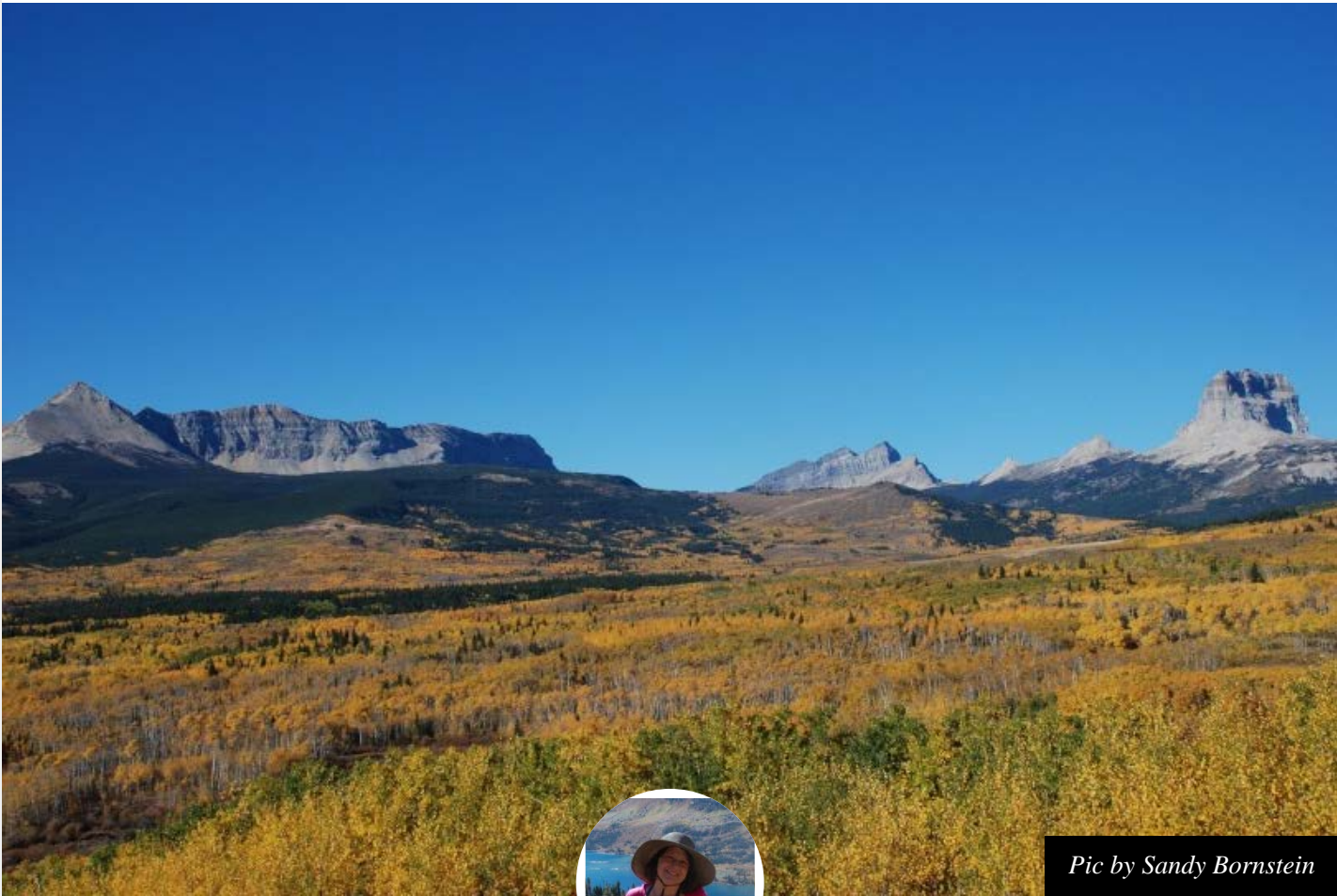




TRAVEL TIPS & INTEL

How I Spent a Day at Waterton Lakes National Park

10 months ago • by Sandy Bornstein • 4 min read



Pic by Sandy Bornstein

Written by **Sandy Bornstein**

When Glacier National Park (Montana) visitors take a day trip north into Alberta, Canada, to [Waterton Lakes National Park](#), the ambiance shifts. Glacier National Park's dramatic jagged peaks are replaced by a more subtle landscape "where the mountain meets the prairie."

Even though both parks share a common border and have been connected by the [Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park](#) since 1932, their respective sizes and layouts are notable and worth comparing.

My motivation to explore Canada's smallest national park with the deepest lake in the Canadian Rockies made it possible to endure a five-hour round trip drive. Had I stayed in the East Glacier Park instead of outside the West Glacier entrance, my journey would have been considerably shorter.

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Pic by Sandy Bornstein

I highly recommend booking reservations in multiple locations to better manage commuting time.

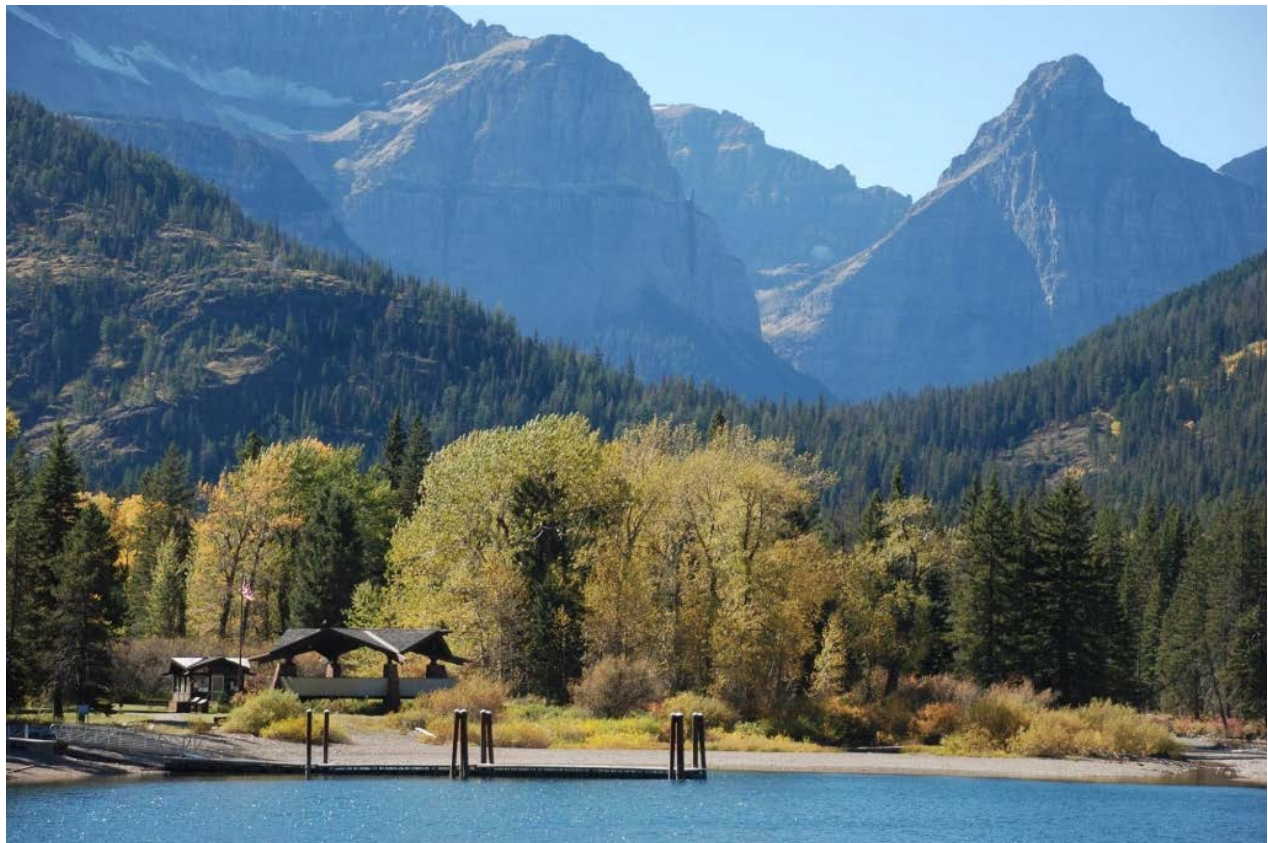
Domestic and international travelers coming from elsewhere can fly into [Calgary](#) and then drive approximately 160 miles.

After driving along the five-mile entrance road, I immediately took note of the Canadian efforts to incorporate a small town inside a park setting. Within walking distance of the main focal point, Waterton Lake, I saw restaurants, retail stores, and places to stay.

My time in Waterton was limited. The Chief Mountain Highway Border Crossing closed at 6 p.m. during the off-season. I immediately purchased tickets for a two-hour cruise on a [Waterton Inter-Nation Shoreline Cruise Company](#) boat.

With about an hour to spare, I strolled through the town and visited the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

As I walked onto the dock, a gust of air caught me off guard. My jacket was no match for the unrelenting winds that kept me chilled throughout my boat ride.



Pic by Sandy Bornstein

The boat stopped for points of interest, including the simple boundary marker that separates Canada from the US. Luck wasn't in my favor. The local wildlife chose not to make an appearance, but the landscape photos and tidbits of information were well worth the ride.

While Waterton’s more manageable size (approximately 195 square miles) provides fewer options than Glacier National Park (about 1,600 square miles), its overall beauty will mesmerize adventure seekers.

With just two hours left, I drove 10 miles from the village to Cameron Lake, a sub-alpine lake. As I hiked, I admired the sparkling lake set against a backdrop of mountains. I joyfully breathed in the evergreen scent coming from the nearby trees.

If I had more time ...

Had I stayed a day or two longer, I’d have checked out the Bison Paddock Loop, kayaked on Cameron Lake, taken a horseback ride, and/or embarked on a half-day picnic to a hidden lake or waterfall.

A few vital tips ...

Like any other year-round destination that has off seasons, it’s important to check websites for closures. The Chief Mountain Border crossing, the primary route for people coming from Glacier National Park, is only open for 4 ½ months with limited hours. Without a passport in hand, you won’t be able to enjoy Canada.

During the shoulder season, the boat cruise neither offers its top-rated expert hike to Crypt Lake nor does it stop at Goat Haunt on the US side of the lake.

Travelers who desire a more leisurely pace should spend more than a day in Waterton.

If you’ve been to Waterton Lakes National Park, what was the best part of your adventure? Let us know in the comments section.

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