

## Backcountry Camping Guide

Photo by Will Landon

### Before Your Trip

Please read this brochure. These few pages will help you use the backcountry of Glacier National Park safely and gently. There is no way to eliminate all the risks of backcountry travel, but preparing for them can make your trip safer and more enjoyable. The following information will assist you in minimizing your impact on this fragile wilderness so it will always be here to enjoy.

Be sure to read the information in the park's newspaper—*The Waterton/Glacier Guide*. For further help, hiking and camping guides are available for reference at visitor centers and ranger stations.

Use a topographic map to help plan your trip. Carefully consider distances and elevation changes. After you arrive in the park, discuss your plans with a ranger and obtain information on trail conditions and bear activity. Be aware that dates vary for the installation and removal of many trail bridges and the clearing of trails. Hazardous stream crossings and snow fields may be encountered well into the summer season. Ranger stations and visitor centers have maps of these areas.

### Getting Your Permit

A free permit is required to camp in Glacier's backcountry at any time. The permit authorizes camping in established campgrounds on specific nights. Strict adherence to the planned itinerary is required to prevent overcrowding and to minimize human caused impacts. Locations and capacities of campgrounds are shown on the map in this brochure. Many fill quickly in July and August.

Permits are available daily, in summer, at the Apgar and St. Mary Visitor Centers and the Many Glacier Ranger Station. Check before trying to obtain permits at other ranger stations; many have irregular hours of operation and may not be open to issue permits.

For trips between May 1 and November 19 permits are issued no more than one day in advance. For trips between November 20 and April 30 special regulations are detailed in the *Winter Backcountry Camping* handout.

Each campground contains from two to eight sites. Each site is limited to four people and will hold only one or two small tents. A party of five will require two sites. Limiting the group to four

people will improve chances of getting the sites desired and have less impact on the backcountry. Group size is limited to a maximum of 12 people for overnight backcountry use.

Each trip is limited to six nights with no more than three nights in one campground. Some campgrounds have a one night limit. During July and August the total length of stay in the backcountry is limited to fourteen days.

In most cases, camping is only allowed in designated campgrounds. For those wishing more primitive conditions, the Nyack/Coal Creek Camping Area allows camping outside of designated campgrounds.

Campers on continuous trips may use special sites in the Many Glacier and Two Medicine auto campgrounds. These sites are reserved as part of your backcountry permit.

Stock users must also obtain a permit for backcountry camping.

Separate permits are needed to camp in Waterton Lakes National Park.

### Setting Out

Accept the challenge to "Leave No Trace" while in the backcountry by following all the recommendations in this brochure. Take a moment to read the trailhead signs. They contain important regulations and safety information.

Allow plenty of time for your trip. Consider distance, elevation, weight carried, physical condition, weather, and hours of daylight remaining. Snow covers some trails well into July so be prepared to do some route finding. Set a pace that all party members can handle.

Note that no pets or firearms are allowed in the backcountry, and vehicles, including bicycles, and canoe carts are prohibited on trails.

Carry insect repellent. Mosquitoes and biting flies can be fierce. Ticks may carry Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Lyme disease has been reported in Montana.

Bring at least 25 feet of rope to hang your food.

Backpackers arriving by plane or train should be aware that there are no facilities for storage of extra gear.

### For Your Safety

Check the latest weather forecast, and be prepared for weather changes. Cool, wet conditions, that may be accompanied by wind, can cause a serious medical condition called hypothermia. Hypothermia is a progressive lowering of the body's core temperature causing physical collapse and diminished mental capacity. Prevent hypothermia by using water resistant clothing before you become wet. Minimize wind exposure and if your clothes become wet, replace them with dry ones. Avoid sweating in cold climates by dressing in layers, rather than a single bulky garment.

On warm sunny days watch out for signs of heat exhaustion.

The protozoan *Giardia lamblia* may be present in any river, creek, or lake. When ingested, the reproductive cysts of these creatures can cause an intestinal disorder which may appear weeks after your trip. Carry drinking water with you, or boil, filter or treat water. The easiest method of effective water treatment is to boil the water for one minute (up to three minutes at higher elevations) or use a filter capable of removing particles as small as 1 micron.

### On the Trail

Follow the recommendations on reducing your chances of a bear encounter, as listed below.

Horses have the right-of-way. If you meet a horse party, step off of the trail on the downhill side and stand quietly until they pass.

Stay on the trail and hike single-file. Resist the temptation to walk off trail when the tread is muddy. The mud will flake off your boots much sooner than the trampled plants will grow back.

Help to minimize impacts. Never short cut switchbacks. Pick up litter found along the way and when taking breaks, pick resilient areas, such as rocks or outcroppings, to stop on.

Never leave food, including food in your pack, unattended.

Pit toilets are provided at backcountry campgrounds. For sanitation along the trail, dig a six inch deep hole for solid waste at least 200 feet from water or trails. Cover it with soil when finished. Urinate in rocky areas that won't be damaged by animals digging for salts and minerals found in urine.



### Backcountry and Bears

Most backpackers never see a bear, however people have been injured and killed by bears in Glacier National Park. Black bears and grizzlies may be encountered throughout Glacier.

#### Especially Dangerous Situations

- Surprise encounters may startle a bear and trigger an attack.
- A female with cubs is fiercely protective of her young and may attack.
- Bears rigorously defend food sources like berry patches and dead animals.
- A bear that gets food from humans may become aggressive towards people in order to get more food. Such a bear will have to be destroyed. **A fed bear is a dead bear.** Never feed a bear or leave food or garbage where a bear can get it. Regulations against feeding animals or leaving food and garbage unattended are strictly enforced.
- Harassment, such as intentionally approaching a bear, for photography or any other reason, may trigger an attack.

#### To Reduce the Chances of an Encounter

Don't hike alone or after dark. Stay together as a group. There is safety in numbers.

Never approach a bear for any reason and leave the area if you see a cub. Avoid coming between the cub and mother.

Make loud noises while hiking to avoid surprising a bear. Most bears will move off if they realize humans are in the area. Yell, sing, clap, or otherwise make loud noises to let them know you are coming. Bells, if large and noisy, may work, but the human voice when singing or calling out is more effective.

Use caution in remote areas. Bears may not be accustomed to encountering people off trail.

Be especially alert on blind corners, in thick brush, on windy days, and near running water where it is more difficult for bears to sense you.

Keep a flashlight, noisemaker, or other deterrent handy, especially in the tent at night.

Be alert for signs of bear activity and take extra caution when fresh tracks, scat, disturbed logs,

diggings, and overturned rocks are observed. Avoid obvious feeding areas such as ripe berry patches, and never stay in an area where you smell or see a dead animal.

Stay clean, but avoid scented soaps, deodorants, and cosmetics.

Don't sleep in clothes you wore when cooking. Hang them away from camp with your food.

Sleep in a tent. The physical barrier affords some protection.

Although evidence is inconclusive, sexual activity or a woman's menstrual period may attract bears.

#### If You Encounter a Bear

Keep calm and **Do Not Run** or the bear may chase you. You can't outrun a bear.

Assume a nonthreatening posture by turning your head to break eye contact. Bears may perceive eye contact as a threat.

Talk softly and retreat slowly.

#### If You are Charged

Drop something to distract the bear (preferably something that doesn't contain food).

Do not climb a tree since you will seldom have time to climb out of reach and many bears, including grizzlies, can climb trees.

Drop to the ground and assume a fetal position. Play dead and keep quiet if the bear is attacking you. Use your arms to protect your head and neck. Stay face down or tuck your knees to your chest to protect vital organs. Keep your pack on to protect your back. Remain in that position until you're sure the bear has gone.

Many charges are "bluff" charges. The bear may stop.

#### Pepper Spray

The use of pepper spray as a bear deterrent is a personal choice. If you decide to carry it be aware that wind, spray distance, rain and product shelf life all influence its effectiveness. Do not let it serve as a false sense of security or as a substitute for recommended safety precautions while in bear country.

### Other Wildlife

Whether bears, mountain lions, deer, goats, squirrels, marmots, or any other species, all wildlife can be dangerous, especially females with young. Feeding, harassing, or molesting wildlife is prohibited.

#### Mountain Lions

Mountain lions have attacked children and can be aggressive with adults.

If approached by a mountain lion, **Do Not Run**, back away slowly.

Act aggressively if an attack seems imminent. Throw rocks at it or threaten it with a large stick. Fight back if attacked.

Warn children of dangers and teach them what to do if confronted or attacked by a mountain lion. Have children stay close to adults.

### Leave No Trace

Challenge yourself to learn and practice the six basic principles of Leave No Trace outdoor ethics, so that the wilderness character of Glacier National Park may endure.

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Camp and Travel on Durable Surfaces
- Pack It In, Pack It Out
- Properly Dispose of What You Can't Pack Out
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Use and Impacts of Fire

Stay on the trail if possible, but if your trip takes you off trail, learn to minimize your impact. Do not mark routes with rock cairns or any other method. Traverse scree slopes rather than sliding down them to help prevent erosion.

Hike in small groups, and spread out rather than walking in a line. Plants may survive being stepped on once, but a string of hikers will kill them. Walk on rocks, gravel, or snow when possible to avoid disturbing moist meadows with fragile vegetation.

Strive to Leave No Trace.





## At Camp

Backcountry campgrounds have tent sites, pit toilets, food storage facilities and food preparation areas. Each campground has a map showing where everything is located.

Tents must be pitched within designated tent sites that are marked with signposts. Avoid pitching tents on undisturbed vegetation, and never dig or trench around a tent.

Fires are only allowed in some campgrounds; check regulations before leaving. Build fires only in provided pits. Use only dead and down wood. Keep fires small and completely within

fire pits. Be sure the fire is out cold before you leave. You may burn paper refuse at sites where fires are allowed, but do not burn plastic, foil or food.

Hang your food and garbage on the food pole or cable anytime you're not cooking or carrying the food. A rope at least 25' long is required. Hang the food at least 10 feet above the ground and four feet out from any tree.

Cook and eat only in the designated food preparation area. Avoid odorous foods and plan meals so there are no leftovers.

Never wash yourself, clothes, or dishes directly in a lake or stream. Carry water at least 100 feet from lakes and streams so it will filter into the soil rather than polluting the water. Use biodegradable soap if any. Do not scatter food scraps in the water or on the ground.

Pack out all garbage and food scraps. Do not throw them into the pit toilets, doing so may attract bears and shortens the useful life of the pit toilet.

Please be considerate of others, and keep noise or loud conversation to a minimum.

Never take food into the sleeping area.

Deer, goats, porcupines and other animals are attracted by sweat and urine. They can destroy campsites, clothes, boots and camping gear in search of salt. Hang your gear. Urinate only in the pit toilets. When pit toilets are unavailable, urinate on rocks, gravel, or snow to prevent destructive digging by animals.

Some campgrounds have been abused in the past and efforts have been made to restore them. Please use only established trails and avoid revegetated areas to aid in recovery.

## Leaving the Backcountry

If ending a trip early, have a ranger cancel the permit so other backpackers can use the site.

Please report all bear sightings and any unusual wildlife sightings, trail conditions or incidents to a ranger. Glacier National Park records all bear sightings for research purposes.

Pack out all of your garbage and that of others less considerate.

Showers are available in the park at Rising Sun and Swiftcurrent Motor Inns and in private campgrounds outside the park.

Shuttle service is available to trailheads between West Glacier and St. Mary, on the Going-to-the-Sun Road, and concession operated tour busses travel between major park destinations. Hitchhiking is permitted within the park except within 1/2 mile inside the entrances. In Canada, there is taxi service between Waterton and Chief Mountain Customs.

If you observe any violations of rules and regulations, please report them to a ranger as soon as possible.

## Glacier National Park Backcountry Campgrounds

Campground	Code	Sites	Stock	Special	Campground	Code	Sites	Stock	Special
0. Round Prairie	ROU	3	0	● ☆	33. Morning Star Lake	MOR	3	0	●
1. Adair	ADA	4	6		34. No Name Lake	NON	3	0	● ①
2. Akokala Lake	AKO	3	0	●	35. Oldman Lake	OLD	4	6	● ①
3. Boulder Pass	BOU	3	0	●	36. Two Medicine CG	TMC	2	0	☆
4. Bowman Lake HD	BOW	6	10		37. Upper Two Med. Lake	UPT	4	0	● ①
5. Brown Pass	BRO	3	0	●	38. Gunsight Lake	GUN	8	6	●
6. Grace Lake	GRA	3	0		39. Otokomi Lake	OTO	3	0	●
7. Kintla Lake HD	KIN	6	10		40. Red Eagle Lake FT	REF	4	0	●
8. Logging Lake FT	LOF	3	0		41. Red Eagle Lake HD	REH	4	10	●
9. Lower Quartz Lake	LQU	4	6		42. Reynolds Creek	REY	2	6	☆
10. Quartz Lake	QUA	3	0	●	43. Cracker Lake	CRA	3	0	●
11. Upper Kintla Lake	UPK	4	10		44. Many Glacier CG	MAN	2	0	☆
12. Arrow Lake	ARR	2	6	●	45. Poia Lake	POI	4	10	●
13. Camas Lake	CAM	2	0	●	46. Slide Lake	SLI	2	6	
14. Lake Ellen Wilson	ELL	4	6	● ①	47. Belly River	BEL	4	0	
15. Flattop	FLA	3	6	●	48. Cosley Lake	COS	4	6	
16. Granite Park	GRN	4	0	● ① ▼	49. Elizabeth Lake FT	ELF	5	8	● ①
17. Lincoln Lake	LIN	3	8	●	50. Elizabeth Lake HD	ELH	4	6	● ②
18. McDonald Lake	MCD	2	0		51. Glens Lake FT	GLF	4	8	
19. Snyder Lake	SNY	3	6	●	52. Glens Lake HD	GLH	3	0	
20. Sperry	SPE	4	0	● ①	53. Helen Lake	HEL	2	0	●
21. Beaver Woman Lake	BEA	2	10	●	54. Mokowanis Junction	MOJ	5	8	
22. Coal Creek	COA	2	10		55. Mokowanis Lake	MOL	2	0	●
23. Harrison Lake	HAR	3	6		56. Three Mile	THR	3	6	
24. Lake Isabel	ISA	2	0		57. Fifty Mountain	FIF	5	6	●
25. Lower Nyack	LNY	2	10		58. Lake Francis	FRA	2	0	● ①
26. Ole Creek	OLC	3	8		59. Goat Haunt Shelters	GOA	7	0	● ①
27. Ole Lake	OLL	2	6	●	60. Hawksbill	HAW	2	0	●
28. Park Creek	PAR	3	6		61. Hole in the Wall	HOL	5	0	● ①
29. Upper Nyack	UPN	2	10		62. Lake Janet	JAN	2	6	
30. Upper Park Creek	UPP	3	6	●	63. Kootenai Lake	KOO	4	6	●
31. Atlantic Creek	ATL	4	6		64. Stoney Indian Lake	STO	3	0	● ①
32. Cobalt Lake	COB	2	0	● ①	65. Waterton River	WAT	5	6	

- Fragile area, no wood fires
- ① One night limit in July and August
- ② Two night limit at Elizabeth Lake Head
- ☆ Special camping conditions exist here; inquire at Backcountry Desk
- ▼ Granite Park must be part of an extended trip in July and August.

## About the Map

Do not use this map as a hiking guide. It shows only approximate distances and the approximate locations of the park's backcountry campsites. All backcountry users should purchase more detailed information about their planned trip.

## Nyack/Coal Creek Camping Zone

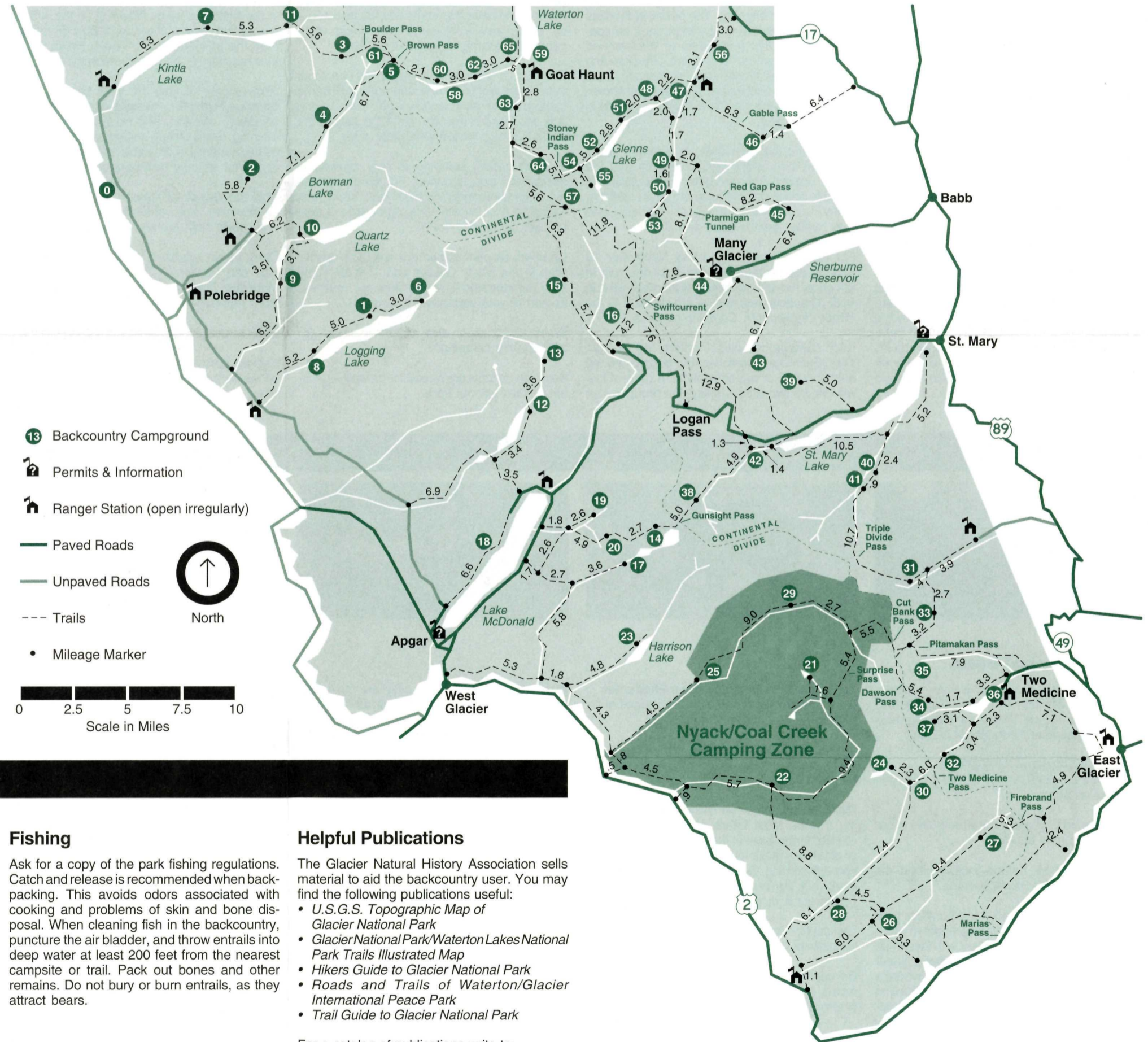
This area offers exceptional opportunities for solitude, higher levels of challenge and risk, and requires leave no trace camping techniques. Camping here is not restricted to designated campgrounds, but is limited to a maximum of three nights at any one site and six nights total. Outside designated campgrounds, party size limit is six people. Parties with stock may only use campgrounds designated for stock.

Camp at least 100 feet from lakes or streams, one half mile from any patrol cabin or designated campground, and out of sight and sound of trails and other parties. Pick a durable spot away from moist meadows. Dry grassy areas are much more resilient than those with forbs or low shrubs. Areas with thick duff and little vegetation are also

good. Avoid areas that look like they've only been used a few times. They may grow back if left alone. Leave the area with as little human impact as possible.

Wood fires are not allowed. Carry a self-contained stove for cooking. Cook and eat well away from camp in an area where cooking does not disturb vegetation. Store food well away from camp and suspend food and packs ten feet up and four feet away from tree trunks. Be sure to carry enough rope. Never store food in tents or sleeping area.

Where pit toilets are not available, dispose of human waste in a shallow hole at least 200' from water or trails, then cover it with soil.



## Fishing

Ask for a copy of the park fishing regulations. Catch and release is recommended when backpacking. This avoids odors associated with cooking and problems of skin and bone disposal. When cleaning fish in the backcountry, puncture the air bladder, and throw entrails into deep water at least 200 feet from the nearest campsite or trail. Pack out bones and other remains. Do not bury or burn entrails, as they attract bears.

## Helpful Publications

- The Glacier Natural History Association sells material to aid the backcountry user. You may find the following publications useful:
- U.S.G.S. Topographic Map of Glacier National Park
  - Glacier National Park/Waterton Lakes National Park Trails Illustrated Map
  - Hikers Guide to Glacier National Park
  - Roads and Trails of Waterton/Glacier International Peace Park
  - Trail Guide to Glacier National Park

For a catalog of publications write to:  
Glacier Natural History Association  
P.O. Box 428  
West Glacier, Montana 59936  
(406) 888-5756

## For Additional Information

Please contact:  
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