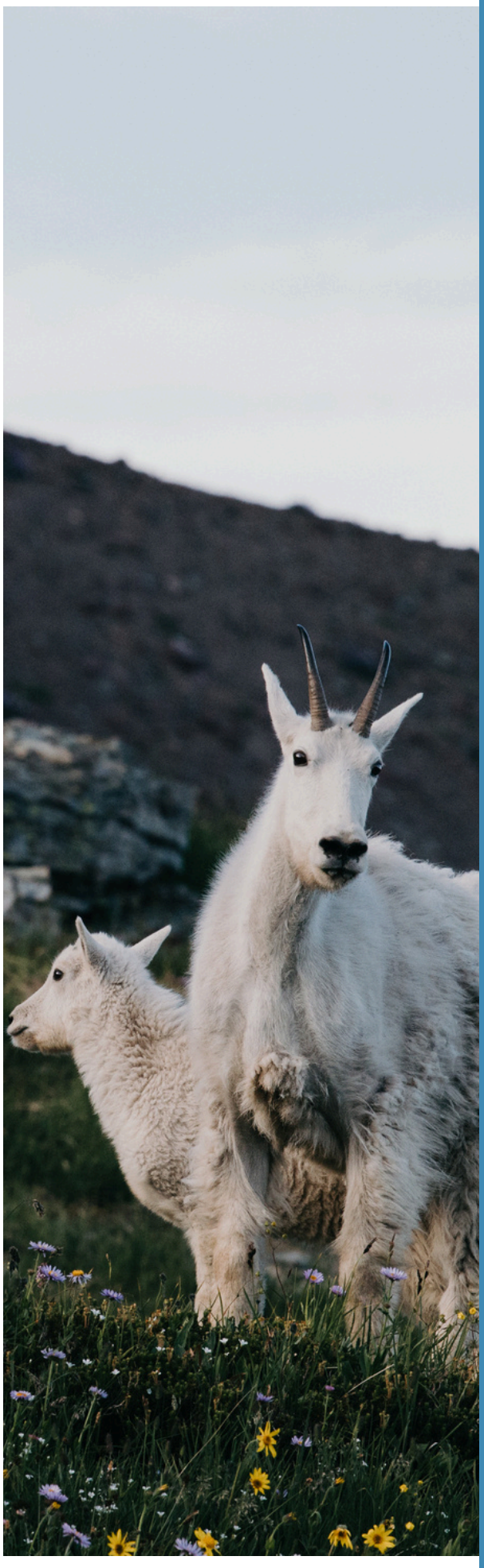


GLACIER INSTITUTE

Lake McDonald Lodge

Essentials of Glacier
Glacier National Park

August 18 - 21, 2027
September 6 - 9, 2027

Immerse yourself in the rugged beauty of Glacier National Park with this four-day educational adventure based at the historic Lake McDonald Lodge. Designed for a small group of up to 14 participants, this program combines guided hikes through some of Glacier's most iconic landscapes with expert-led outdoor education.

You'll enjoy hikes to Avalanche Lake and along Siyeh Trail, showcasing dramatic alpine scenery, wildflower meadows, cascading waterfalls, and glacially carved valleys. Along the way, you'll gain insights into the region's unique geology, wildlife, and the impacts of a changing climate.

With hikes ranging from moderate to strenuous, this program offers an enriching and active experience suitable for moderately fit participants. Evenings allow time to unwind at Lake McDonald Lodge, reflecting on the day's discoveries in comfort and tranquility.



Whether you're new to Glacier or a returning visitor, this program offers a unique way to connect with the park's natural wonders while deepening your understanding of its incredible ecosystems.

Why Choose an Essentials of Glacier Package?

These Essentials of Glacier packages are developed through a partnership with **Glacier National Park Lodges and the Glacier Institute**. These packages combine the best lodging locations with an exceptional immersive field education experience.

The Glacier Institute is the official education partner of Glacier National Park. The Glacier Institute's mission is to strengthen connections to the natural world through outdoor education.

To learn more about the Glacier Institute, visit our website, ***glacierinstitute.org***.

The Glacier Institute has been delivering immersive educational programs in Glacier National Park for over 40 years. Glacier Institute Outdoor Education Specialists are passionate professionals with extensive training to offer unique and accurate insights into the park's natural and cultural history.

What's Included?

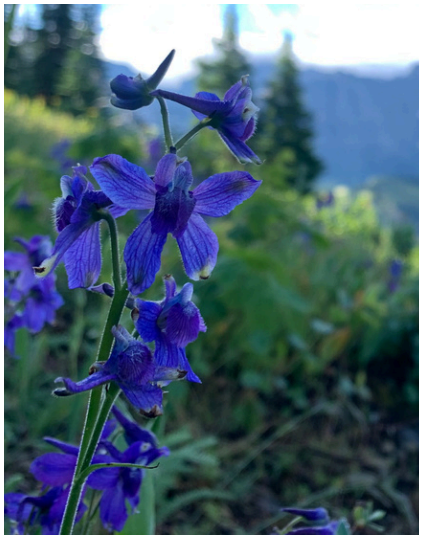
- 3 Night Stay - Lake McDonald Lodge
- Meals Provided: Boxed lunches
- Exceptional educational programming with a Glacier Institute Outdoor Education Specialist
- Use of high-powered scopes and binoculars from Zeiss Optics



Program Itinerary







Day One | Welcome & Evening Program

4:00 p.m: Lake McDonald Lodge Check-In begins
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m: Join your Outdoor Education Specialist for an evening program to discuss the history of the Lake McDonald Lodge and an introduction to Glacier's wildlife.

Day Two | Avalanche Lake Educational Hike

10:00 a.m: Depart for the hike to Avalanche Lake
Hike: Explore 6 miles of trail, winding through a lush old growth forest, leading to the stunning Avalanche Lake where you'll enjoy views of the cirque basin and magnificent waterfalls. Dive deeper into the ecology west of the Continental Divide and the role of old growth forest.
Estimated Elevation Change: 768 ft
3:00 p.m: Return to Lake McDonald Lodge

Day Three | Alpine & Glacier View Educational Hike

8:00 a.m: Depart for the hike on the Siyeh Trail
Hike: Embark on a 6 to 9 mile out-and-back hike along the lesser known Siyeh Trail. Begin ascending through dense subalpine forest, which opens up to reveal wildflower meadows, stunted wind-shaped trees and sweeping views of Piegan Glacier. Along the way, discover more about Glacier's alpine ecosystems, geology and the story of past and present glaciers.
Estimated Elevation Change: 1,500 ft - 2,300 ft
3:00 p.m: Return to Lake McDonald Lodge

Program Itinerary





Day Four | John's Lake Loop Nature Hike

8:00 a.m: Depart for a hike on John's Lake Loop
Hike: Enjoy a peaceful 2 mile morning nature hike on John's Lake Loop. Begin meandering along Upper McDonald Creek, taking in the cascades and venture into the quiet forest leading to the calm John's Lake. Explore how Glacier's unique ecology and how every part of nature, including ourselves, depends on one another.
Estimated Elevation Change: 219 ft
10:00 a.m: Wrap up and farewells
11:00 a.m: Check-out time from lodge (if applicable).



Frequently Asked Questions



IS THERE AN AGE REQUIREMENT?

- Yes, this program is for adults only. All participants must be over 18.

WHAT SHOULD I PACK?

- Much of the program time will be spent outdoors, and participants should be prepared for various mountain weather conditions and temperatures. Appropriate clothing, equipment, and footwear are essential. Summer temperatures can range from below-freezing in the mornings to 85°+ Fahrenheit in the afternoons. Layering garments for protection against the wind, sun, and temperature extremes should guide clothing choices.
- ***The Outdoor Education Specialist will carry a first aid kit, bear spray, and emergency communication device.***

HOW FIT DO I NEED TO BE?

- Participants should be prepared to hike up to 10 miles in a day with elevation gains of up to 2,300 feet. Depending on the group's pace and preferences, hikes may be shortened to prioritize educational quality.
- The Glacier Institute follows a strict hike-as-a-group policy, ensuring all participants stay together for a safe, engaging, and enriching educational experience.
- Participants should be prepared for changing environmental conditions that may exasperate existing health conditions. Please make considerations for elevation, seasonal allergies, and air quality due to fires and bring any necessary medications.



Frequently Asked Questions



WHAT ARE THE STAFF'S QUALIFICATIONS?

- Our staff arrive each season with tremendous passion and diverse backgrounds. They undergo three weeks of intensive training covering natural and cultrual history led by field experts, alongside specialized instruction with NPS Interpreters. They are First-Aid/CPR certified.

AM I GUARANTEED TO GO ON THE HIKES LISTED IN THE ITINERARY?

- We will do our best to follow the itinerary that was crafted for this trip. However, Glacier National Park occasionally closes trails for weather, trail conditions, wildlife, or fires. In the case of a closure, we will find another suitable location to explore.

WHAT WILL I EAT?

- **Lunch will be boxed and ready for each day's adventure.** Please complete a form with the dining room the night before. Lunches can be picked up by 7 am.
- **Breakfast and Dinner** are not included in this package.
- ***Please discuss any dietary restrictions with the dining staff, they will make all possible efforts to accommodate your needs.***

WHAT DO THE VEHICLES LOOK LIKE?

- They are 15 passenger vans.

SHOULD I TIP MY OUTDOOR EDUCATION SPECIALIST?

- Tips are never expected, but always appreciated.



Terms & Conditions

Itineraries are subject to change. Unforeseen cancellations of Program activities due to inclement weather or mechanical difficulties will be supplemented with extended touring routes or alternative activities. Refunds will not be issued for canceled activities.

Rates include taxes and fees with the exception of the NPS Entrance fee, which must be paid upon entering the National Park. Rates, taxes, and fees are subject to change and based on approved local, state, and NPS fees at the time of the session date.



Deposit/Refund Policy:

The following policies apply to Glacier Institute Lodging & Learning packages. If you cancel:

- 60 days or more prior to the start of your package, 100% of your payment will be refunded.
- 30 days or more prior to the start of your package, 50% of your payment will be refunded.
- If you cancel fewer than 30 days before the start of your program, your full payment will be forfeited.
- Please call the Central Reservations Office at 855-SEE-GLACIER (855-733-4522) to cancel.

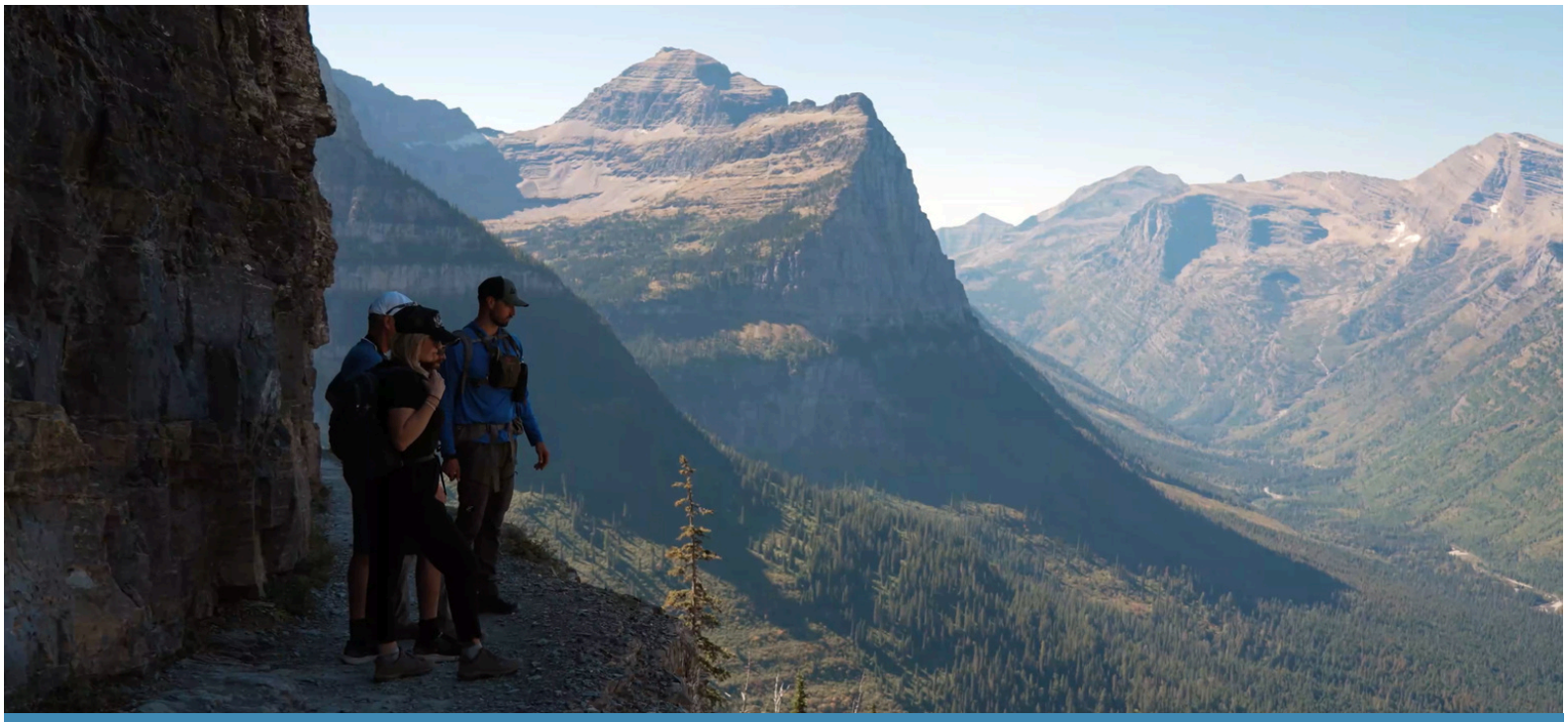
We recommend the purchase of travel insurance to help protect you against financial loss if you must cancel or interrupt your trip due to unforeseen circumstances.

About The Glacier Institute

The Glacier Institute, a nonprofit and the official education partner of Glacier National Park and Flathead National Forest, is a trusted leader in outdoor education. With over 40 years of experience, we offer immersive, expert-led programs which foster deeper connections to the natural world while cultivating critical thinking and understanding.

Our week-long courses provide in-depth, hands-on learning guided by seasoned educators and topic experts. Participants gain more than knowledge. Leave with a renewed perspective and a profound appreciation for the environment.

As a nonprofit, we're dedicated to making outdoor education impactful and accessible, ensuring every experience is both meaningful and transformative. When you join a Glacier Institute course, you'll gain skills, insights, and memories that will stay with you long after you leave the trail.



"We only protect what we love, we only love what we understand, and we only understand what we are taught."

Jacques-Yves Cousteau