



HIKES AND HUCKLEBERRIES



GETTING THERE AND AROUND

You can reach Glacier by flying into Kalispell, Mont., and driving half an hour to the west side of the park, or flying into Great Falls and driving two and a half hours to reach the eastern entry point. You can also take Amtrak’s Empire Builder from Chicago, Seattle or Tacoma, and disembark at either East Glacier Park, Essex or West Glacier. The Going-to-the-Sun Road has been under repair since last year, which means that traffic is often rerouted to a single lane. This results in stops that can add 30 or 40 minutes to the usual one- or two-hour trip.

The Logan Pass parking lot and visitor center is usually posted “Full” by midmorning all summer, according to park staff members. A shuttle bus system along the Going-to-the-Sun Road ferries hikers and sightseers to and from Logan Pass and a series of trailheads.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

At East Glacier Park:
Both the **Glacier Park Lodge** and, to the north, **Many Glacier Hotel** (for both 406-892-2525; glacierparkinc.com/reservations.php; both from \$140 a night for two in high season) are concessioner “legacy” railroad hotels — gracious dowager empresses that can’t help but show their age.

The **Backpacker’s Inn**, right behind Serrano’s Mexican Restaurant (29 Dawson Avenue; 406-226-9392; serranosmexican.com) and under the same ownership, is \$30 a night for a single room, \$12 a night for the gender-segregated hostel. Clean, quiet, spartan. Serrano’s has benches on the porch for its surplus of patrons — a mix of locals, tourists and backpackers who line up for the chimichangas and carne Tampico. The super-smoky habanero sauce is sold at the cash register.

At West Glacier:
The **Silver Wolf Log Chalets** (406-387-4448; silverwolfchalets.com; from \$176) are cabins with interior décor that is almost exclusively logs, twigs and sticks, quiet and nicely appointed, 10 minutes from the park.

The **Belton Chalet** (406-888-5000; beltonchalet.com; from \$155) is a lovely old hotel with predictable advantages and limitations. Keep in mind that a railroad line is close at hand. The restaurant is one of the best at this edge of the park.

In the park:
There are 13 national park campgrounds, many with views of lakes and peaks, including those at Appgar Lake, Medicine Lake or Swiftcurrent Lake. Cook a porterhouse or two over the iron grill, bring in a bottle of malbec and observe all bear precautions.

A NOTE ABOUT WATER

East Glacier Park, Mont., is a small tourist town whose water system is not reliably safe, according to state and federal authorities. Motels connected to that system are required to post a “boil order” warning, but some don’t, which could mean trouble if you’re unaware and brush your teeth or drink water from the tap in your room. (Boiling kills giardia, E. coli, cryptosporidium and other potentially illness-producing microorganisms not reliably filtered out by the current water operation, said Shelley Nolan of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.)

A few places, including the big Glacier Park Lodge, have their own wells or water filtration, so the water is safe to use without boiling. Restaurants should use bottled water. So ask.

A new water treatment plant is set to begin operation soon, according to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, but as of this writing, it’s not certain that will occur in 2011.



enchiladas pasillas at Serrano’s Mexican restaurant among a crowd of other glacier-gawkers and local ranchers — I opted for the Mountain Pine Motel. It has endured, with appearance and ambience intact, since 1947. The owners are descendants of the pioneer Sherburne family that helped settle the park area in the 1890s.

Nearby is the century-old Glacier Park Lodge, a grandly creaky log cabin writ very large. There are three such concessioner-run legacy hotels at the park, erected by the Great Northern Railroad to lure tourism. My favorite is the Many Glacier Hotel, a darkly comical but generally comfortable old wooden monstrosity with a Swiss theme (the bellhops wear lederhosen). Its broad verandas face a transfixing view of a horizon of pinnacles that surround Swiftcurrent Lake — one of 131 named lakes in the park (631 others are as yet unnamed; feel free to follow my example and name a few after your friends).

When my wonderful clawfoot tub leaked onto the occupants of the room below, the two repair-crew guys who showed up grinned and shrugged after some futile work: that’s kind of the way this place is, they said. The only other available room was infested with bats, and smelled like it, I was told. It was a great stay, just the same. Half of the hotel is being renovated all this season and is

closed, along with one of the dining rooms.

The Many Glacier Hotel is also the start of one of the park’s most popular hikes, to Grinnell Glacier. The 8- or 10-mile hike is strenuous, though less so than the Siyeh Pass Trail, and the payoff is that you can get within a stone’s toss of the glacier itself, the surface area of which is more than twice Sexton’s.

I embarked with a ranger-guided group on Chief Two Guns — a trim 45-footer, built locally and hauled up here

somehow 50 years ago — for a quick trip over Swiftcurrent Lake. Then a short walk to another boat, the even older Morning Eagle, across Lake Josephine to the trailhead. The boats moved past a shifting panorama of jagged rock faces, slender waterfalls, and high above, the destination glacier. The trail is often crowded, but that scarcely registers in these surroundings. Hikers stop to catch a breath and find it taken again by the view out over the string of lakes, far below, fed by Grinnell’s meltwater. Con-



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