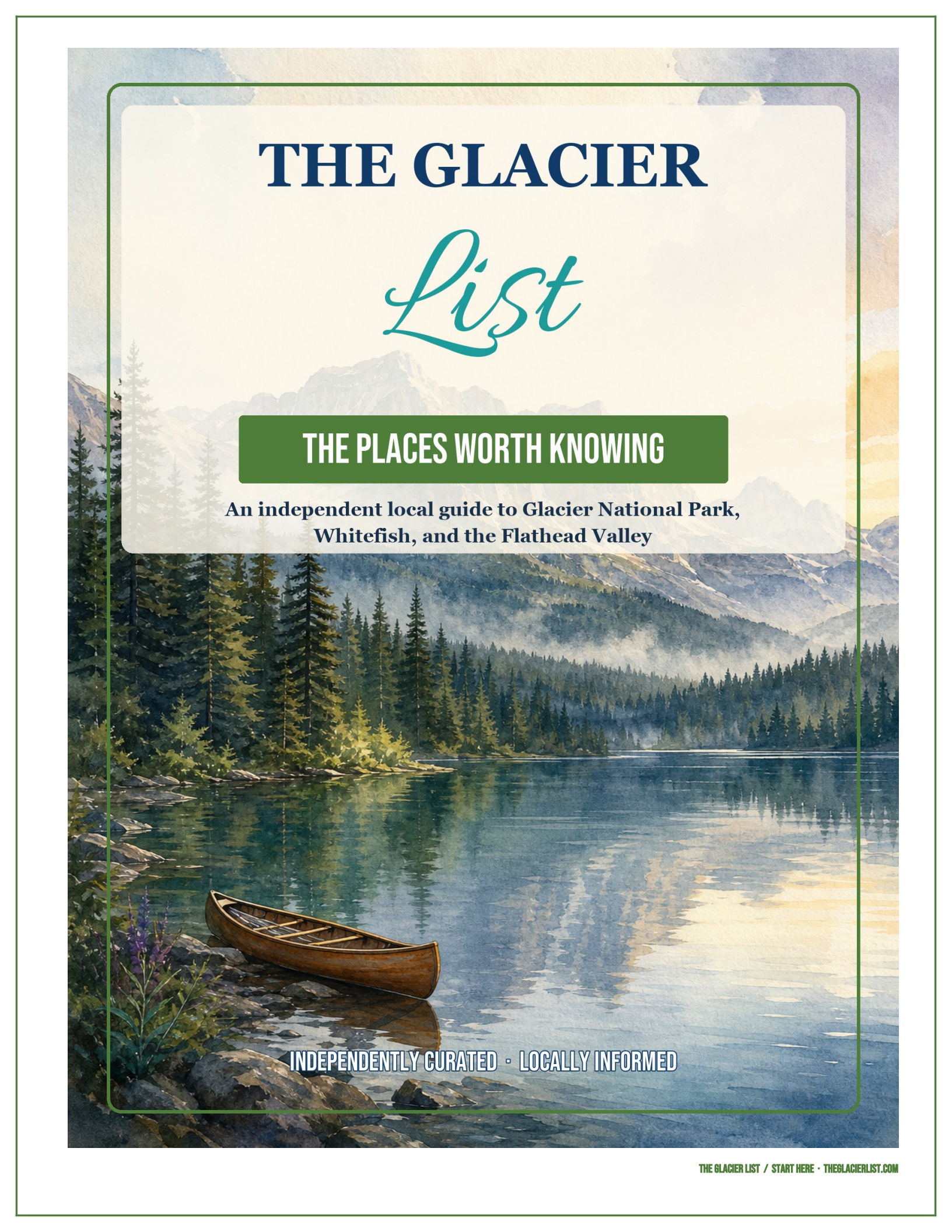




THE GLACIER *List*

THE PLACES WORTH KNOWING

An independent local guide to Glacier National Park,
Whitefish, and the Flathead Valley

INDEPENDENTLY CURATED • LOCALLY INFORMED

A LOCAL POINT OF VIEW

Fewer listings

better decisions

The Glacier List is a considered shortlist of the places and experiences genuinely worth your time.



KNOW THE AREA

Fewer listings. Better decisions.

This is not a directory of everything. It is one edited list: the roads, trails, tables, lake days, stays, and local details we would recommend to people we care about.



BEST ALL-AROUND BASE

Whitefish

Walkable downtown, the strongest dinner concentration, and an easy launch toward Glacier.

LAKE-FOCUSED

Bigfork

Quieter and artistic, with quick access to Flathead Lake and Jewel Basin.

PRACTICAL HUB

Kalispell

Airport, medical care, groceries, gear, and more budget-friendly lodging.

ARRIVE EASY

Land, collect the keys, and be on the road in minutes.

Glacier Park International Airport is small and straightforward. Rental counters flank baggage claim, and the cars are parked immediately outside.



01 / LAND

FCA

A compact terminal and an easy baggage claim keep arrival simple.

02 / COLLECT

Rental car

The best trailheads, lakes, and scenic drives require your own wheels.

03 / REFUEL LATER

Not at the airport

There is no adjacent gas station. Fill up before returning the vehicle.

A RENTAL CAR IS ESSENTIAL

The towns are close. The experiences are spread out.

WHITEFISH

Roughly 15 minutes north of Kalispell; do not hesitate to drive there for dinner.

BIGFORK

Roughly 20 minutes east of Kalispell; ideal for galleries and Flathead Lake.

WEST GLACIER

Roughly 30-35 minutes from Kalispell in normal conditions; start early.

REFUEL

Use Highway 2/40, Safeway, or Town Pump before returning the rental car.



Ten things I would send my best friends to do.

One edited shortlist—not a checklist to conquer, but a week shaped around the experiences that earn their place.

01 Going-to-the-Sun Road Logan Pass, Hidden Lake, and the east side if the day allows.	02 Prime rib night Whitefish Lake Golf Club, Thursday through Sunday.
03 Dinner at Abruzzo Reserve early and order the lasagna before it disappears.	04 Boat Club afternoon Whitefish Lake, a dockside drink, and sunset.
05 Thursday rodeo Blue Moon in summer for a real Montana crowd.	06 A dive-bar night Downtown Whitefish or live music in Columbia Falls.
07 Bigfork art & antiques Walk the village and do not miss the antique barn.	08 Buffalo Cafe Big, hearty breakfast or lunch; the wait is part of it.
09 Fleur coffee & croissants Go early, before the pastry case thins out.	10 Sweet Peaks Montana-made ice cream after a summer dinner.

*If I had one
perfect week...*

Where to Eat

Whitefish punches well above its weight. These are the tables worth planning around—and the orders locals know.

● RESERVE EARLY ★ LOCAL FAVORITE



WHITEFISH DINNER

Six very different reasons to make the short drive.

01

Abruzzo ITALIAN • LIVELY

Really good Italian food in a lively room. The lasagna sells out early most nights, and sitting at the bar is a smart move if you don't have a reservation.

PLAN IT Reserve at least a week ahead. Order lasagna early.

02

Enga SWISS / EUROPEAN • INTIMATE

One of Whitefish's newer standouts, with an outstanding beverage program and a refined European sensibility. The room is small; the bar is an excellent option.

BEST MOVE Take a bar seat and let the beverage program lead.

A LOCAL'S PLANNING STRIP

01 RESERVE EARLY

Summer tables disappear quickly.

02 TRY THE BAR

A strong fallback—and often the best seat.

03 ASK FIRST

Special orders can sell out before late dinner.

Locals know; travel blogs don't.

Evening tables, local orders

03

Herb & Omni UPSCALE • TASTING-STYLE

The closest thing to a Michelin-style experience in the valley. Start with a rooftop drink; solo diners should know the remarkable cheeseburger is available at the bar.

ORDER NOTES *Foie gras pie for the adventurous; duck is excellent.*

04

Whitefish Lake Golf Club CLASSIC MONTANA STEAKHOUSE

Classic Montana atmosphere and one of the valley's best meals. It rarely appears in glossy travel lists, which is part of the appeal.

LOCAL FAVORITE *Prime rib, Thursday through Sunday only.*

05

Jalisco Cantina MEXICAN • CASUAL

Great tacos and a traditional pozole with real, warming heat. After a day on the slopes or in the mountains, this is the bowl that brings you back.

WARM-UP MOVE *Pozole after a mountain day; tacos for the table.*

06

Beldi MEDITERRANEAN • LEVANTINE

The room is simple and understated. The plates are not: they arrive with the polish of a far more decorated kitchen. Chef owned, seasonal, and pointed at the Mediterranean and the Levant. Conversation carries in a space this size, so the mood is animated rather than reverent.

START WITH *The salatim, a spread of small Levantine plates. Get all of them. Tuesday to Saturday only.*

AT THE PARK GATE

Dinner at the place that started all of this

Whitefish is the obvious dinner town, but if the day was spent inside Glacier there is a better answer than driving back over the hill.



The Belton at dusk, with the Great Northern main line still running past the front porch.



The Golf Club dining room: log walls, mountain landscapes, and a stone fireplace big enough to stand in.

HISTORIC RAILWAY HOTEL · WEST GLACIER

Belton Chalet

The Great Northern Railway opened the Belton in June 1910, a few weeks after Glacier was dedicated as a national park. It was the first piece of the railway's plan to build hotels, roads, and trails and then sell the whole place to travellers arriving by train, which is more or less how Glacier tourism began.

It went a long way downhill and came back. New owners took it on in 1997, spent a million dollars putting it right, and reopened for the 1998 season. It is now part of the Great Northern Railway Buildings national historic landmark district, and it is still a hotel, so you can sleep in it as well as eat in it.

The main line still runs past the front of the building and Amtrak still stops twice a day. Out on the porch that is either the charm or the problem, depending on your evening.

HOW TO ORDER IT

START WITH THE BREAD

The bread service is not a formality here. Do not wave it away.

THE LONG-RUNNING ONE

Bison meatloaf. It has been on the menu a very long time and it is what the place is known for.

ALSO EXCELLENT

The Thai curry, which is not what you expect from a 1910 railway hotel, and the beef tallow skillet potatoes.

BOOK AHEAD

Reserve, and reserve well ahead if you want to sit outside.

SEASON

Daily through the summer into early October, then weekends only in the winter. Confirm before you drive out.

ALSO WORTH A TABLE

Not every night is a reservation night

Lower billing than the six above, and no less worth knowing. These are the places the plan falls back to when it loosens up: a slice, a shake, barbecue, a pint by the lake.

TEXAS BARBECUE · WHITEFISH

Piggyback BBQ

Real Texas pit barbecue brought north from Houston, and something like fifty Montana beers waiting in the cooler.

PIZZA & ITALIAN · WHITEFISH

Mama Ev's

Family run and serious about sourcing: Montana flour in the dough, valley farm vegetables on top, Montana creamery cheese. South of town on 93, not downtown.

NEW YORK SLICE · WHITEFISH

Jersey Boys Pizzeria

The quick-slice answer. East Coast style, twenty-inch pies, and no ceremony about any of it. Also out on 93 south.

BURGERS & SHAKES · BIGFORK

Burgertown

A walk-up stand on Highway 35 since 1970, hand-pattied burgers and real ice cream shakes. Summer only, and the huckleberry shake is the one.

BREW PUB · LAKESIDE

Tamarack Brewing

Locals call it the Rack. Montana beer at the source, and the order is buffalo wings with the garlic blue cheese fries.



Burgertown on Highway 35, home of the Flathead Monster, open only as long as the summer lasts.



Sweet Peaks, downtown Whitefish. Whatever else is in the case, the salted caramel is the one.

KEEP THE DAY GOING

Breakfast, coffee & one dependable Kalispell supper



Buffalo Cafe

MOUNTAIN BREAKFAST

Big, hearty, no frills. Expect a weekend wait; it's worth it.



Fleur Bake Shop

BAKERY / COFFEE

Beautiful pastries and excellent espresso. Go early for croissants.



Sweet Peaks

ICE CREAM

Montana-made ice cream. Salted caramel is the local-note favorite.



Mercantile Steakhouse

KALISPELL STEAKHOUSE

Reliable when Whitefish isn't in the plan.

THE LOCAL RHYTHM



MORNING

Coffee & croissants

Start early; Fleur's best pastries move fast.

AFTER DINNER

Walk for ice cream

Sweet Peaks fits naturally into a downtown evening.

WHEN IN KALISPELL

Keep it dependable

Mercantile is the straightforward steak option.

Go wild

Start early, choose the right trail, and give the east side more time than you think.

50-MILE ROAD · 6,646-FT PASS



GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

The first day: west to east

01 ESSENTIAL DRIVE

Going-to-the-Sun Road

The 50-mile route crosses Logan Pass through glacier-carved valleys and exposed alpine terrain.

BEST RHYTHM Early departure · frequent pullouts

03 EAST SIDE

Many Glacier

Dramatic scenery, wildlife viewing, and several of the park's most rewarding hikes justify the longer day.

BEST RHYTHM Hotel · trailhead time · wildlife stops

02 WEST SIDE

Lake McDonald & Apgar

Boat tours make an easy introduction; a calm-day motorboat rental can be a genuine highlight.

BEST RHYTHM Families · first afternoon · gentler pace

04 QUIETER ALTERNATIVE

Two Medicine

A beautiful lake and more remote feeling make this the counterpoint to busier west-side stops.

BEST RHYTHM Quiet water · fewer crowds



Lake McDonald from Apgar, where the colored stones sit under a few feet of very cold, very clear water.



Many Glacier Hotel, and the reason the east side deserves more of your day than you planned.

CHOOSE YOUR TRAIL

Six hikes, six very different days

Highline Trail **STRENUOUS**

11.8 mi · **point-to-point**

Alpine ridgeline, mountain goats, wildflowers, and Granite Park Chalet.

Avalanche Lake **EASY-MODERATE**

5.9 mi · **roundtrip**

Old-growth cedar forest leading to a turquoise glacial lake.

Grinnell Glacier **STRENUOUS**

10.6 mi · **roundtrip**

Active glacier, turquoise lakes, and bighorn-sheep country.

Hidden Lake Overlook **EASY-MODERATE**

2.6 mi · **roundtrip**

Starts at Logan Pass; an excellent easier wildlife walk.

Iceberg Lake **MODERATE**

9.6 mi · **roundtrip**

A Many Glacier trail to a cirque lake with ice well into August.

Trail of the Cedars **ACCESSIBLE**

0.9 mi · **boardwalk loop**

Flat boardwalk and pavement through old-growth cedar. One of only two wheelchair-accessible trails in the park.



Granite Park Chalet, roughly seven and a half miles along the Highline.



Avalanche Lake, with the whole headwall running with water in early summer.



Iceberg Lake earns its name well into August.



Trail of the Cedars, flat the whole way, and the one everybody in the group can do.

EASY & ACCESSIBLE

Trail of the Cedars is a roughly one-mile accessible boardwalk through old-growth forest. It is flat, peaceful, and works well for strollers and visitors who want a gentler walk.

START EARLY

Reach popular trailheads by 7 or 8 AM.

CARRY WATER

Elevation and sun change the day quickly.

TURN AROUND

Weather and energy—not mileage—set the limit.

Wild country, practical preparation



BEAR SAFETY

Carry bear spray where you can reach it—not buried in your pack. Hike in groups and make noise.

WILDLIFE RHYTHM

Early mornings and evenings are especially active times. Give every animal space.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE TOWN

VEHICLE ACCESS

Reservation windows and entry rules change. Confirm current official requirements before the trip.

ROAD STATUS

The full Sun Road usually opens after high-elevation snow clearing and closes again in fall.

PARKING

Logan Pass and major trailheads fill early. A seven o'clock start meaningfully changes the day.

The best park day begins before breakfast.

Lake days

Big water, clear coves, roadside cherries, and a sunset worth rearranging dinner for.

FLATHEAD LAKE / WHITEFISH LAKE



ON THE WATER

Choose the water that fits the day.

Flathead Lake rewards a full excursion. Whitefish Lake is the easy, close-to-town answer when the afternoon opens up.

01

THE FULL-DAY LAKE

Flathead Lake

The valley's biggest water: startling clarity, a cherry-orchard east shore, and easy access to paddling, boat tours, and marina days.

BEST BASE Bigfork or Polson

BEST RHYTHM Town / lunch / boat / cherries

02

THE EASY AFTERNOON

Whitefish Lake

Smaller, closer, and effortless to pair with town. Rent a boat, spend a few hours out, then stay by the water for golden hour.

BEST BASE Whitefish

BEST RHYTHM Boat / dock / drink / sunset

Buy the cherries. Stay for sunset.

CHOOSE BY MOOD

~ CRUISE

Big water and a full afternoon.

+ PADDLE

A cove, a board, and a slower pace.

* SUNSET

Stay close to Whitefish and linger.

<> FISH

Book a guide and follow the river.

One unhurried Flathead Lake day.

The pleasure is in linking the small moments - not racing from one attraction to another.



A FOUR-STOP LAKE LOOP

01 MORNING Bigfork Cross the Swan River bridge, walk downtown, and browse galleries and antique shops.	02 LUNCH Saddlehorn Settle into a casual lakeside meal and arrange a marina rental if the water is calm.	03 AFTERNOON Get afloat Choose a motorboat, kayak, paddleboard, or tour according to weather and experience.	04 EAST SHORE Stop for cherries In season, pull over at a roadside stand. This is part of the day, not an errand.
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CHERRY SEASON

LATE JULY / EARLY AUGUST	Timing varies with the year. If the roadside stands are open, buy the bag. Flathead cherries are part of the east-shore experience.
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WEATHER DECIDES THE WATER

Wind can change a lake day quickly. Match the craft and route to the conditions, your experience, and current local guidance.

READ THE SHORELINE

NE BIGFORK Walkable village at the lake's northeast corner.	E CHERRY SHORE Seasonal stands line the east-shore drive.	S POLSON A useful southern base for lake access.	ALL OPEN WATER Allow more time than the map suggests.
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Let the water set the pace.

Close to town, easy to love.



01 / RENT SMART

Compare Whitefish Marine with on-site resort pricing.

02 / GET OUT

A calm afternoon is enough to make the day feel complete.

03 / DOCK

The Lodge waterfront makes an easy finish when access allows.

04 / STAY

Even without a boat, the sunset is worth the short drive.

FOLLOW THE CURRENT

Fishing, floating, and a faster line.

GUIDED FISHING

Flathead River

A guided float is the cleanest introduction for first-timers. Lakestream Outfitters runs small two-guest boats.

CHOOSE YOUR SPEED

Scenic or whitewater

Glacier Raft Company offers mellow floats and whitewater on the Middle Fork, allowing mixed groups to choose their comfort level.

BEFORE CASTING OFF

Check current rules

Licenses, seasons, river conditions, launch access, and outfitter schedules change. Confirm details before the day.

PLAN BEFORE LAUNCHING

WEATHER

Check wind, temperature, and current river or lake conditions before choosing the craft and route.

LICENSE

A Montana fishing license is required. Confirm current seasons and regulations with Montana FWP.

OPERATOR

Reconfirm meeting point, launch access, age limits, and what the outfitter supplies before departure.

Buy the cherries. Stay for sunset.



First light on the North Fork, before the wind gets up and the river gets busy.



The Middle Fork, where a mellow float and a genuinely wet one leave from the same put-in.

Stay out late

Unpretentious bars, surprisingly strong live music, and a town that is easy to walk.



AFTER DARK

Central Avenue makes the first round easy.

LANDMARK BAR

Great Northern Bar

A Whitefish institution with live music, big energy, and the tendency to keep you longer than planned.

DIVE / PUB

Bulldog Saloon

Casual beer, late-night food, and no interest in pretending to be polished.

SUNDECK & STAGE

The Boat Club

A big sundeck over Whitefish Lake for dinner in the long light, and a snug room inside with live music and a bar worth settling into.

COLUMBIA FALLS

Gunsight Saloon

A useful live-music option when the night points east.

WALK THE CORE / PLAN THE RIDE HOME

Downtown Whitefish is compact. If the evening moves beyond town, decide on a sober driver or transportation before the first stop.

A MONTANA NIGHT OUT

Dinner first. Music next. Let the last stop be accidental.



Thursday night at the Blue Moon, which is as Montana as the week gets.

01 / 6:00

Dinner

Book the table. Whitefish fills early in summer and on ski weekends.

02 / 8:00

Live music

Look for John Dunnigan, Big Sky City Lights, or a weekend Lodge set.

03 / 10:00

A local bar

Choose Great Northern for energy or Bulldog for a more relaxed finish.

04 / SUMMER THURSDAY

Blue Moon rodeo

Roping, riding, and a crowd that feels distinctly Montana.



LISTEN FOR

John Dunnigan

A standout local performer at the Lodge in winter and venues around the valley in summer.

LISTEN FOR

Big Sky City Lights

A Montana-and-New York duo with a distinctive, polished live sound.

LOCAL RULE

Do not over-plan

The best nights usually need one reservation and enough room for the music to decide the rest.

Play outside

Ski trees in winter. Ride, hike, and take in Glacier views in summer.



MOUNTAIN TIME

One ridge, two very different seasons.



Big Mountain in winter, with Whitefish Lake and the valley laid out below.



WINTER

Tree skiing & views

The mountain is known for broad terrain, manageable crowds, and views toward Glacier.

SUMMER

Lift-accessed play

Mountain biking, hiking, an alpine slide, and zip-line experiences shift the energy.

PACK

Weather changes

Bring a layer even when town is warm. The summit runs its own forecast.

EAT, RIDE, REPEAT

The mountain day is better with two local institutions.



Hellroaring, mid-mountain, at the hour when a ski day turns into a long lunch.

MIDDAY

Hellroaring Saloon

A ski-season lunch stop with the atmosphere that makes a mountain day feel complete.

APRES

Bierstube

Pitchers, music, and ski boots on the floor. The local rule: walk to the bar rather than waiting for a line.

OTHER ADVENTURES

When the mountain is not the whole day.

JUNE-OCT

Mountain biking

Whitefish Trail, Spencer Mountain, and the resort.

MAY-SEPT

Horseback riding

Bar W Guest Ranch and Swan Mountain Outfitters.

MAY-OCT

Golf

Whitefish Lake Golf Club and Eagle Bend in Bigfork.

DEC-MAR

Nordic skiing

Glacier Nordic Center and Round Meadows.



RESERVE

Mountain lessons, rentals, and popular summer activities should be confirmed before peak dates.

Sleep well

Choose the base by the trip you want, not simply the shortest drive from the airport.



WHERE TO STAY

Which base fits the week?



BEST ALL-AROUND

Whitefish

Walkable dining and nightlife, resort energy, and an easy north-valley base.

BEST FOR LAKE TIME

Bigfork

Quieter, artistic, and ideal when Flathead Lake is the center of the trip.

BEST VALUE

Kalispell

More practical choices, airport convenience, and quick access to supplies.

FIVE USEFUL ANCHORS

A lodge for every version of the trip.

WHITEFISH

LAKE SIDE / \$\$\$\$

The Lodge at Whitefish Lake

Spa, waterfront atmosphere, Tiki Bar, and weekend Boat Club music.

WHITEFISH MOUNTAIN

MOUNTAIN / \$\$\$

Kandahar Lodge

Intimate alpine character and ski-in/ski-out convenience.

BIGFORK

ALL-INCLUSIVE / \$\$\$\$

Averill's Flathead Lake Lodge

A dude-ranch-style lake experience built around the property.

KALISPELL

PRACTICAL / \$\$

Hilton Garden Inn

Reliable mid-range lodging with a convenient location.

EAST GLACIER

HISTORIC / \$\$\$

Glacier Park Lodge

A classic railway-lodge base for an east-side park chapter.

BOOK EARLY

For summer, three to six months ahead is not excessive. Reconfirm cancellation terms and current amenities.

Trade the lobby for a porch or a tent.

Lakefront cabins are the most coveted and expensive. Better value often appears in the woods between Kalispell and Whitefish or along quieter stretches of the lake.



WEST GLACIER

Apgar Campground

Popular park access; reservations and current operating details should be confirmed.

BIGFORK

Wayfarers State Park

A useful Flathead Lake campground near the village.

FOREST

Big Creek Campground

A quieter national-forest option; confirm the current reservation policy.

RENTAL STRATEGY

Look beyond lakefront

Wooded homes can offer more privacy and value while keeping the towns close.

ASK FIRST

Confirm road access, air conditioning, watercraft rules, fire restrictions, and winter plowing before booking a remote rental.

Look closer

The best detours reward curiosity without requiring a full day.



WORTH THE DETOUR

Five reasons to leave the main route.

TRAILS Jewel Basin Alpine lakes and miles of trails with a fraction of Glacier's crowds.	ISLAND Wild Horse Island Boat- or kayak-access wildlife country in Flathead Lake.
STAGE Bigfork Summer Playhouse Ambitious musical theater in a small-town setting.	HISTORY Conrad Mansion A preserved 1895 home and a focused window into Kalispell's past.
TASTE Huckleberry everything Jam, pie, ice cream, candy - Montana's signature berry is everywhere.	LOCAL RULE Leave room for discovery The antique shop, roadside stand, or quiet trail often becomes the story.

FOUR SEASONS

The valley changes character four times a year.



JUNE-SEPT

Summer

Peak demand, warm days, cool elevation changes, and possible August smoke.

OCT-NOV

Fall

Golden larch, thinner crowds, lower prices, and many park closures by mid-October.

DEC-MAR

Winter

Whitefish Mountain, a lively town, and the need for winter-ready driving.

APR-MAY

Spring

Quiet, muddy in places, rich with wildlife, and too early for the full Sun Road.

EVENTS WORTH PLANNING AROUND

FEBRUARY

Whitefish Winter Carnival

Dates vary by year; confirm before travel.

LATE MAY

Bigfork Whitewater Festival

Dates vary by year; confirm before travel.

JULY 4

Valley celebrations and Whitefish parade

Dates vary by year; confirm before travel.

LATE JULY

Flathead Cherry Festival

Dates vary by year; confirm before travel.

AUGUST

Huckleberry Days

Dates vary by year; confirm before travel.

Beyond the obvious

Three things the valley mostly keeps to itself: a wild berry nobody has managed to farm, a reservoir that visitors drive straight past, and a wilderness that asks more of you than a national park does.



QUIETER GROUND

Worth knowing. Not worth rushing.

Glacier, Whitefish, and Flathead Lake have earned their top billing, and nothing here displaces them. This chapter is for the spare day, the second visit, or the traveller who would rather meet the valley on its own terms than work through the obvious list.

Still no such thing as a huckleberry farm

Montana made the huckleberry its official state fruit in 2023, and there is still no commercial huckleberry farm supplying the market. A century of attempts has never produced a cultivar worth planting, the best wild stands yield only about a hundred gallons an acre, and the ground that grows them is steep, high, and awkward to reach. Everything in the valley that tastes of huckleberry was picked by hand, by someone, on a hillside.



FIND THE FLAVOR

Pie first. Then everything else.

Pie and ice cream are the honest introduction. After that it turns up as preserves, in pancakes, in a milkshake, in a cocktail. If a menu in the valley says huckleberry in August, order it.

PICKING ETIQUETTE

By hand. And modestly.

On the Flathead National Forest no permit is needed for up to ten gallons a person a YEAR. Inside Glacier the limit is one quart per person per day and rakes are prohibited outright. Pick with your fingers and leave plenty on the bush.

LOCAL REALITY

The crop is never the same twice.

Berries ripen low first and follow the warmth uphill, so the window runs from roughly mid-July into September, with August the most dependable stretch. Good patches are family knowledge, quietly kept.

BEARS FIRST

A huckleberry patch is not a novelty to a bear, it is the winter calorie budget. Grizzlies and black bears work the same slopes on the same schedule, and the Park Service singles out berry ground as a place to be especially alert. Pick with other people, keep talking while you work, carry bear spray where you can reach it, and give up the patch if you find fresh sign.

THE WILD LAKE BEHIND THE WALL

Come for the scale of the dam. Continue for the silence beyond it.

564 feet of concrete closed off the South Fork of the Flathead in 1953, and the lake behind it reaches about 34 miles back into the mountains. Most visitors photograph the dam and turn around. The road keeps going, and that is the part worth the day.



THE DAM

An engineering set piece

564 feet high and 2,115 feet along the crest, a thick-arch wall 39 feet wide at the top and as much as 330 feet through at the base. It holds back the South Fork of the Flathead rather than the main river, which is the detail most write-ups get wrong.

THE SPILLWAY

The real superlative

Water goes over the rim of the morning-glory spillway and falls 490 feet, and both Reclamation and the Park Service call it the highest structure of its kind in the world. Rankings for the dam itself are muddled enough that federal agencies disagree.

THE OVERLOOK

The dependable stop

The access road leaves Highway 2 at Hungry Horse and runs about 4.5 miles to the north end of the dam. The viewpoint shelter is the reliable stop; the visitor center has been closed in recent seasons, so confirm before you build a morning around it.

Then keep driving

Past the dam the pavement gives way and the crowds disappear entirely. The road around the reservoir runs roughly 110 miles, nearly all of it gravel, and it exists only because Reclamation had to replace the Forest Service road the rising water drowned. Three to four hours of driving without stops, which means a full day if you intend to stop at all.

ON THE WATER Boating and fishing Native bull trout and westslope cutthroat water rather than a stocked fishery, so the rules are specific and they change. Check current regulations before you fish, and note that bull trout require their own catch card.	OVERNIGHT Forest Service campgrounds Lost Johnny Point, Lid Creek, Murray Bay, Emery Bay, and Spotted Bear are the mainstays. Mostly first come. Assume no drinking water and arrive self-sufficient. Lost Johnny Point caps trailers at 22 feet.
IN SEASON Berry country These are the hillsides the first pages are about. Pick where you are allowed to, watch for bears, and do not block the road to do it.	THE FAR END Spotted Bear 55 gravel miles south of Hungry Horse the road reaches Spotted Bear Ranger Station, the northern doorway to the Bob Marshall. It is a long drive rather than a scenic detour.

Know before you go

DISTANCES	Everything is farther than the map suggests. Spotted Bear is 55 miles from Hungry Horse, and most of those miles happen at gravel speed.
ROADS	A standard car manages the loop in good summer conditions. Large RVs and long trailers should not attempt it. The east side road closes for wildlife from December into mid-May, and late summer is both the best driving season and the peak season for fire closures.
WATER LEVELS	The reservoir is drawn down through the season, so expect wide mudflats and old stumps by late summer. Check ramp conditions before towing a boat.
SERVICES	No fuel, no food, and no dependable cell coverage past the highway. Fill up in Hungry Horse or Martin City, carry water and a spare, and tell somebody your route.

Glacier can be visited. The Bob must be entered.

The Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat wildernesses run together across roughly 1.6 million acres, managed under shared direction by three national forests and five ranger districts. The Forest Service calls it the third largest wilderness complex in the lower 48. About 1,700 miles of trail, and no roads at all. The Chinese Wall carries the Continental Divide along its crest and stands roughly a thousand feet above the meadows at its base. Big Prairie, the ranger station in the middle of it, is a two-day walk from the nearest road and still gets its supplies by pack string. There is no scenic drive here, no shuttle, and no cell service.

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCED

Plan a real trip.

No permit, quota, or fee is required to walk in, which surprises people. Nothing else about it is casual. Parties are capped at 15, food storage is legally mandatory, bridges are rare enough that fords are routine, and the high passes usually hold snow into early July.

IF YOU WANT A GUIDE

Go with an outfitter.

Outfitters have packed this country since about 1919 and they get people deeper in than most parties manage alone. Montana licenses the outfitter and the Forest Service permits the operation on a specific district, so confirm both.

IF YOU ARE CURIOUS

Look in from the edge.

A legitimate choice and more often than not the right one. Drive the reservoir to Spotted Bear, walk in from Meadow Creek for an afternoon, and turn around. You will see the country without turning your holiday into a rescue.

Readiness, honestly

NAVIGATION

Map, compass, and the ability to use both when the trail is buried. Crews still clear those 1,700 miles with crosscut saws and axes, so an early season route on the map may not exist on the ground.

FOOD STORAGE

Not advice, a regulation. A Northern Region order requires bear-resistant storage across this country: a certified bear-resistant container, or a hang at least 10 feet up measured from the bottom of the load and 4 feet out from the support.

WEATHER

High passes are usually snow free around the Fourth of July, and usually is doing a great deal of work in that sentence. Expect weather in any month, and river crossings that rise with heat and rain.

STOCK ETIQUETTE

Hikers yield to stock. Speak up as soon as you see a string, step off on the downhill side because a startled horse bolts uphill, and keep talking until the last animal is past.

REGULATIONS

Fifteen people maximum, 35 head of stock, single file on trail. No bicycles, no e-bikes, no drones, no chainsaws, and no caching supplies. Camping is closed year round on the ground directly beneath the Wall.

EMERGENCIES

Assume you are the first responder. Carry a satellite messenger, leave an itinerary with somebody who will notice you are late, and understand that help measured in hours beside a road is measured in days out here.

Take the long way. Leave some berries.

KEEP IT EASY

Small preparations make the week feel effortless.

TIME Mountain Time The valley observes Mountain Time.	CELL Strong in towns Expect spotty or absent service in park and backcountry areas.
GAS Fill before Glacier Kalispell, Whitefish, and Columbia Falls are the easy fuel stops.	MEDICAL Logan Health Kalispell is the primary medical hub; use emergency services when needed.
TIPPING Plan for service The source guide suggests 18-20% in restaurants and 15-20% for guides.	LAYERS Always carry one Elevation, wind, and sunset can change the temperature quickly.

GROCERIES & PROVISIONS

Stock up once. Keep the cooler useful.

WHITEFISH	Safeway and Markus Foods cover the convenient in-town run.
KALISPELL	Costco makes sense for a larger house or longer stay.
SPECIALTY	Whitefish Liquor Store offers a notably curated wine and spirits selection.
MONTANA FLAVOR	Perfect Cuts in Columbia Falls is a source for game meats when the rental has a grill.

GEAR, RENTALS & COMMUNITY

The useful stops before the adventure.

BIG SELECTION Sportsman's Warehouse Kalispell for the broadest gear run; Whitefish for quick essentials.	OUTDOOR STAPLES REI Kalispell A familiar option for clothing, equipment, and forgotten basics.
CURATED Rocky Mountain Outfitters A more focused specialty selection.	DELIVERY Black Tie Ski Rentals Convenient lodging delivery when the trip is built around skiing.
ECONOMICAL Sportsman in Whitefish A practical ski-rental choice; reserve around peak dates.	ON-MOUNTAIN Reserve ahead Mountain rental inventory can tighten during holiday periods.

CHURCHES

Several styles of worship are represented.

CONTEMPORARY FreshLife Church Live Kalispell service with additional campuses, including Whitefish.	CATHOLIC St. Matthew's A Catholic option in Kalispell.
MONTANA ORIGINAL Cowboy Church A distinctly local church option.	KALISPELL Canvas Church Another contemporary local congregation.

TAP TO NAVIGATE

Getting here, dining, and nightlife.

Links remain live in the digital PDF. Tap a name to open the location in Google Maps.

GETTING HERE

[Glacier Park International Airport \(FCA\)](#)

[Gas - Hwy 2 & Hwy 40 intersection](#)

[Safeway Gas Station, Whitefish](#)

[Town Pump, Whitefish](#)

[Costco, Kalispell](#)

BARS & NIGHTLIFE

[Great Northern Bar](#)

[Bulldog Saloon](#)

[The Lodge - Tiki Bar & Boat Club](#)

[Bierstube](#)

[Hellroaring Saloon](#)

[Gunsight Saloon](#)

[Blue Moon](#)

RESTAURANTS & DINING

[Abruzzo](#)

[Enga](#)

[Herb & Omni](#)

[Whitefish Lake Golf Course Restaurant](#)

[Mercantile Steakhouse](#)

[Buffalo Cafe](#)

[Fleur Bake Shop](#)

[Burgertown](#)

[MacKenzie River Pizza - Saddlehorn](#)

[Sweet Peaks Ice Cream](#)

Glacier, lakes, towns, and landmarks.

Links remain live in the digital PDF. Tap a name to open the location in Google Maps.

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

[West Glacier Entrance](#)
[Logan Pass](#)
[Apgar Village & Boat Rentals](#)
[Lake McDonald Lodge](#)
[Many Glacier](#)
[Two Medicine](#)
[Avalanche Lake Trailhead](#)
[Highline Trailhead \(Logan Pass\)](#)
[Grinnell Glacier Trailhead](#)
[Hidden Lake Trailhead](#)
[Iceberg Lake Trailhead](#)
[Trail of the Cedars](#)

LAKES & WATER

[Flathead Lake](#)
[Whitefish Lake](#)
[Whitefish Marine \(boat rentals\)](#)
[Saddlehorn Marina](#)

TAP TO NAVIGATE

Shopping, services, outfitters, and guides.

Links remain live in the digital PDF. Tap a name to open the location in Google Maps.

TOWNS & LANDMARKS

[Downtown Whitefish](#)
[Downtown Kalispell](#)
[Bigfork](#)
[Bigfork Antique Barn](#)
[Many Glacier Hotel](#)
[Whitefish Mountain Resort](#)
[Jewel Basin Hiking Area](#)
[Wild Horse Island](#)
[Conrad Mansion Museum](#)

OUTFITTERS & GUIDES

[Lakestream Outfitters](#)
[Glacier Raft Company](#)
[Black Tie Ski Rentals](#)

SHOPPING & SERVICES

[Sportsman Warehouse, Kalispell](#)
[REI, Kalispell](#)
[Rocky Mountain Outfitters](#)
[Sportsman Warehouse, Whitefish](#)
[Safeway, Whitefish](#)
[Markus Foods](#)
[Whitefish Liquor Store](#)
[Perfect Cuts](#)
[FreshLife Church - Kalispell](#)
[FreshLife Church - Whitefish](#)
[St. Matthew's Catholic Church](#)
[Cowboy Church](#)
[Canvas Church](#)
[Logan Health Medical Center](#)

Memories, mountains
& every moment

FINAL NOTE

Do not be surprised if you start looking at real estate before you leave.