

WED 24.8.

## GLACIER NATIONAL PARK, MONTANA

Our food bags were back by 6 a.m. The temperature in the morning was - 4°C. I met /talked to a young couple from Barcelona (they'd been travelling in the same car as we did 3 years ago- DODGE CAMPER, better than our Toyota, because they could fold all the seats, whilst we couldn't). On my question how they keep safe from bears, when having food inside – they had shown me a big plastic box which they purchased at Walmart. They thought it would be safe for them to keep food in their car and sleep in it, too. These young people had travelled in Europe quite extensively on their



motorbike a few years ago; they went to the High Tatra Mountains in Slovakia, too.

After breakfast we drove from our camp at St. Mary to **Many Glacier** location, and there we separated, as VP could not walk up as fast and as far as I could, and did not want to limit me. So, I decided to walk up to **Grinnell Glacier** and was about to take **Grinnell Glacier Trailhead**, when stopped by two smart rangers who were warning walkers about grizzly feeding on berries. Being on my own (the recommended number of walkers was at least three), they had stopped a young chap with his

girlfriend and asked if I could join them, the young couple did not object to it.

As the chap had a hand gun on his chest the rangers questioned him about using it and stressed, that should he shoot a bear, he would have to justify it in court, and have damn good reason for doing that.

*His name was "T Jay" (from Wisconsin)*

He was fully equipped, as can be seen from this photo: a hand gun holster on his chest, camera, binoculars, thermos flask and spray against the bears, and on his head he wore a headscarf and sunglasses. He was a friendly bloke though. For a while I walked with them, but they were too slow for me (blaming it on being a little tired after yesterday's walk), so in about 10 minutes I left them and continued along Grinnell Glacier Trailhead. Info from a signboard: *"Most of the forest trees are lodgepole pines (*Pinus contorta*), spruces (*Picea abies*) and firs (*Abies*), i.e. evergreen coniferous trees. The trail follows a chain of glacial lakes, whose basins were scoured out during the Ice Age. The area is often cut by avalanche chutes and higher up, only widely scattered subalpine plants have colonized the rock slopes. The entire area provides excellent habitat for moose, black and grizzly bears and bighorn sheep".*



**Grinnell Glacier** is in the heart of Glacier National Park. The glacier is named for George Bird Grinnell, an early American conservationist and explorer, who was also a strong advocate of ensuring the creation of Glacier National Park.



The glacier has been one of the most photographed glaciers in the park and many of these photographs date back to the mid 19th century. When compared with images taken over subsequent years, the glacier has obviously retreated substantially. In 1850, at the end of what has been referred to as the Little Ice Age, Grinnell Glacier measured 2.9 km<sup>2</sup>, including the area of The Salamander Glacier, an ice apron or shelf glacier that used to be attached to Grinnell, but is now separate. By 1993, Grinnell Glacier measured 0.89 km<sup>2</sup> and The Salamander measured 0.23 km<sup>2</sup>. Between 1966 and

2005, glacier lost almost 40 percent of its acreage. Of the estimated 150 glaciers which existed in the park in the mid-19th century, only 25 active glaciers remained by 2010. Scientists studying the glaciers in the park have estimated that all the glaciers in the NP, including Grinnell, may disappear by 2030 if the current climate patterns persist (if carbon dioxide levels increase a worst-case scenario).



*These there photos were taken on my way towards Grinnell Glacier. The Glacier was in front of me all the time. The first picture of it was taken from our car.*



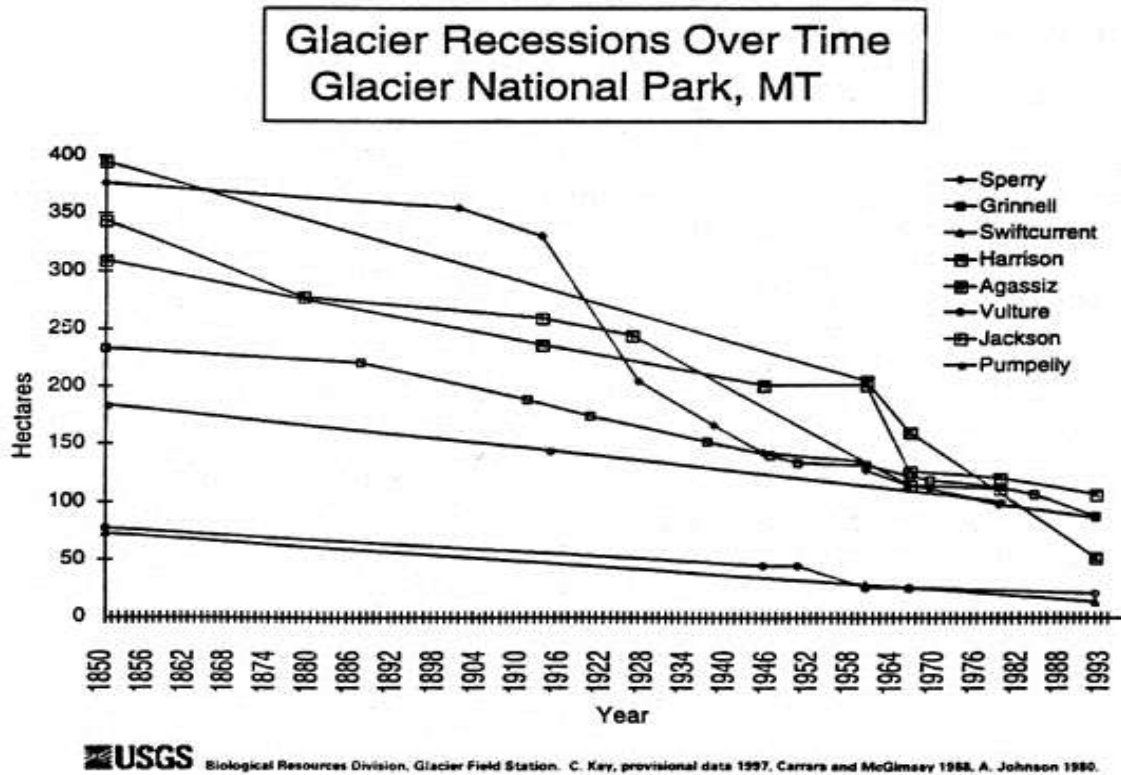
*At the top there was this beautiful ice-cold lake in which the Grinnell glacier melted away. People sit here, rest, and marvel before returning down.*





*These pictures were taken on my way down from Grinnell Glacier (flowers in those two photos are spp. Penstemon and Epilobium).*

**Glacier National Park** is a national park located on the Canada–United States border with the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. The park encompasses over 4,000 km<sup>2</sup> and includes parts of two mountain ranges (sub-ranges of the Rocky Mountains), over 130 named lakes, more than 1,000 different species of plants, and hundreds of species of animals. This vast pristine ecosystem is the centrepiece of what has been referred to as the "Crown of the Continent Ecosystem", a region of protected land encompassing 41,000 km<sup>2</sup>. How long is it all going to last?



*This graph tells it all: **GOING, GOING, GONE***

The region that became Glacier National Park was first inhabited by Native Americans. Upon the arrival of European explorers, it was dominated by the Blackfeet in the east and the Flathead in the western regions. Under pressure the Blackfoot ceded the mountainous parts of their treaty lands in 1895 to the federal government; it later became part of the park.



*Two  
Medicine  
Lake with  
Sinopah  
Mountain  
(Wikipedia)*





Glacier National Park has almost all its original native plant and animal species. Large mammals such as the grizzly bears, (approximately 300 grizzly bears are believed to live in the park as of 2008; *photo taken from Wikipedia*) moose, and mountain goats, as well as rare or endangered

species like the wolverines and Canadian lynxes, inhabit this park. Hundreds of species of birds, more than a dozen fish species, and a few reptiles and amphibian species have been documented. The park has numerous ecosystems ranging from prairie to tundra. Notably, the easternmost forests of western red cedar and hemlock grow in the southwest portion of the park.

*Saint Mary Visitor Centre*



Glacier National Park borders Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada—the two parks are known as the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and were designated as the world's first International Peace Park in 1932. Both parks were designated by the United Nations as Biosphere Reserves in 1976, and in 1995 as World Heritage sites.

### Enough information from Wikipedia and back to my trip

The trail was 11 km long one way. It took me 4.5 hours to go up and 2.5 hours to come down. Just before reaching the car park I talked to two old men (in their 70's) before they got on a boat to the other side of Swiftcurrent Lake. They had done a good walk and looked forward to be back in their Many Glacier Hotel. An uncle of the older man served as a soldier during the WW2 in Indonesia. What a pity I could not have talked to them a bit longer, time was pressing both parties.

VP was waiting already at the car park and looked rather excited as he had actually seen a grizzly bear. Being on a path with other tourists they observed it from a safe distance as it was feeding on berries.

Info from Visitor Centre: Grizzly eats up to 100 000 huckleberries / day in preparation for the winter hibernation.

In the evening I went back to the same restaurant as last evening and enjoyed another very good meal. VP did not come with me as he left the car in the village (some 300-400m from the camp) to do some shopping and was not interested in going to Johnsons of St. Mary again. That evening we did not hide our foodstuff from the bears, we just wrapped up and sealed all our food in those big plastics bags which were left to us by the camp manager. Well, we did it also because we were told that no bears ever came to this camp.

THU 23.8.



*Frost this morning once again. On my way to restrooms I had stopped to talk to these cyclists.*

*They were from Idaho and cycling to east coast of US. The good lady was driving a car as support vehicle.*

Usual greeting in US: "How are you today?" It seemed that cyclists had a lot of clothes to wash! Nice and friendly people, but I was not much amused though, when after I had told them about cycling ROUTE 66 against the wind 16 years ago, they suggested to do it again, but this time the other way round - with the wind behind me! I met these people once again later on when I was walking to a



Hidden Lake. Cyclists are often a funny lot (I include myself into this category)! Well they have to be to survive the torture of long distance cycling!

Leaving the camp, and saying farewell to our neighbours from Barcelona, we had stopped once again at the Saint Mary Visitor Centre, since we were passing it anyway. There I saw a couple of short films on the GNP and the Indian tribe **Kootenay**. Then we continued towards **Logan Pass Visitor Centre**.



*After stopping, at what surely was some of the most beautiful scenery of GNP – **Saint Mary Lake and Wild Goose Island**, we were driving through burned forest. Large forest fires are uncommon in the park. However, in 2003 over 13% of the park was burned.*



Up and up we went until we arrived to the top at **Logan Pass** (elevation 2,026 m) which is located along the Continental Divide in Glacier National Park. It is the highest point on the Going-to-the-Sun Road. The pass is a popular starting point for hiking and backpacking trips. The most popular trail is the Highline Trail which heads north along the west side

of the continental divide, through an area known as the Garden Wall, due to the proliferation of wildflowers which grow there during the summer. Just east of the pass, an area known as Big Drift often records over 30 m of snowfall, much of which has been pushed over the continental divide by the prevailing westerly winds during the winter.





The pass is closed during the winter due to avalanche hazards and the virtual impossibility of keeping the Going-to-the-Sun Road open, it is generally open from the end of May until mid October.

VP suggested we meet at this car park in four hours. He wanted to see some meadows with alpine plants locations, whilst I wanted to go for a trail walk. So, I got my backpack, some food and drink, my walking sticks, and off I went. I had chosen this trail leading to **Hidden Lake**.

*When at the car park, I took a picture of Glacier National Park Red Buses Fleet (in Yellowstone NP – there were same buses but yellow colour)*



*Just leaving the car park, I met these smiling rangers and very soon I was to learn the reason*





Talking to the lady ranger, I learnt that today is the National Park centennial, as it was established exactly 100 years ago, on the 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1916.

I was curious about qualifications for a position of ranger. She replied “I myself have a degree in natural sciences, biology and chemistry, it helps.” By the way, that little dog (in the above picture) bears a sign “Wildlife Service Dog” and belongs to her colleague rangers.

The **National Park Service (NPS)** is an agency of the United States federal government that manages all U.S. national parks, many American national monuments, and other conservation and historical properties with various title designations. The Service is charged with a dual role of preserving the ecological and historical integrity of the places entrusted to its management while also making them available and accessible for public use and enjoyment.

Notice that the rangers wear two badges on their uniform:



**Logo of the United States National Park Service.** The elements on the logo represent the major facets of the national park system. The Sequoia tree and bison represent vegetation and wildlife, the mountains and water represent scenic and recreational values, and the arrowhead represents historical and archeological values. The logo became the official logo on July 20, 1951, replacing the previous emblem of a Sequoia cone, and has been used ever since. This badge is on the left shoulder.

**NPS Badge** worn by Chief Park Rangers. The primary focus of their jobs is the protection of natural resources, protection of NPS employees and the protection of visitors. The badge is above the heart of a ranger.





This is a photograph (from Wikipedia) of three Yosemite National Park Rangers at a US Citizenship ceremony at Glacier Point in 2011. The term Park Ranger is traditionally used to describe all National Park Service employees who wear the uniform.

As of 2014 21,651 employees of the NPS oversee 413 units, of which 59 are designated national parks.



Before starting on my walk I went to see a ranger at the **Logan Pass Visitors Centre**; there were so many people about that I was not sure where to start, and of course, I wanted to have another little chat with a professional. The ranger just walked outside the house with me, showed me the way and parted with the words: "Have fun."

There were so many people walking on this trail that it reminded me of Wenceslas Square in Prague (that's what the Czechs always say about a place with too many people). In spite of that warning (red sign) all those people carried on walking towards the Lake, so did I. Naturally, we all stopped at the tape which closed the trail, in about 3km.

It was amazing to see quite a few people either ill equipped for walking (bad shoes) or quite old for that walk (I mistakenly thought). Some brave folks around, you could not find a better case of "The spirit is willing but the body is weak", than this. In this case - the spirit was winning!





*Hidden Lake view point beyond which the trail was closed*



*Along the trail there were several mountain goats (Oreamnos americanus) which totally ignored us tourists*

Because it was getting a lunch time, I diverted from the main path to a smaller one where I ate three boiled eggs bought two days ago in Safeway, Bozeman. The eggs, sold without eggshell, were very tasty with no smell at all.



*The view from my lunch table was magnificent*



*An elderly couple having their picnic and enjoying the same view*

That elderly couple was sitting about 30m in front of me and having their lunch, too. They knew about me, of course, and when I was leaving, the lady waved me good buy. That encouraged me



enough to climb down a bit, and talk to them. We chatted for about 30 minutes, it was so interesting. As our main conversation topic was politics, the lady she did not want to be involved and left it to her husband. He was very knowledgeable, and referred to the presidential candidates as “he” and “she” (presidential election was to be in a couple of weeks). As a retired army officer, he had been unhappy with the treatment of the army by the last two presidents, saying that they made the US Army weaker. These nice people (he was 74 years old) were from California and living only 15 miles from Yosemite NP. Pity I could not have talked to them a bit longer, since four hours had elapsed and VP would be waiting for me. I said to the man, that at that age, he was a good inspiration to me to carry on walking in the mountain as much as he did. They said to me: “Have a good day”, and I left.

On the way back to the car park I caught up with a young woman who was walking very fast, so fast, that had a job to keep up with her (same as Sandy in Victoria, Canada). When we got down to the Visitors Centre I spoke to her, asking whether she was from the army. She said no, and added that she works as a nurse.

My walk was about 4km x 2 (diverted by another km sideways where I had my packed lunch and met those two older people), and lasted 5 hours including lunch.

VP was waiting already for me, apparently richer for his experience, and we went back on the Going-to-the-Sun Road towards Lake McDonald.



Native people have lived here for millennia. Today's roads and hiking trails trace their routes over the Rockies. Our campgrounds and other facilities stand where they camped to gather plants and hunt animals.

*Blackfoot camp c. 1916*

The Indian tribe **Kootenay** used to held a 10-21 days dancing ceremony at **Lake McDonald**; it was a kind of spiritual guidance-being in touch with their creator. Snow could have been up to 7m deep. As I had seen a video about this important location of the Native Americans at the Saint Mary Visitor Centre, on our way to the Canadian border, I just had to



stop by the lake, make a picture and spare a little thought for those Indians.



On our way to Canada we first passed through **Whitefish** (the population 6,357), where we had stopped for VP to buy his camera memory card and to see a local vegetable / flower market, before entering our last US town on route **Eureka** (the population 1,037).

*US Hwy 93 through Whitefish (above). The main street in Eureka (below)*



**CANADA**



*We crossed the border to Canada at Roosville and continued on Kootney Hwy 93*



Now our priority was to find a camp, which we did so just before the first town in Canada-Wardner, on our left. This was an excellent camp at – Will-O-Bend Golf& RV Park – with first class facilities @CAD 25.00.



After the site steward showed us this site and we started to settle down, he arrived in his electric buggy with another man whom he introduced as a caravan camper whose roots are in Central Europe. The man, in his early 80's, went as a small boy, with his family from

Germany to Ukraine late in the 1930s. However, a few years later, before the WW2, his father was conscripted to Russian army and the family never saw him again. The little boy's grandma saved the boy and his mother from certain death by deciding to immigrate to Canada, which they managed to do so a short time before the start of WW2. What a story! We chatted for quite a while.

During those last two days I had seen some of the most beautiful mountains in my life – **The Glacier National Park** – and to summarise, I will borrow the following quotation:

**Far away in northwestern Montana, hidden from view by clustering mountain peaks, lies an unmapped corner—the Crown of the Continent.**

**—George Bird Grinnell (1901)**



In 2011, Glacier National Park was depicted on the seventh quarter in the America the Beautiful Quarters series.

We had done 6100km.