

10 Insider Tips



hike734

1 The Logan Pass parking lot fills up quickly

Driving the Going-to-the-Sun Road is an incredible experience. Its highest elevation is reached at the Continental Divide at Logan Pass. Here, the visitor center is a wonderful stop, and the hike to Hidden Lake is a must. The problem is, the parking lot fills up quickly (as in by 7am some days). Get an early start and make haste to get to the top. You'll have plenty of time to explore the rest of the road. **You'll need a vehicle reservation to drive the road... unless you get to the gates before 7am, but expect a line even then! Check the park's page on how to get your reservation.**

2 Set aside one day to drive Going-to-the-Sun Road

Okay, so you may be the trail pounding, anti-tourist, but taking one day to drive Going-to-the-Sun Road is worth it. There are also a handful of short hikes just off the road that need to be hiked. The amazing highway hugs the cliffs on the west side giving you jaw dropping views of U-shaped valleys carved by glaciers. Waterfalls and epic vistas take your breath away with every turn. Take one whole day to drive it from one entrance to the other, stopping to hike to Hidden Lake, St. Mary and Virginia Falls, and take a picture at Wild Goose Island. You won't regret it! (See the [Going-to-the-Sun Road Driving Guide](#) for the perfect day of exploration!)

3 Don't hike Avalanche Lake the day you drive Going-to-the-Sun Road

I'm not saying, "Don't hike to Avalanche Lake." Avalanche Lake is a super great hike and very popular for many reasons. (It's only 4.6 miles round trip, you hike along a frothy gorge, and the lake is amazing with cliffs, waterfalls, and happiness at the end.) It's just a bit too long for the day you drive the entire road. You'll end up rushing everything else and everything else shouldn't be rushed.

4 Rent bear spray in Apgar

At around \$40 a can, bear spray can seem pricey, especially for those just hiking for a day or two. What makes it even worse is that you can't take it back with you on the plane. The reality is, however, that you shouldn't hit the trail without it. What to do? Rent it! Swing into Apgar Village and chat with the good folks at Glacier Outfitters. Bonus, they rent paddleboards which are super fun on Lake McDonald.

5 The best place to see big game is in Many Glacier

National Parks aren't zoos, so there are no guarantees or predictability with animals. (That's my disclaimer.) While animals can be seen all over Glacier, your best chance tends to be in the Many Glacier area. Many Glacier has wonderful broad alpine hillsides to see bighorn sheep and both grizzly bears and black bears. From the parking lot of Swiftcurrent Motor Inn, get out your binoculars and spotting scope, looking at the hillsides or, better yet, hit the trails! Cliffs often contain mountain goats, although you see them better when you hike up towards the cliffs. Trails such as Grinnell Glacier and Cracker Lake are great examples. Moose are frequent in any of the drainages due to the streams, lakes, and amazing willow habitat.

6 Mountain goats are most easily seen at Logan Pass

I've seen mountain goats everywhere there is a cliff in Glacier. The best place to see them nearer rather than from afar, is Logan Pass. Coming from the west entrance along Going-to-the-Sun Road, as you approach Logan Pass, there is a bend in the road as you come to the head of the valley.

That is called Oberlin Bend and it has a parking lot with an overlook. In the summer, the goats are frequently feeding in the surrounding meadows in the morning and panting in the shade during the day. They also are frequently seen at Hidden Pass which is the high point of the trail to Hidden Lake. A bonus tip is to keep your eyes peeled for bighorn sheep. They often bed down on the hillside across the parking lot from the visitor center, although you may need binoculars and a keen eye to spot them.

7 Sunrises in the East. Sunsets in the West

Talk to any landscape photographer about the best time to take pictures and, as a rule of thumb, the early morning and the later evening tend to yield the best results. It also happens to be when the lakes are the calmest. So if you're looking for amazing photo opportunities, consider waking up early, right as the sun begins to kiss the mountains. Pink hues, then golden light graces the mountains at Two Medicine Lake, St. Mary Lake, and the lakes in Many Glacier. Then, as the long summer days wind down, make sure you find yourself in Apgar Village or along the shore at Lake McDonald, or drive up to the North Fork and watch as the mountains change from incredible to unbelievable as they reflect in Bowman Lake or Kintla Lake.

8 Walk-in permits have secrets

Okay, so they're not secrets, but a little strategy here. The first is that they are a great way to get a backcountry site. Just because you don't have an advanced reservation, doesn't mean you can't find a great trip on a popular route. The real trick here, is that they give walk-in permits not only for trips starting that day, but for trips starting the following day. Get in line before they open to snatch up your dream itinerary for the next days. Also keep an eye on the Park's walk-in availability page the week leading up to the trip to see what's still open. (links to that page plus more tips on <https://www.hike734.com/backpacking/>) The extra element to this is that, if you have an advanced reservation permit already, you can pick it up the day before you actually set foot on the trail.

9 Shuttles expand your options

Only have one vehicle, but want to end up at a different trailhead than you started? There are two shuttle options to help! The most popular shuttles are the free shuttles offered by the Park Service that run the length of the Going-to-the-Sun Road. These are great because they are free, but what if your hike starts or ends elsewhere? The answer is a fee based shuttle service by Pursuit that runs from East Glacier to Two Medicine to St. Mary as of this writing. There is also one that runs from Many Glacier to St. Mary operated by Xanterra. Check out the shuttles blog on <https://www.hike734.com/backpacking/> for all of the details. (The fee based shuttle services need to be reserved in advance.)

10 September is my favorite month in Glacier

Each month has unique, amazing elements that I love, but September is my favorite month to be out on the trail. The first reason is that all trails are open for hiking and backpacking. Early season has high water, lingering snowpack, closed roads, etc. In September, all of the passes are open, the trails have been maintained, and you can explore to your heart's content. Overall, the weather is beautiful. While it has a couple of days that are devils, most of them are angels. As September goes on, the mornings get cooler and crisper which means that the days spent exerting yourself don't have you melting. Also, the animals are active. They are trying to squeeze the last little bit out of summer before they migrate to lower elevations or dens. They are busy feeding and storing. Elk are starting to rut and moose antlers are glorious. Bears are foraging like crazy trying to get fat, so they are feeding for most of the day. Lastly, school has started and the summer crowds have gone home. (See the [Day Hikes of Glacier National Park](#) to find the perfect trail for you!)

More resources on next page!!

Resources

The Hike 734 website (<https://www.hike734.com/>) is full of videos, trail descriptions, photos, clickable maps, etc of Glacier National Park and other National Parks as I continue to explore around. Use it to explore and research places before you hit the trail so you know exactly where to go! Below are a couple of highlights.

Day Hiking in Glacier

The Day Hiking page (<https://www.hike734.com/hiking/>) carries a list of day hikes with links to trail descriptions. They're ordered by Jake's recommendation, so you can "ask Jake" to figure out where to go. All of this information is included in the Day Hikes Map Guide which is an excellent topographical map with the ordered list of recommendations on one side and the full guide on the other. It's printed on recyclable, waterproof, synthetic paper which is perfect for throwing in a pack. Head on over to the Hike 734 store (<https://www.hike734.com/shop/>) to see more!



Topo from Day Hikes Guide

Backpacking in Glacier

The Backpacking page (<https://www.hike734.com/backpacking/>) is the hub for my blogs on getting your backpacking trip right. From information about shuttles and permits to recommendations on routes, start here on your way to the perfect trip. The perfect topo map for backpacking is located on the Day Hikes Map Guide. The map was designed for both day hiking and backpacking with distances between trail junctions and color coded trails for difficulty. It's printed on recyclable, waterproof, synthetic paper which is perfect for throwing in a pack. Head on over to the Hike 734 store (<https://www.hike734.com/shop/>) to see more!

Day Hiking in other National Parks

After Glacier, I went down to Zion National Park then other [National Parks](#) to bring my style of videos, photos, blogs, and guides to you! Check my [National Parks page](#) for a simple way to navigate all of them. It may just help you with your next National Park adventure!

Social Media

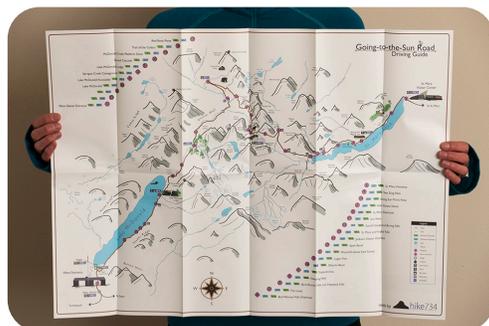
I'm on a variety of social media platforms and would love to have you connect with me there! They are:

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/hike734>

Twitter: [@hike734](#)

Instagram: [@hike734](#)

Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/hike734/>



Going-to-the-Sun Road Driving Guide



Day Hikes Map Guide

About

Making the Leap

In 2009 I decided that, after nine years stuck in a corporate job, I needed to try and make a go at a different life. I sold my house, quit my job and started a video production company. At the end of 2010, I had this crazy idea to hike all of Glacier National Park's trails in one summer. I began in May of 2011 and finished up my project in October of 2011.

Along the way, I brought along my camera and started blogging and sharing Glacier through videos, photos, and stories. After the project, I reworked my site to be more of a resource to help people figure out what they're going to do when they come to this amazing park.

From questions I get regularly, I realized that there was a need for some sort of guide that didn't exist yet. In 2013 I figured out a new formula of creating a map with a guide on the back. I came out with a [Driving Map for Going-to-the-Sun Road](#) first. A year later, I came out with one for [Day Hiking](#). They have been received with enthusiasm and encouraged me to branch out to other National Parks and create my unique map guide style elsewhere.

In 2014 I went down to the beautiful Zion National Park to start work on a [Day Hikes of Zion National Park Map Guide](#). I've since followed that up with maps for [Yellowstone](#), [Grand Teton](#), [Yosemite](#), [Olympic](#), and [Rocky Mountain National Park](#).

