

Glacier Discovery Week: Natural History Exploration Week in GNP for Adults

July 18 - 25, 2020

John Muir encouraged visitors to Glacier National Park to “give a month at least to this precious reserve.” He said that time in Glacier “will not be taken from the sum of your life. Instead of shortening it, it will indefinitely lengthen it and make you truly immortal.” Although we cannot promise that this trip will result in immortality, we can promise a week of camaraderie, learning, and world-class hiking that you will remember for the rest of your life. Join like-minded adventurers for a weeklong exploration of the ‘Crown of the Continent’ Ecosystem. Venture out each day with professional naturalists to see and learn about cerulean lakes, meadows bursting with wildflowers, the iconic Going to the Sun Road, and Glacier’s famous bears and goats. This trip is designed for those that want to see and learn as much as possible about Glacier over the course of a single week.

Your trip fee includes:

- Rustic and comfortable shared lodging on a bluff overlooking the Wild and Scenic Middle Fork of the Flathead River.
- Five field outings led by professional naturalist guides trained in wilderness first aid and bear safety.
- Twenty One meals (dinner from arrival day – packed lunch on departure day). Breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day with coffee, tea, snacks, appetizers, and desserts included. ****Example meals & dietary restriction information below****
- All transportation to and from trailheads

Your trip fee DOES NOT include:

- Ground transportation to and from Glacier Park International Airport (information on this below)
- Park entrance fees. Passes can be purchased online ahead of time at: <https://www.yourpassnow.com/ParkPass/park/glac>
- Additional costs associated with non Glacier Institute activities on “Day 5”

Difficulty

Moderately-strenuous. Participants will hike an average of nine miles each day over uneven terrain with an average elevation gain of 1,500 feet. See hike specific trail stats on itinerary below (these are approximations).

Tentative Trip Itinerary

*Itinerary is **subject to change** depending on trail closures, road closures, and group abilities (see note below for more information)*

If two groups are necessary, trails will be adjusted

Day 1: All travelers should arrive to the Glacier Institute Field Camp between 4:00PM and 5:00PM. At camp, you will settle in to your cabins, familiarize yourself with the campus, and meet other travelers. Then, over a happy hour with lemonade (guests over 21 are welcome to bring their own beer or wine) and appetizers, we will review the schedule for the week, go over risk management policies, and answer questions for the week ahead. After dinner we will enjoy an evening walk to Quarter-Circle bridge to stretch our legs and look for wildlife.

Day 2: Today will begin with a drive up to Logan Pass along the stunning Going to the Sun Road. Today, we will hike along the Highline Trail and to Hidden Lake Overlook, two of the Park's most remarkable trails. Our local expert guides will give us an overview of the park's geology and the mile high glaciers that once carved these landscapes. Logan Pass is a wildlife-rich area, and we will keep an eye out for mountain goats, bighorn sheep, and the gregarious hoary marmot along the trail, discussing how these alpine species survive in this harsh environment.
(combined daily total 9mi, 1,200ft elevation gain/loss).

Day 3: Our first day on the trail will lead us to the exuberant scene at the southern boundary of the park and area that leaves one breathless before even hitting the trailhead. This nexus of prairie, montane, marsh, and parkland, and ultimately reaching into the sub-alpine, one is unlikely to miss the whistling songbirds and greater menagerie of wildlife that corridor through. We will rest for lunch atop Firebrand Pass peering into Ole Creek valley. This is a catch-all trail rare on the south side!
(10.2mi, 2,100ft elevation gain/loss).

Day 4: Group participants often list today as the highlight of their trip. Our drive today will lead us to the east side of the park to visit the Many Glacier Valley. As we hike past shining lakes, we will climb into beautiful alpine meadows home to spirea and beargrass when in season. At our destination of Grinnell Lake, your legs and lungs may burn from the climb, but the stunning views of Grinnell Glacier laid out before you will steal your breath away all over again. We will rest here for lunch, while we enjoy a rare opportunity to bask in the presence of one of Glacier National Park's few remaining Glaciers. Our educational focus today will highlight our changing climate, melting glaciers, and the resulting impact on the local flora and fauna.
(10.3mi, 1,700ft elevation gain/loss).

Day 5: Today is our rest day. Designed to give you the option to explore the area at your leisure; maybe you decide to go rafting on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, or Kayaking on Lake McDonald, or simply enjoying a huckleberry ice cream cone on the shores of Lake McDonald while reading a good book. This day is intended to break up the hiking of the week and allow for people to pick what they wish to do, or choose to come along for another Glacier Institute Hike.

If you wish you participate the Glacier Institute hike we will be headed to Trail of the Cedars and Avalanche Lake. Following mossy boulders and smoothed ravine walls of Avalanche Creek, the aquamarine waters guide a trail to Avalanche Lake, home to the Westslope Cutthroat trout who feed in the chilly clines of this lake and tell a remarkable tale of adaptation and change. Encountering the remnants of avalanche blowdown, colossal stones plucked out by pressures of ice, and finishing in a glacier-fed cirque basin leaves the gravest of hikers misty-eyed. *(4.6mi, 600ft elevation gain/loss).*

****The logistics:** We will have breakfast at 7:30am, and run various shuttles to nearby Apgar Village at pre-designated times thought the day, appetizers will be at 5pm followed by dinner at 6pm.

Day 6: Our morning drive will take us around the southern boundary of the park, back towards the Two Medicine valley, with our eyes set on Scenic Point. The raging torrent of Appistoki Falls is hardly out of earshot before the first few switchbacks carry one into a bleached graveyard of Whitebark Pine. The decline of this keystone species, is reverberating throughout the forested zones of the Rockies with grave ecological implications! Switchbacks of dusty scree and a moonscape tundra contrast with hemispheres of green, plants inches-tall clinging to the thinnest skein of soil while bighorn sheep graze at elevations of the eye that defy pastoral possibilities. We will eat lunch atop the mountain with grand sweeping views, the Two Medicine valley one way and, in the other, the Sweet Grass Hills nearly 100 miles afar on a raven's line. *(7.9mi, 2,300ft elevation gain/loss).*

Day 7: Today we will head to the "Backbone of the Earth" where we will hike to Piegan Pass. A steady climb will challenge us as we move through talus fields and meadows where it is not completely uncommon to see a grizzly bear. At Piegan Pass, we will be rewarded with stunning views of the Many Glacier Valley thousands of feet below. The stunning alpine landscapes of Piegan Pass set the stage for today's educational focus on pikas, wolverines, ptarmigan, and other alpine ambassadors of Glacier National Park. *(8.9mi, 1,700ft elevation gain/loss).*

Day 8:The trip will end after breakfast our trail lunch spread will also be available for packing a travel lunch. All travelers should plan check out by 10:00AM.

Suggestions on Getting There

The Glacier Institute Field Camp is located just inside the West Entrance to Glacier National Park. The nearest airport is in Kalispell, Montana, about 30 minutes from Field Camp. Travelers should plan to arrive to Field Camp on arrival day between 4:00PM and 5:00PM to check in and get settled. Travelers should plan to depart Field Camp by 10:00AM on departure day.

If you find airline reservations are difficult to make by flying into Kalispell, an alternative is to fly into Missoula, which is about three hours from the park. If you fly into Missoula you will need to rent a car for the drive up to the park. For those of you who can utilize Southwest Airlines another option would be to fly into Spokane, Washington, and then drive to the park from there. The drive would be approximately six hours. On past trips, some participants have traveled to the Park by Amtrak. The Empire Builder line, which leaves from Chicago, makes a stop at West Glacier.

*Note: airfare and car rental are not included in the trip price.

Accommodations

We will be staying at the Glacier Institute Field Camp which is best described as "rustic." Though rustic, it is quite comfortable. The camp is located on a bluff overlooking the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, and includes five sleeping cabins, a community bathhouse with private showers and bathrooms, a classroom, a library and a kitchen. Each sleeping cabin comes with five twin beds and has electricity, but there is no running water, TV, or phone. The cabins do have a portable electric heater for use if the nights get too cool. A bottom sheet and pillow are provided, we request guests bring their own sleeping bag or other personal bedding. The community bathhouse has flush toilets, sinks, and hot showers.

Food

All meals will be provided by the Glacier Institute staff (dinner from arrival day – packed lunch on departure day). Breakfast is continental style (e.g. oatmeal, yogurt, cereal, fruit, hard boiled eggs, bagels) and dinner is homemade (e.g. garlic chicken pasta, burrito night, spaghetti night); lunch fixings (e.g. sandwich fixings, carrots, apples, trail mix, chips) are provided for each participant to prepare their own lunch to eat on the trail. Vegetarians can be accommodated. Upon request we can provide gluten free bread for lunch, gluten free pasta, corn tortillas. If you have specific dietary needs please get in touch with us upon signing up. We can figure out what we provide and if you should bring any items to supplement what we provide.

For more information about the camp and the Glacier Institute, please visit their website at www.glacierinstitute.org.

Notes on our Itinerary

Glacier National Park is among the top 10 ranked national parks in the country. There are many other visitors that visit Glacier during the summer months. Glacier National Park is over 1 million acres in size. It isn't uncommon for many of our days to start early

with breakfast between 6:00AM and 7:00AM. We plan accordingly to beat the heat, beat the crowds, and we allow ourselves ample time to reach the trailhead each day. The early bird gets the worm, especially in Glacier National Park. We allow ample down time in the evenings, upon returning from our daily excursion. Due to the nature of experiencing a natural place such as Glacier National Park we are constantly adjusting our plans to accommodate road and trail closures (due to bears, weather and wildlife). Therefore natural circumstances may arise that warrant us adjusting some of the above itinerary.

*Be sure to also check out our adult day courses going on. If there is one you are interested in joining during your week, please inquire upon registration.

Trip Difficulty

Most of our hikes will range from 8-12 miles in length. The hikes will be moderate to moderately strenuous with elevation gains of 400-2,700 feet. All of the hikes are on maintained trails and will take place between elevations of 5,000 to 8,100 feet. In order to comfortably complete the hikes on this trip, all hikers should be participating in regular aerobic activity four to five days a week for a minimum of 30 minutes duration -- jogging, bike riding, or using the aerobic equipment at your local gym are just some examples. To help build your endurance, you should begin weekly hikes a few months before the trip of 8-10 miles that gain at least 1,500-2,000 feet of elevation. By the time of the trip you should be able to comfortably maintain an average hiking speed of 2-2.5 mph for six to eight hours -- the key word being comfortably. Because of the small, but real potential for grizzly bear encounters while hiking in Glacier National Park, it is not safe for people to become separated from the group. Therefore, it is imperative that you are able to maintain the hiking pace recommended by the leader.

**** You must be 21 or older to attend this course unless attending with your parent or guardian****

Weather

Field Camp is located in West Glacier, roughly 3,600ft above sea level. Glacier National Park covers quite a large spread of land, and straddles the continental divide. On any given day, the weather on the west side of the divide can be quite different from the weather on the east side of the divide. The best way to be prepared for ever changing mountainous weather is to have layers! See our gear list for recommendations on what to bring. We recommend checking the weather prior to your trip. NOAA Weather Forecast is a great resource for this. Although we will be lodging in West Glacier we will also travel to the eastern side of the divide near East Glacier & Saint Mary; checking the weather for these different locations can help to provide a big picture of the forecast.

Gratuity Guidelines

Should we tip the Field Camp team of teacher naturalists? This is a great question. We will leave the decision up to you but let us say this. While we do not have a mandatory

tipping policy. Our teacher naturalists are trained professionals who are all incredibly passionate about what they do. For many this is more than a job, it is a lifestyle. Our teacher naturalists do much more than provide education on the trail while ensuring everyone returns safely at the end of the day. This means while hiking and navigating mountainous roads in Glacier National Park. They are eager to share stories and jokes and many will take turns being the chef during your stay. If you feel our team of teacher naturalist has done a great job and made your experience a memorable one, then you can certainly show your appreciation by giving them a tip.

How much should we tip? Tipping is voluntary and completely at the discretion of the individual trip participants. If you feel that the team of teacher naturalists did an outstanding job and you would like to reward them for their efforts, a suggested guidelines is \$5 - \$15 per participant per day. This would be appropriate tip and greatly appreciated!

Who does our tip benefit and who should we give our tip too? Tip will be split between all members of our Field Camp teacher naturalist team. Any tips should be given to the Field Camp Program Manager, who will handle distributing these to the team appropriately.

Fellow Travelers

This is a group travel adventure. All participants are encouraged to review the itinerary and trip difficulty. It is inevitable that some travelers will have different goals, perspectives and abilities. We ask that the group respect each individual's conditions and needs throughout the course or trip. We want everyone to enjoy themselves to the fullest!