



Around Glacier National Park

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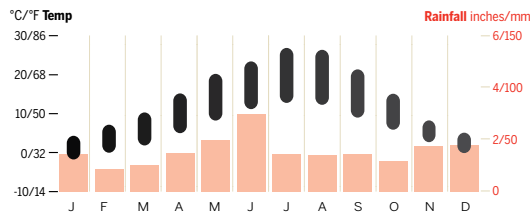
Why Go?

Although Glacier National Park's tourist numbers are relatively high (two million a year), almost all visit between June and September. Choose your moment and splendid isolation is yours for the taking. The park remains open year-round; however, most services are open only from mid-May to September.

Glacier's 1562 sq miles are divided into five regions, each centered on a ranger station: Polebridge (northwest); Lake McDonald (southwest), including the West Entrance and Apgar Village; Two Medicine (southeast); St Mary (east); and Many Glacier (northeast).

When to Go

Glacier National Park



May–Jun The thaw begins and lower-altitude destinations attract the intrepid and hardy.

Jul–Aug Peak summer when most trails and all park facilities are open.

Sep Fewer crowds, quieter campgrounds and a reliable weather window before the first snows.

West Glacier

Lying less than 1km (0.6 miles) from the park's busiest entrance gate and equipped with an Amtrak train station, West Glacier is the park's most pleasant gateway town, with an attractive cluster of serviceable facilities. Known as Belton until 1949, the settlement was the site of the park's oldest hotel, the Belton Chalet, built in 1910 and still hosting guests.

Sleeping

Glacier Campground CAMPGROUND \$
(☎ 406-387-5689; www.glaciercampground.com; tent/RV sites US\$25/30, cabins US\$40-60; ♿) This well-run and friendly campground, located 1.6km (1 mile) west of West Glacier and off US 2, sits on 16 hectares (40 acres) of densely wooded grounds. Sites (all have electrical outlets) come in a variety of sizes and configurations, so it's best to check out several before committing. It also offers basic wooden cabins

Hearty grub, such as gumbo and catfish po'boys, is served from 5pm to 10pm in the **Hungry Sasquatch** restaurant (mains US\$10), an outdoor pavilion open to nonguests as well.

Glacier Highland Resort Motel MOTEL \$
(☎ 406-888-5427; www.glacierhighland.com; US 2; r US\$70-100; ♿) The majority of the rooms at this popular place are in a low-slung motel-style building just up the hill from the West Glacier train station. It has a faux log-cabin exterior, whereas the blandly furnished, carpeted rooms offer little suggestion you're out West; they do have flat-screen TVs.

★ **Belton Chalet** HISTORIC HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎ 406-888-5000; www.beltonchalet.com; 12575 US 2; r US\$160-185) Built and opened the same year as the national park (1910), this Swiss chalet overlooking the railroad tracks in West Glacier was Glacier's first tourist hotel. Other incarnations, including time as a pizza parlor, followed, and it lay rotting until a late-1990s refurb, which dusted off 25 traditional yet elegant rooms, arts-and-crafts-style furnishings, a spa and a celebrated taproom.

Glacier Guides Lodge B&B \$\$
(☎ 406-387-5555; www.glacierguides.com; Highline Blvd; r US\$171; ♿) One of West Glacier's nicest properties, Glacier Guides Lodge is set in a quiet pocket just off US 2, opposite the West Glacier train station. It's an attrac-

tive wooden B&B-style lodge (built to LEED standards) with a stylish, rustic authenticity that doesn't forsake creature comforts such as wi-fi, air-con and TV.

Vista Motel MOTEL \$\$
(☎ 406-888-5311; www.glaciervistamotel.com; US 2; r from US\$135; ♿) The no-nonsense Vista does at least have a vista, along with comfortable beds, powerful showers and a spatially challenged swimming pool. Located a 0.8km (0.5-mile) hike along US 2 (there's a wide shoulder) from the West Glacier train station, it's a viable crash pad if you're arriving by train and plying the park by public transport.

West Glacier Motel & Cabins MOTEL, CABINS \$\$
(☎ 406-888-5662; www.glacierparkinc.com; d/cabins US\$105/200) A bed and a Bible are the only two guarantees at the closest motel to the park entrance, located on the north side of the railroad tracks in West Glacier Village. Motel-style rooms are situated in the village, while cabins are perched on a bluff overlooking Flathead River. No TVs, fridges, coffee machines or wi-fi.

Eating & Drinking

Oso CAFE \$
(12127 US 2 East; sandwiches US\$8; ☺ 8am-5pm) Housed in a bright red Great Northern Railway train caboose, with a kitchen the size of a food truck's, this little cafe serves up excellent breakfast burritos and pressed chicken and pork sandwiches and tacos. It's attached to the Great Northern Rafting company office and has a large outdoor patio.

West Glacier Restaurant AMERICAN \$
(☎ 406-888-5359; 200 Going-to-the-Sun Rd; mains US\$6-18; ☺ 7am-10pm mid-May-Oct; ♿) Basic diner fare in a classic if drab diner setting, but it's conveniently located close to the park's western entrance. Kids, with their parents' cash in hand, stop in for excellent ice cream.

★ **Belton Chalet Grill Dining Room & Taproom** INTERNATIONAL \$\$\$
(www.beltonchalet.com; 12575 US 2; mains US\$21-34; ☺ 3-10pm) For a step up from unadorned meatloaf, hit West Glacier's historic chalet for some equally historic food. The sit-down restaurant sports tablecloths, wine glasses and menu items such as coffee-dusted duck breast and Montana beef fillet cured in bourbon. The adjoining taproom is a more casual, economical affair that offers an