

Day 1 Arrive in Whitefish, Montana. Travel to Glacier National Park

Avalanche Lake; 5-6 miles, easy to moderate

Your guides will meet you at the Best Western Rocky Mountain Lodge at 8:00 a.m. in the lobby. They'll be wearing Country Walkers shirts. Please be dressed for walking.

From the meeting point in Whitefish, you drive (approximately one hour) to the western side of Glacier National Park. Here, in the lush, ancient cedar rainforest, you stretch your legs on an easy walk up to the glacial meltwaters of Avalanche Lake. The path first passes Avalanche Gorge, where rushing waters have carved the stone into smooth chutes and bowls. From here, you continue climbing a moss-rimmed pathway among western red cedars and hemlock to the tranquil shores of Avalanche Lake, which rests in a cirque surrounded by the towering, layered cliffs of Glacier Park's dramatic mountains.

Following a lakeside picnic lunch, you travel a short distance to your home for the night—a national park property that first began welcoming guests in 1895. Nestled in a cedar grove on tranquil Lake McDonald, the lodge provides opportunities to stroll the lakeshore or perhaps relax near the lobby's giant stone fireplace. Tonight, enjoy a welcome dinner in your lodge's dining room.

Country Walkers provides you with city information including recommendations on what to see and do in Whitefish if you arrive early or depart later than your tour.

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Day 2 Highline Trail to Haystack Butte

7 miles, moderate

This morning, early risers may have an opportunity to view the wildlife, such as deer and elk, that make their home in the forested foothills around Lake McDonald. After breakfast in the dining area with its rough-hewn beams and hunting trophies, you depart the western side of the park in a classic Red Bus by way of the well-known Going-to-the-Sun Road. This marvel of engineering spectacularly scales the Continental Divide at Logan Pass (elevation 6,646 feet) and affords close-up views of the park's majestic high peaks, cliffs, and lakes.

Today's walk is the famous "Garden Wall" section of the Highline Trail, which provides excellent opportunities to view wildlife on the open mountain slopes below the rugged ridge of the Continental Divide. The trail crosses a broad ledge, then twists through fir and spruce that time has molded into eerie shapes. Strong winter winds and ice particles have left many without windward branches and, instead, with a flagpole-like appearance. As you hike, you are surrounded by the results of glacial activity, in a valley overlooking mountains that cradle a high hanging basin, from which a waterfall cascades hundreds of feet to the valley floor below. You may share the trail with mountain goats or bighorn sheep, which are at home on the ledges of the rugged, rocky terrain. After lingering near a promontory known as Haystack Butte, you then return on the same trail.

By late afternoon you reach your home for the next two nights, another impressive park lodge built by the Great Northern Railroad in 1915. The lodge sits on the shores of Swiftcurrent Lake and offers some of the best wildlife viewing in the park. This convenient location means your next two days of walking begin right from the lodge's front door. Built with a true Swiss flavor, the hotel features a recently renovated exterior. This evening you dine in the lodge's Ptarmigan Dining Room, which serves Continental and American cuisine.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3 Iceberg Lake. Independent exploration at Many Glacier Hotel

5-9 miles, moderate, 1,200-ft. elevation gain

After a breakfast buffet, you set out for the striking aquamarine tarn known as Iceberg Lake. The trail climbs briskly for the first few hundred yards, then gradually ascends to the lake (elevation gain of 1,200 feet). You traverse slopes colored with a profusion of wildflowers, including creamy white beargrass blossoms in early summer and magenta fireweed spikes in mid-summer. In all seasons, you behold breathtaking views of Swiftcurrent Glacier, Grinnell Point, and towering Mt. Wilbur, known to the Blackfeet as "Heavy Shield Mountain."

Ptarmigan Falls provides a refreshing rest spot on warm summer days. For a shorter walking option, you may turn back here and enjoy a leisurely afternoon at the lodge. For the longer option, continue to the glacial cirque that supports the frigid turquoise waters and ice flows of Iceberg Lake (elevation 6,094 feet). After the short or long option, enjoy a leisurely evening, choosing the locale for dinner on your own either at the hotel's main dining room or the more casual "Swiss Lounge" with a full bar menu.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 4 Grinnell Lake Overlook

5 miles, moderate, 600-ft. elevation gain OR Grinnell Glacier; 11 miles, moderate to challenging, 1,400-ft. elevation gain

The Grinnell Valley area holds two of today's possible destinations—Grinnell Lake Overlook or Grinnell Glacier. Both options begin with a short, yet scenic, boat ride across Swiftcurrent and Josephine lakes. The trail starts with a climb through a forest of subalpine firs, then traverses ledges of sedimentary red and green argillite. The path then opens broadly to breathtaking views of the surrounding peaks, with Mts. Gould and Grinnell towering above. Grinnell Falls, with the distinctive milky flow of glacial meltwater, cascades into Grinnell Lake below. Wildlife sightings are likely as you travel through the habitat of bighorn sheep, mountain goats, bear, and moose. The turnaround point at Grinnell Lake Overlook is remarkably picturesque. It allows for a leisurely pace on the return, along the wildflower-studded shores of two lovely lakes (elevation gain of 600 feet).

For those who continue onward and upward, the trail is demanding, but rewarding, and provides access to one of the largest remaining glaciers in the park (elevation gain of 1,400 feet).

At the end of the day's adventures, a scenic drive of just over an hour brings you to new accommodations—a historic park lodge known as the “Big Tree” hotel owing to the enormous Douglas fir trees adorning its majestic lobby. Dinner tonight is in the lodge's dining room.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5 Scenic Point Trail

8 miles, moderate to challenging, 2,200-ft. elevation gain OR Upper Two Medicine Lake; 7.5 miles, easy

This morning, a short drive brings you to Two Medicine Valley and the trailhead for a walk that boasts the week's highest elevation, uniquely located here in the park's vast, eastern prairies. From the east bank of Appistoki Creek, the trail climbs quickly, passing Appistoki Falls, then ascends steeply and steadily via switchbacks up the arid mountainside above the creek. All of today's elevation gain (approximately 2,200 feet) is within the first three miles, and you are rewarded at the summit of Scenic Point (elevation 7,522 feet) with sweeping views. To the west are magnificent peaks, passes, and deep blue lakes along the Continental Divide, and to the east are great plains that stretch for hundreds of miles. After a picnic lunch, you return on the same trail with beautiful views of Glacier National Park spread out before you.

For those looking for something more leisurely, a walk is offered to Upper Two Medicine Lake. Starting at the foot of Two Medicine Lake with magnificent Rising Wolf Mountain towering to the north, the trail gently winds through forest, where avalanche chutes open to views of this gorgeous valley. While eating a snack at impressive Twin Falls, you may catch a glimpse of an ouzel (or American dipper), which makes its home in a nest under one of the falls. Continuing to Upper Two Medicine Lake (elevation gain of 300 feet), you unpack your picnic lunch before making your way back to Two Medicine Lake and returning by boat. Tonight's farewell dinner is at a local restaurant known for its casual menu and lively atmosphere.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6 Forest and Fire Nature Trail

1 mile, easy. Depart from Whitefish

Conclude your Glacier National Park hiking tour with a pleasant hike around the Forest and Fire Nature Trail loop, near the Camas Creek entrance to Glacier National Park. Previously called the Huckleberry Mountain Nature Trail, this hike takes you through areas that were severely burned in 1967—and scorched yet again in 2001. Visible regrowth here is a testament to nature's determination. Determined pine saplings, young aspens, and fragrant wildflowers surround the trail as you walk through the rebirth of the forest.

Soon you'll ascend vantage points to see thousands of charred trees and spreading views of the Flathead River. Once this hike is complete, you'll shuttle to Apgar Village on the shores of Lake McDonald, for a picnic lunch before returning to Whitefish for departure from the airport or downtown.

Included Meals: Breakfast