arts venues – especially if the Alpine Theater Project group is involved.

Whitefish Mountain Resort's Walk in the Treetops (9 miles/15 minutes from downtown Whitefish) is one of the area's striking outdoor activities; a naturalist-led hike through the forest canopy on a boardwalk suspended 60 feet above ground. Brace for glorious views of mountains and lakes, where red-tailed hawks, western tanager and kinglets vie for your attention.

Whitefish Mountain Resort's activities also include the wildly popular and exhilarating Zip-line and Alpine Slide.

Whether you're looking to beat the heat or take in incredible vista or hitch a ride to the top for some mountain bike action, the summer lift rides at Whitefish Mountain Resort are a great way to get outdoors and enjoy Mother Nature.

Overnight in Whitefish before flying out of Glacier Park International Airport.

IF YOU GO:

- Whitefish Mountain Resort • (406) 862-2900 • www.skiwhitefish.com/activities
- Alpine Theater Project • (406) 862-7469 • alpinetheatreproject.org
- Whitefish Downtown Shopping • (877) 862-3548 • www.whitefishvisit.com
- The Stumptown Historical Museum • Whitefish • (406) 862-0067 • www.stumptownhistoricalsociety.org

EATS:

- Tupelo Grille • Whitefish • (406) 862-6136 • www.tupelogrille.com
- Buffalo Cafe • Whitefish • (406) 862-2833 • www.buffalocafewhitefish.com
- Pescado Blanco • Whitefish • (406) 862-3290 • www.pescadoblanco.com

SLEEPS:

- State Park on Whitefish Lake • (406) 862-3991 • http://fwp.mt.gov/lands/site_280100.aspx

*Would you like to extend your trip?
Beautiful country and relaxed Montana charm doesn't end here!*

For travel assistance, visit www.glaciermt.com or call one of our travel counselors toll-free at 1-800-338-5072.