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## ***Stop 45. Glacier East***

Arrival datetime: Sunday, June 30, 3:30PM  
Sites visited: Glacier National Park  
Accommodations: Glacier Lodge  
States traveled: Montana

We had tried to get two nights in Many Glacier, but felt lucky that we did not succeed. We also tried to cancel the last night at Glacier Lodge, but they would have kept our deposit. It was less cloudy than the previous day, so as its mountain views were the heralded highlight of the park, we decided to try the Going to the Sun Road again. Not a quarter mile from the hotel, Jennifer saw the hindquarters of a big brown bear disappear into bushes on the side of the road. Another excited tourist who had pulled over for the event told us she saw a cub as well.

It drizzled here and there, but the clouds were high enough this time to let us see the smooth bowl shaped mountain peaks and the long u-shaped valley below. The treeline was etched starkly on all the mountain surfaces. Below it were rows of evergreens through which waterfalls occasionally spouted and disappeared. Above it were flat mosaics with green, red, or brown tiles.

We stopped at a Sunrift Gorge. Though it must have been the 100th or more example of it this trip, we again marveled how fast-moving water carves deep smooth curves into hard rock. We followed the gorge along a short hiking trail to Baring Falls. Though it was only a half-mile or so walk, we clapped and spoke loudly to each other to scare away

the bears. There were a lot of other people on the trail, and were relieved to see each one of them.

We stopped at the Visitors Center at Logan Pass. From the edge of the parking lot, we had a broad view of the Valley. Mountains on all sides looked like someone had dipped an ice cream scoop into the tops and swept out a path straight through the layers of rock, snow, and forest to the Valley floor. In contrast to their smooth sides, the peaks of these mountains were uneven and jagged, studded with small pillars or rectangular knobs. Each was a different color, a dark brown here, a gray green there, one was as bright a red as any found in the deserts of the southwest.

We approached the Visitor Center, still closed, and asked a Ranger why so many people were walking up the snow covered hill behind it. "To see the view," he replied.

"Well worth it," someone on the way down chimed in.

So we kicked our toes into the 80-degree slope of a snow bank and wandered the alpine ridge at the base of the brown tower of Mount Oberlin. Snowboarders were carrying their boards even further up the hill. Only two or three of the peaks



*Mount Oberlin behind Visitors Center at Logan Pass, June 30, 2002.*

surrounding us seemed taller than we were. There were no trees obscuring our view. We were set on a small plateau just under the sky.

Heading down to East Glacier, we found that Route 49 was out because they had not been able to repair the winter erosion. It did not surprise us. We drove through Browning instead. There we picked up a local Sunday paper. We read that two hikers had been attacked by a grizzly near Lake McDonald the day before, and the day before that, a hiker died slipping off the trail into Avalanche Creek.

Details about these incidents were sketchy. But on the bear attack, we gathered that the hiker in front had been charged by a bear she first sighted only

10 feet away. It did not say whether she had been shouting and clapping as instructed, just that once she saw the bear, she dropped to a fetal position, and the bear started to paw her. Her companion charged the bear, hitting it in the side to distract it, then dropped to a fetal position himself. She got scratches. He was mauled. But the attack lasted only 15 seconds and both survived well enough to walk back to the backcountry campsite and get some volunteers to walk with them back to Lake McDonald. The article did not mention where there were when attacked, but that the campsite was 4 ½ miles from the Lake.

We congratulated ourselves on keeping up the clapping and noise making during our Lake McDonald hike, and also for

skipping the Avalanche Creek hike in the pouring rain and fog.

Nevertheless, we decided to take a few very short hikes in the Two Medicine Area, even though it was still drizzling. One was a handicapped accessible interpretive nature trail to Running Eagle Fall. We correctly figured that there would be enough people on it to keep the

bears away. At the waterfall, there were families running around and photographers bending over tripods.

There were lots of leafy low lying plants and light green trees, but it was the rocks along the creek bed that were really amazing. A handful of them could just as easily been scooped from an agate display in a gift shop. Perhaps because they were



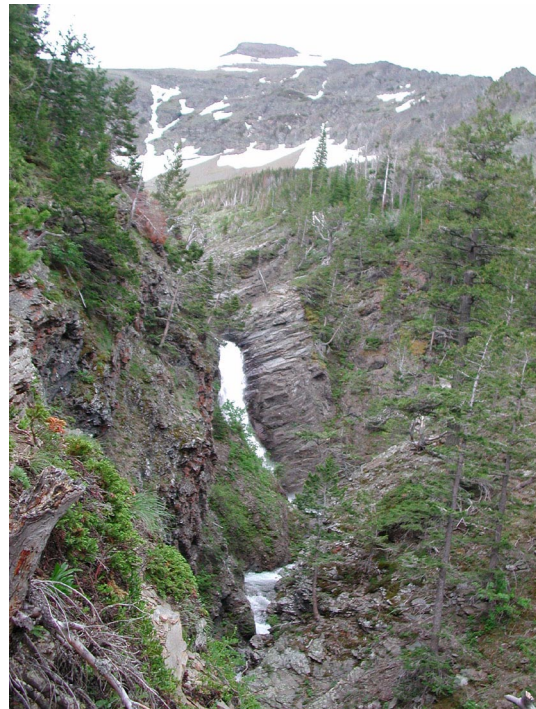
*Running Eagle Fall.*

all wet, the colors made them look like Spanish tile. There was bright blood red, forest green, deep lavender, and gold yellow. They were not round or oval shaped, but all edges were smooth. The same colors in larger rocks shimmered from beneath the clear, fast running water. The waterfall itself was set back upstream from where the path ended, inaccessible but adding to the area's rich aura of natural beauty.

In the Two Medicine Area, the mountains were reminiscent of sand dunes. We had seen in the Visitor Center slide shows that ancient seas produced the rocks in some parts of the park and we figured this was one of those places. Smooth waves of rock sometimes graced the ridges below brown domes. The treeline emerged beneath them as it had on the Going to the Sun Road.

Despite the cold, the wind, the rain, and the bears, we decided to do one more 1.2-mile hike. This place was that beautiful. The destination was a waterfall that we cannot even name because, though it was advertised from the roadside, it was not on any park maps or handouts, Acoppeka or something like that. As before, we took very good care to be noisy on the way up, and experienced huge sighs of relief when encountering families. There were wildflowers, big mossy trees, and occasional snow-edged mountain views.

The falls themselves were set in a narrow and very high gorge. The path came up to the edge of the gorge, but we could not see the falls well. However, we did not get too close to the edge after newspaper article "stepping off the path and falling into the creek" scare. We turned away



*Acoppeka Fall (spelling may be incorrect).*

from the falls at the same time as two young men with large backpacks. We supposed they had come not from the direction we had come, but from some campsite higher up the mountain. We fell in behind them.

The man in front had a little "bear scare" routine he would do on occasion. He whistled, then sang, "I'm a comin'. I'm a comin'." He held the "I" in "I'm" and tapped out the last three syllables in staccato. A few seconds after he said this, Jennifer would clap loudly a few times. Every once in a while, she and Michael would talk loudly about the wildflowers and whether or not they had gotten pictures of them yet and whether the pictures were focused correctly. During the times of our conversation, the backpacker did not need to sing his chant. But when there was a lull, he would pick it up again. We had to quicken our pace a bit more than normal

to keep up with these guys, but it was worth it. When we arrived at the parking lot, we thanked the front man for scaring the bears for us. He smiled a surprised smile. We think they were also happy to have gone down in a group of four themselves.

All the hotels in Glacier Park had had the same menu, and none served individual

breakfasts. The buffets all had cold food and we never eat enough to get our money's worth as they charge extra for coffee and orange juice anyway. So we skipped the hotel buffet-only breakfast again, bought coffee, OJ, and a factory made Danish at the newsstand, and ate in the breezeway. It had huge windows overlooking the mountains. Clouds were as usual taking turns obscuring the peaks.

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| Miles traveled:     | 126                     |
| Departure datetime: | Monday, July 1, 10:00AM |
| Departure weather:  | 60° Sunny and Raining   |