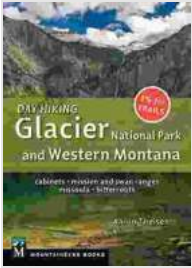


Glacier National Park: A Comprehensive Guide to Western Montana's Natural Wonderland



Day Hiking: Glacier National Park & Western Montana: Cabinets, Mission and Swan Ranges, Missoula,

Bitterroots by Dave Whitlock

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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Nestled in the heart of the Rocky Mountains in Western Montana, Glacier National Park is a breathtaking wilderness of towering peaks, pristine lakes, and ancient glaciers. Established in 1910 as the tenth national park in the United States, Glacier is home to a diverse range of plant and animal life, including over 1,000 species of plants, 62 species of mammals, and 260 species of birds.

History

The area that is now Glacier National Park has been home to Native Americans for thousands of years. The Blackfeet, Flathead, and Kootenai

tribes all have traditional ties to the land and continue to use it for hunting, fishing, and gathering.

In the late 19th century, European explorers and settlers began to arrive in the area. In 1891, the Great Northern Railway was completed, making it easier for tourists to visit the region. By the early 1900s, Glacier was a popular destination for mountaineering and camping.

In 1910, Glacier National Park was established to protect the area's natural beauty and wildlife. The park has since become one of the most popular tourist destinations in the United States, with over 2 million visitors each year.

Geology

Glacier National Park is located in the Rocky Mountains, which were formed over millions of years by the collision of the North American and Pacific tectonic plates. The park's mountains are composed of sedimentary rock, which was laid down over hundreds of millions of years. The glaciers that carved the park's landscape began to form during the last ice age, which ended about 10,000 years ago.

Today, Glacier National Park is home to 25 named glaciers, including the Grinnell Glacier, the largest glacier in the park. The glaciers are a major tourist attraction, and visitors can take boat tours to see them up close.

Wildlife

Glacier National Park is home to a wide variety of wildlife, including grizzly bears, black bears, moose, elk, deer, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats.

The park is also home to a variety of birds, including eagles, hawks, and owls.

Visitors to the park should be aware of the potential for wildlife encounters. Always stay on designated trails, and do not approach wildlife. If you encounter a bear, make yourself look big and back away slowly.

Visitor Activities

There are a variety of visitor activities available in Glacier National Park, including:

- **Hiking:** The park has over 700 miles of hiking trails, ranging from easy to challenging. Some of the most popular hikes include the Highline Trail, the Grinnell Glacier Trail, and the Iceberg Lake Trail.
- **Backpacking:** The park offers a variety of backpacking opportunities, ranging from overnight trips to multi-day treks. Backcountry camping is available throughout the park, but permits are required.
- **Camping:** The park has over 1,000 campsites, ranging from primitive campsites to RV hookups. Reservations are recommended for camping during the peak season (June-September).
- **Fishing:** The park's lakes and rivers are home to a variety of fish, including trout, salmon, and whitefish. Fishing licenses are required.
- **Boating:** The park's lakes and rivers are open to boating. Motorboats are allowed on some lakes, but canoes and kayaks are the best way to explore the park's backcountry waterways.
- **Wildlife viewing:** The park is home to a variety of wildlife, including grizzly bears, black bears, moose, elk, deer, bighorn sheep, and

mountain goats. Visitors can view wildlife from the park's roads, trails, and campgrounds.

Planning Your Visit

The best time to visit Glacier National Park is during the summer months (June-September). The weather is generally mild during this time, and the park's roads and trails are open. However, the park can be crowded during the peak season, so it is important to make reservations for camping and lodging in advance.

To get to the park, you can fly into Glacier Park International Airport (FCA) in Kalispell, Montana. The airport is located about 30 miles from the park's west entrance. You can also drive to the park from the east or west. The park's main entrance is located on the west side of the park, near the town of West Glacier.

Once you are in the park, you can purchase a park pass at one of the entrance stations. The pass is valid for seven days and allows you to enter the park by car, motorcycle, or bicycle. You can also purchase a pass for hiking or backpacking.

Additional Information

For more information about Glacier National Park, please visit the park's website at www.nps.gov/glac.



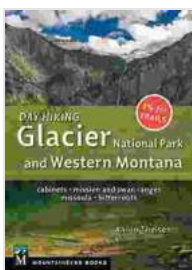
Grinnell Glacier, Glacier National Park



Lake McDonald, Glacier National Park



Bighorn sheep ram, Glacier National Park



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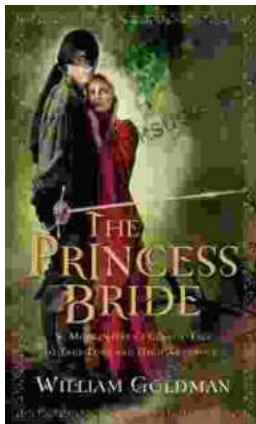
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