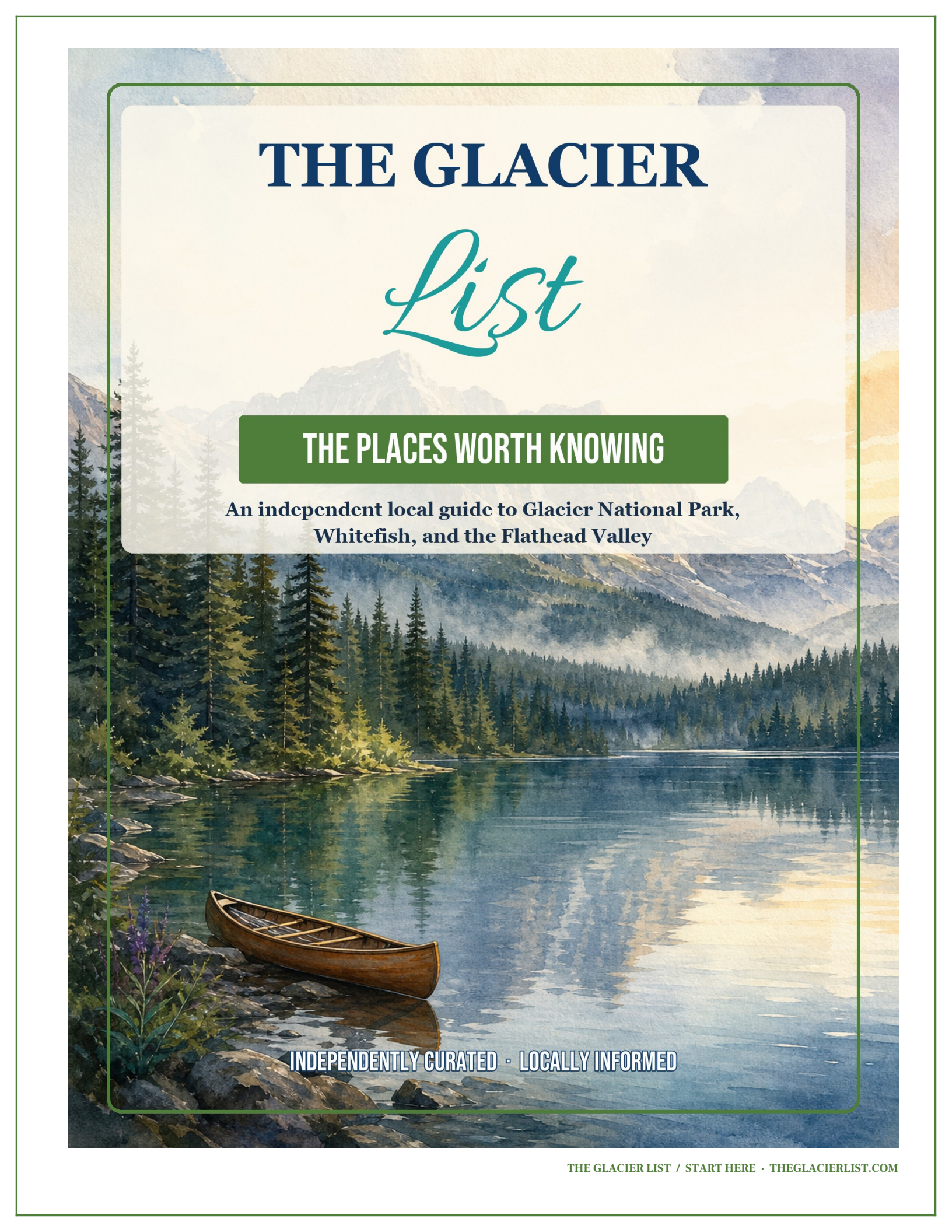




THE GLACIER *List*

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.



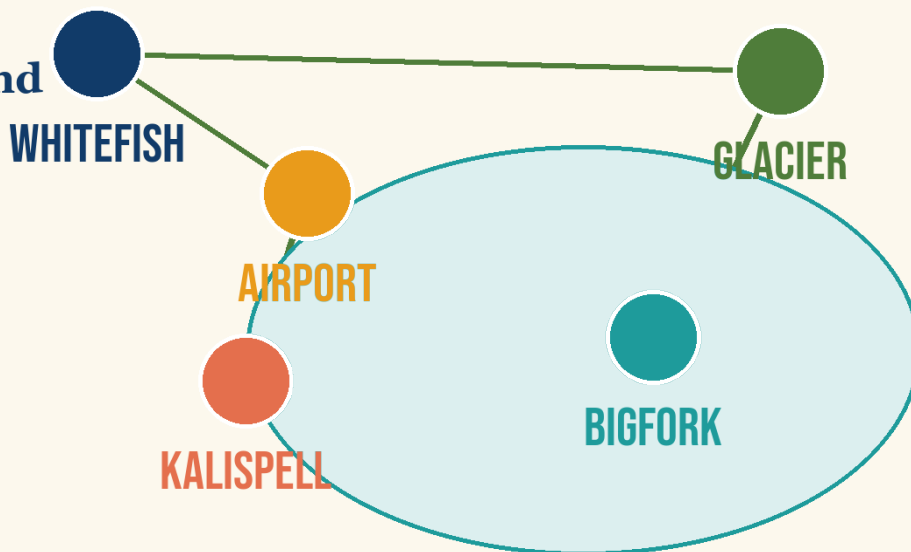
KNOW THE AREA

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.

A quick lay of the land

NOT TO SCALE



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

Four 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.*

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*

CHOOSE YOUR TRAIL

Five hikes, five 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.

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.

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.

LAKESIDE

The Boat Club

Weekend music by the water and an easy change of pace from downtown.

DIVE / PUB

Bulldog Saloon

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

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.

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.

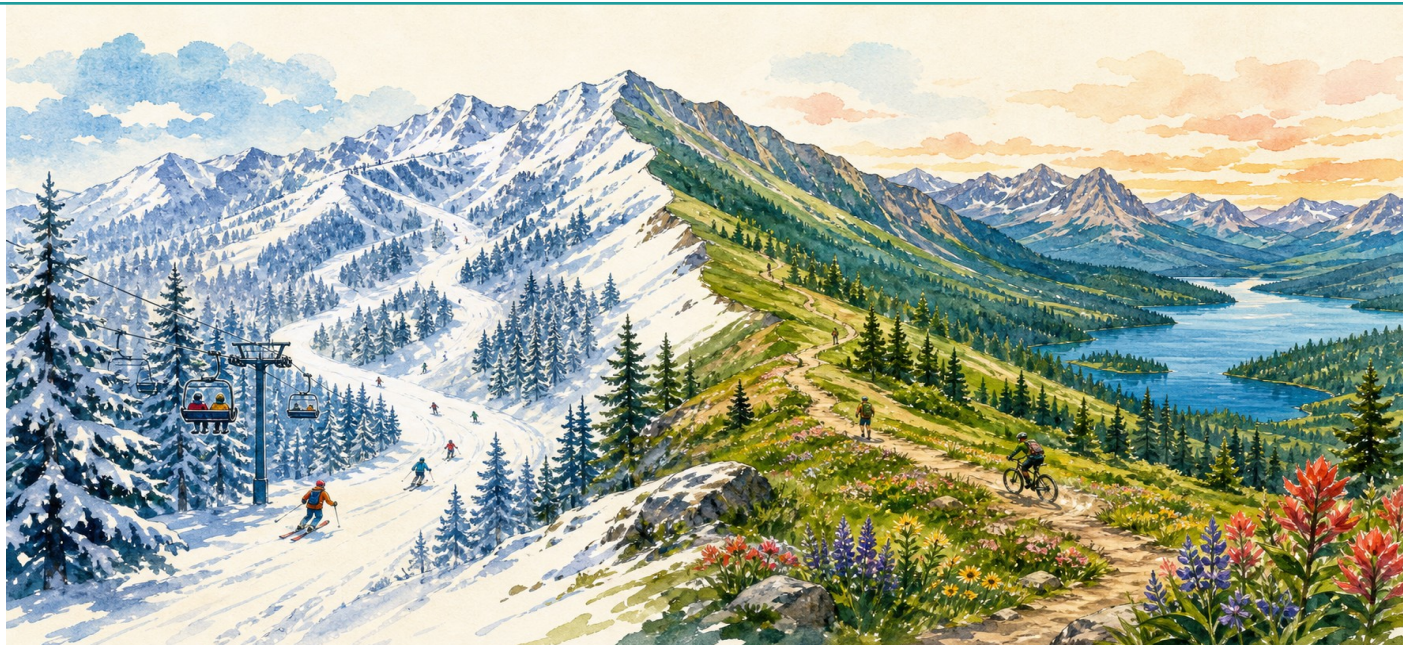
Play outside

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



MOUNTAIN TIME

One ridge, two very different seasons.



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.

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

LAKESIDE / \$\$\$\$

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.

STAGE

Bigfork Summer Playhouse

Ambitious musical theater in a small-town setting.

TASTE

Huckleberry everything

Jam, pie, ice cream, candy - Montana's signature berry is everywhere.

ISLAND

Wild Horse Island

Boat- or kayak-access wildlife country in Flathead Lake.

HISTORY

Conrad Mansion

A preserved 1895 home and a focused window into Kalispell's past.

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.

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.

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](#)

TAP TO NAVIGATE

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.