

AFALCONGUIDE®

Hiking Glacier and Waterton Lakes National Parks

A Guide to More Than 60 of the Area's
Greatest Hiking Adventures

Third Edition

Erik Molvar

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GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT
HELENA, MONTANA

AN IMPRINT OF THE GLOBE PEQUOT PRESS

1 Boulder Pass

A backpack from Kintla Lake to Upper Kintla Campground, 12.0 miles (19.2 km) one way; from Kintla Lake to Boulder Pass, 18.1 miles (29.2 km) one way; or from Kintla Lake to Goat Haunt Ranger Station, 31.8 miles (51.2 km) one way.

Elevation gain: 3,470 feet

Elevation loss: 2,510 feet

Maximum elevation: 7,478 feet

Difficulty: Moderately strenuous (east to west); strenuous (west to east)

Topo maps: Kintla Lake, Kintla Peak, Mount Carter, Porcupine Ridge

Finding the trailhead: Drive north on Glacier Route 7 to its northern terminus at Kintla Campground. The trail begins at the northeast corner of the campground, near the lakeshore.

The Hike

The Boulder Pass Trail provides access to some of the most rugged and beautiful high country areas in Glacier Park. High elevations between Boulder and Brown Passes lead to high snow accumulations and late snowmelt, making this trail impassable early in the season. This trail may be entered and exited via three trailheads: Kintla Lake, Goat Haunt Ranger Station, and Bowman Lake. Any combination of hiking experiences, from day hikes to extended expeditions, are available to hikers on this trail.

The hike begins at Kintla Lake, which is set in a forested valley between tree-clad hills. As the trail winds around the north lakeshore, watch for signs of the mule deer and mountain lions that inhabit the dense forest. Approximately 3.5 miles from the campground, a primitive connecting trail from Starvation Creek joins the Boulder Pass Trail from the north. The Boulder Pass Trail continues to follow the lakeshore for another 3 miles to Kintla Lake (head) Campground, a heavily used area on the lakeshore. Along the way, watch for signs of the 2003 Wedge Canyon Fire on the opposite shore.

Shortly after the campground, at the head of the lake, the trail passes the Kintla Lake patrol cabin, where the trail leaves the lakeshore to begin a gentle ascent to Upper Kintla Lake. The trail passes open benches bearing the marks of the 2003 fire; the cascades of Kintla Creek are now visible. Across the valley and high into the basin you can see the area burned in the 2000 Parke Peak Fire. Occasional avalanche chutes from Long Knife Peak provide vistas of Parke Peak and the Harris Glacier across the valley. The trail reaches the foot of Upper Kintla Lake some 2.5 miles beyond the patrol cabin. The cockscomb peak at the head of the lake is Gardner Point. The trail follows the north shore of the lake, providing views of Kinnerly Peak across the valley. After 2.5 miles, the trail reaches a spur trail to the campground at the head of the lake, which is beautifully situated among stands of fir and spruce.



Thunderbird Mountain from Boulder Pass overlook

Leaving the lakeshore and campground behind, the trail crosses Kintla Creek and begins a steep ascent along the west slope of Gardner Point. There are many switchbacks through scattered stands of spruce and open jungles of cow parsnip, a favorite springtime food for grizzlies, before the trail emerges into alpine parkland at the head of the small valley. All along this section of the trail are views of Kintla and Kinnerly Peaks to the west and the Agassiz Glacier at their feet. Looking back toward Upper Kintla Lake, Long Knife Peak can be seen, marking the boundary between Canada and the United States. The trail then reverses its direction, climbing northward to the Boulder Pass Campground. Just below the pass, the trail passes through stands of young alpine larch, an uncommon tree that exists here near the southern extreme of its range.

From the west end of Boulder Pass, the trail winds for several miles through a high, glacier-carved valley, across moraines left by the retreating ice. Pyramid-shaped piles of rock called cairns mark the location of the trail so that it can be found in times of deep snow. At the east end of the pass, the trail branches into two parts. The more northerly path, the original trail when the Boulder Glacier stretched across the pass, is now a goat path, which ascends the terminal moraine of Boulder Glacier and

winds upward for a mile to a lookout point, high above the Bowman Valley. This lookout affords the most spectacular views of Thunderbird Mountain and many of the high peaks of the Livingston and Lewis Ranges.

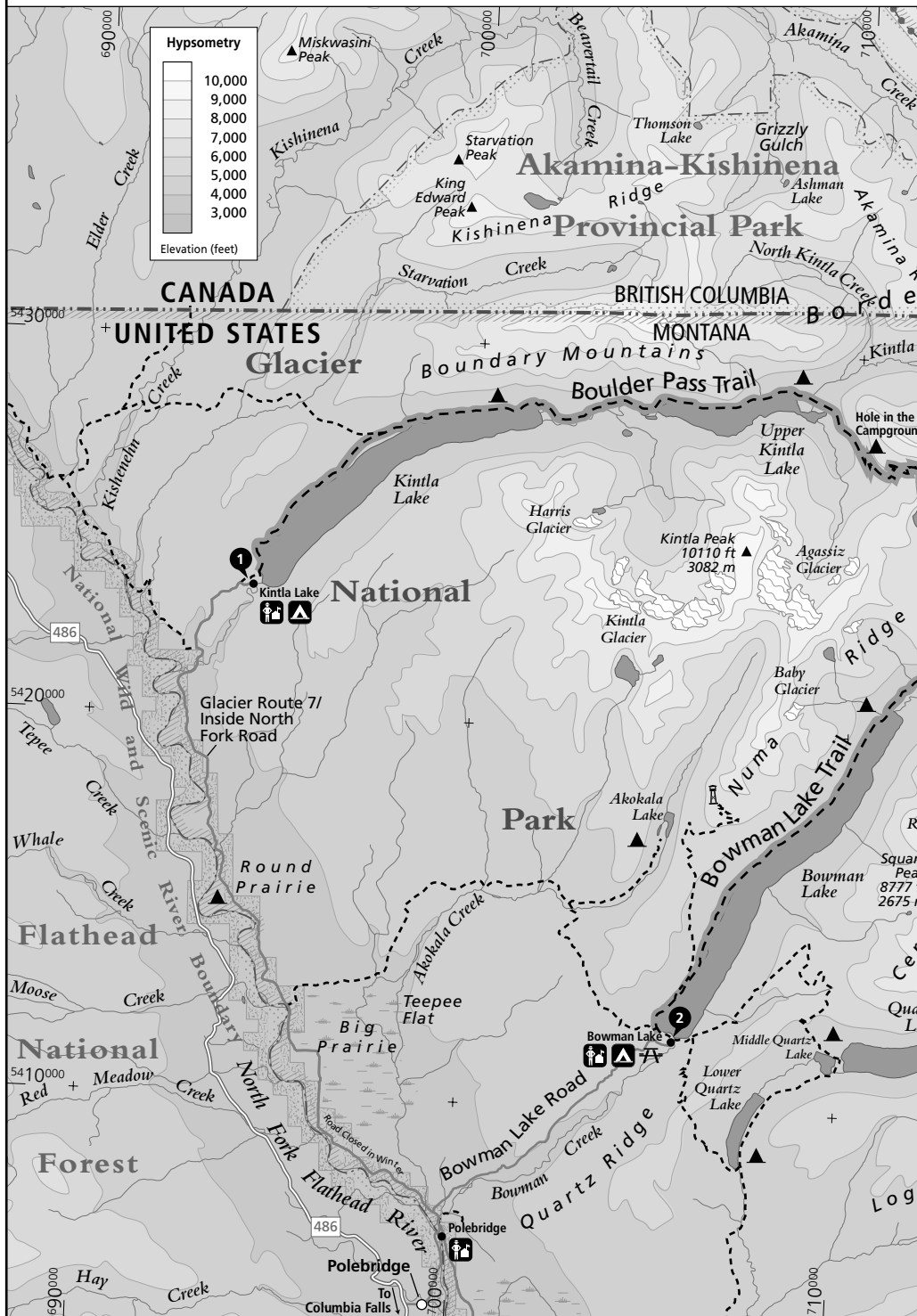
The more southerly path descends onto a rocky shelf occupied by several tarns and continues its decent around the curve of the Hole in the Wall, a perfectly formed hanging cirque that sits some 1,800 feet above the floor of the Bowman Valley. There are steep snowdrifts along this upper section, usually until August. When the trail reaches the eastern edge of the Hole in the Wall, a spur trail descends to the floor of the cirque, where a beautiful alpine campground is located among meadows of wildflowers and subalpine firs. This campground is frequented by mountain goats and several pestiferous mule deer, which you should not feed for any reason.

After passing Hole in the Wall, the trail continues its gentle descent to Brown Pass, a low saddle at the base of Thunderbird Mountain. Huckleberries grow in great profusion along this section of trail and provide a free food source for hikers and animals alike when they ripen in early August. At the pass is the junction with the Bowman Lake Trail. A short jaunt of 0.3 mile down this trail brings the hiker to the Brown Pass Campground, a pleasant area set among windblown firs. Looking eastward from Brown Pass, the jagged spur ridge shaped like a wolf's lower jaw are Citadel Peaks, and the massive peak behind it is Mount Cleveland, at 10,466 feet the highest point in the park. Beyond Brown Pass, the Boulder Pass Trail descends steeply beneath the Thunderbird Glacier to a tarn at the head of Olson Creek Valley. A steep snowdrift extends down to the edge of the water in spring, and several early-season hikers have slid down the drift to receive an icy and unplanned bath. The pond itself is set among dense willows and may harbor an occasional moose.

Once the trail reaches the valley floor, it begins a long, slow descent to the Waterton Valley. The trail passes through a fairly open section to Hawksbill Campground, a small area situated below a clifflike spur ridge scraped sheer on both sides by glaciers. The trail continues eastward through open forest to the junction with a spur trail to Lake Francis Campground, which lies on the shore of a beautiful lake beneath rocky cliffs. The lake is noted for its mosquitoes and fine fishing for rainbow trout. The trail continues to the Lake Janet Campground, which is located on the bank of Olson Creek, some distance from its namesake lake. Grizzly bears are frequently spotted in the avalanche paths on the ridge above this campground.

The trail continues down the Olson Creek Valley, past shallow, and sometimes mucky, Lake Janet, and into a forest of Douglas firs. An occasional opening in the canopy provides a backward look at glacier-clad Porcupine Ridge, as well as views of Citadel Peaks and Mount Cleveland ahead. Finally, the trail makes a brief descent to the floor of the Waterton Valley and meets the Waterton Lake Trail. To reach Goat Haunt, the trail turns south and east, crossing the Waterton River via a suspension bridge and then turning north to the ranger station complex.

Hikes 1 and 2

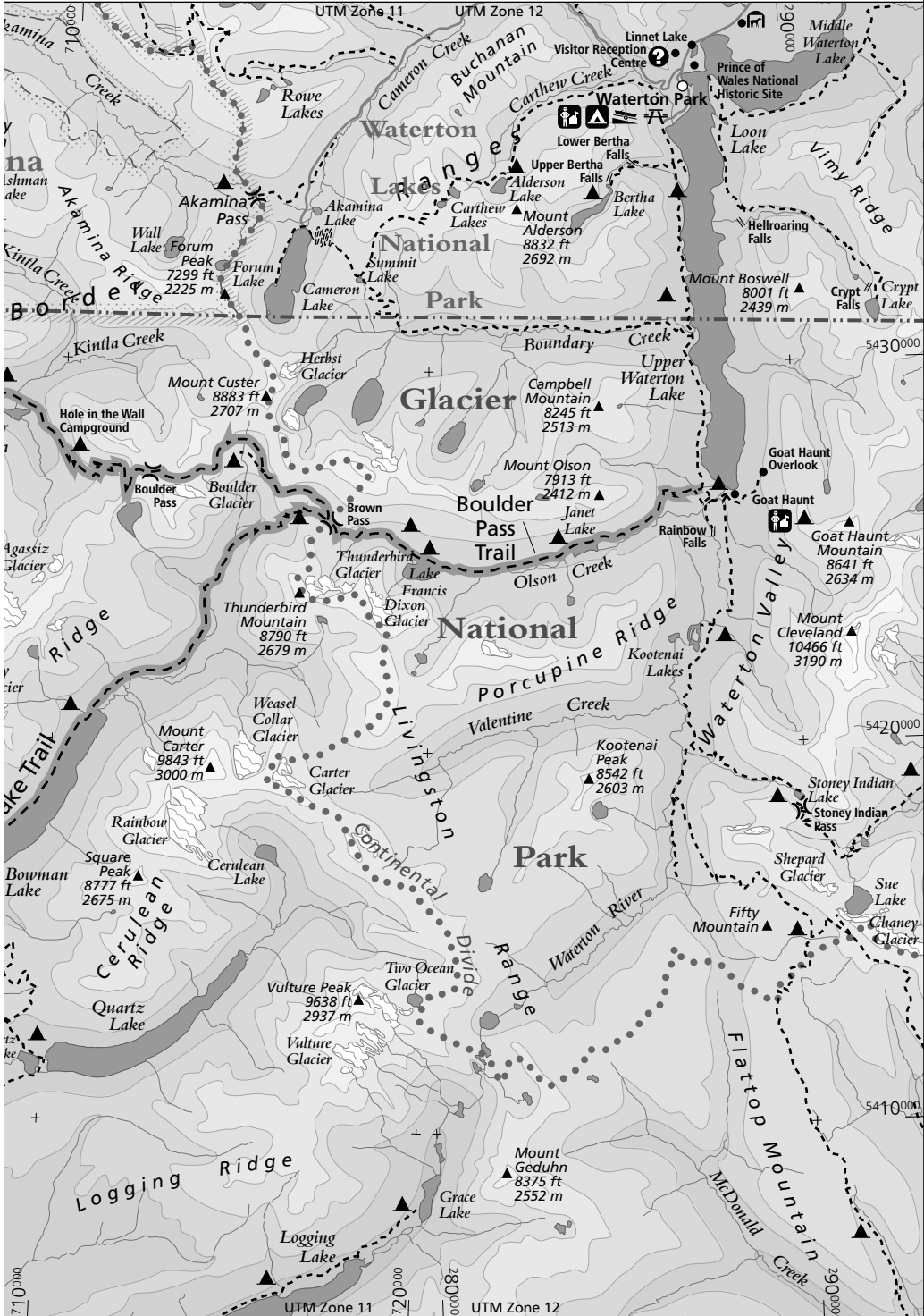


RF 1:177,500

0 Kilometers 4

N

0 Miles 4



Key Points

- 0.0** Trail sign. Trail follows shore of Kintla Lake.
- 4.0** Junction with connecting trail to Kishenehn Ranger Station. Keep right for Boulder Pass Trail.
- 6.7** Kintla Lake Campground. Trail leaves Kintla Lake; moderate uphill to Upper Kintla Lake.
- 9.4** Foot of Upper Kintla Lake. Trail follows shore of Upper Kintla Lake.
- 12.0** Upper Kintla Campground. Trail crosses Kintla Creek and ascends steeply to Boulder Pass Campground.
- 17.6** Boulder Pass Campground.
- 18.1** Boulder Pass. Junction campground is 0.1 mile to the left; stay to right for Boulder Pass Trail, which descends moderately steeply into Hole in the Wall.
- 21.6** Junction with trail into Hole in the Wall Campground (0.5 mile); stay left for Brown Pass.
- 23.2** Brown Pass. Junction with trail to Bowman Lake. Stay left for trail to Goat Haunt Ranger Station, which descends moderately steeply to Olson Creek.
- 25.3** Hawksbill Campground. Trail gradually descends through Olson Creek Valley.
- 25.5** Junction with spur trail to Lake Francis Campground.
- 28.3** Lake Janet Campground.
- 31.3** Junction with Waterton Lake Trail. Stay right for Goat Haunt Ranger Station; turn left to Waterton township (8.7 miles).
- 31.5** Suspension bridge over Waterton River.
- 31.6** Junction with Rainbow Falls Trail. Stay left for Goat Haunt.
- 31.8** Goat Haunt Ranger Station.

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completely fire-dependent. Before the value of fires was well known, or in response to threats to structures or adjacent lands, federal agencies spent billions of taxpayer dollars trying to snuff them out. This misguided effort actually increased the likelihood of large, severe fires in an ecosystem better adapted to smaller, frequent burns. The map on the previous page shows the extent of Glacier's recent forest fires, which typically have occurred during unusually hot, dry summers that may be linked to global warming. Far from being a disaster, these fires have resulted in important benefits for most wildlife, and there is now a trend to allow fires to burn unimpeded in order to reap the ecological benefits for the land.

Using This Guide

This guide provides information that will help hikers choose backpacking trips according to their available time and abilities. It also gives a detailed description of the trail system and interprets natural features found along the trails. Use this guide in conjunction with topographic maps, which can be purchased at the St. Mary or Apgar visitor centers, local gift and sporting goods stores, or through the U.S. Geological Survey, Denver Federal Center, Denver, CO 80225. The 1:100,000 scale topo map of the entire park gives a general impression of the landforms that will be encountered, and 1:24,000 scale quadrangle maps are available for those desiring greater detail. The appropriate quadrangle maps are listed for each major hike in the guide.

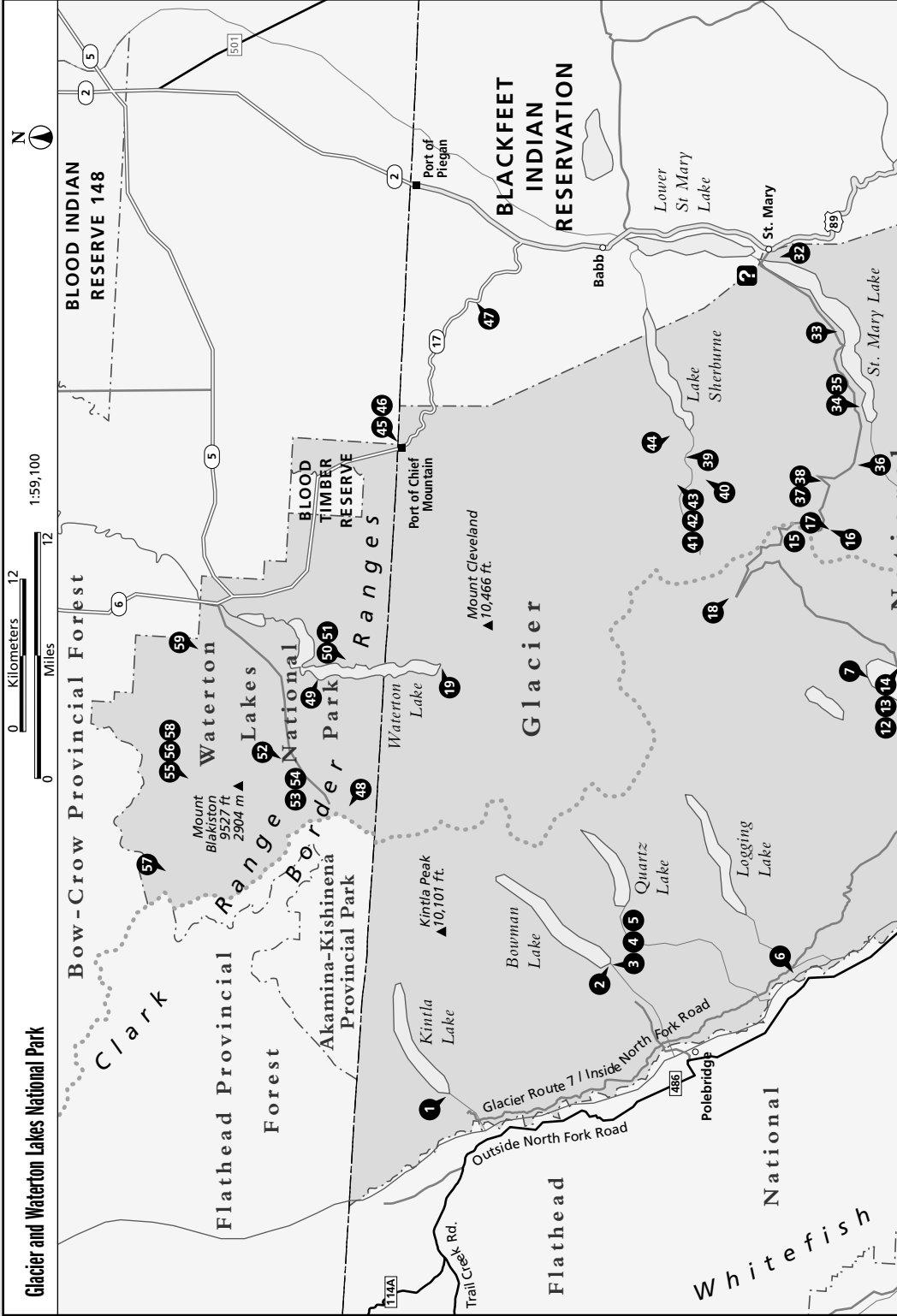
Each trail description begins with a quick and easy reference section outlining the physical characteristics of the trail. The outline includes distances (in miles and kilometers), the hike type (day hike or backpack, which is usually longer and includes an overnight stay), altitude gain and loss, maximum elevation, appropriate topo maps, and degree of difficulty. The difficulty rating can be interpreted as follows: **Easy** trails can be completed without difficulty by hikers of all abilities; **moderate** hikes will challenge novices; **moderately strenuous** hikes will tax even experienced hikers; and **strenuous** trails will push the physical limits of the most Herculean hiker.

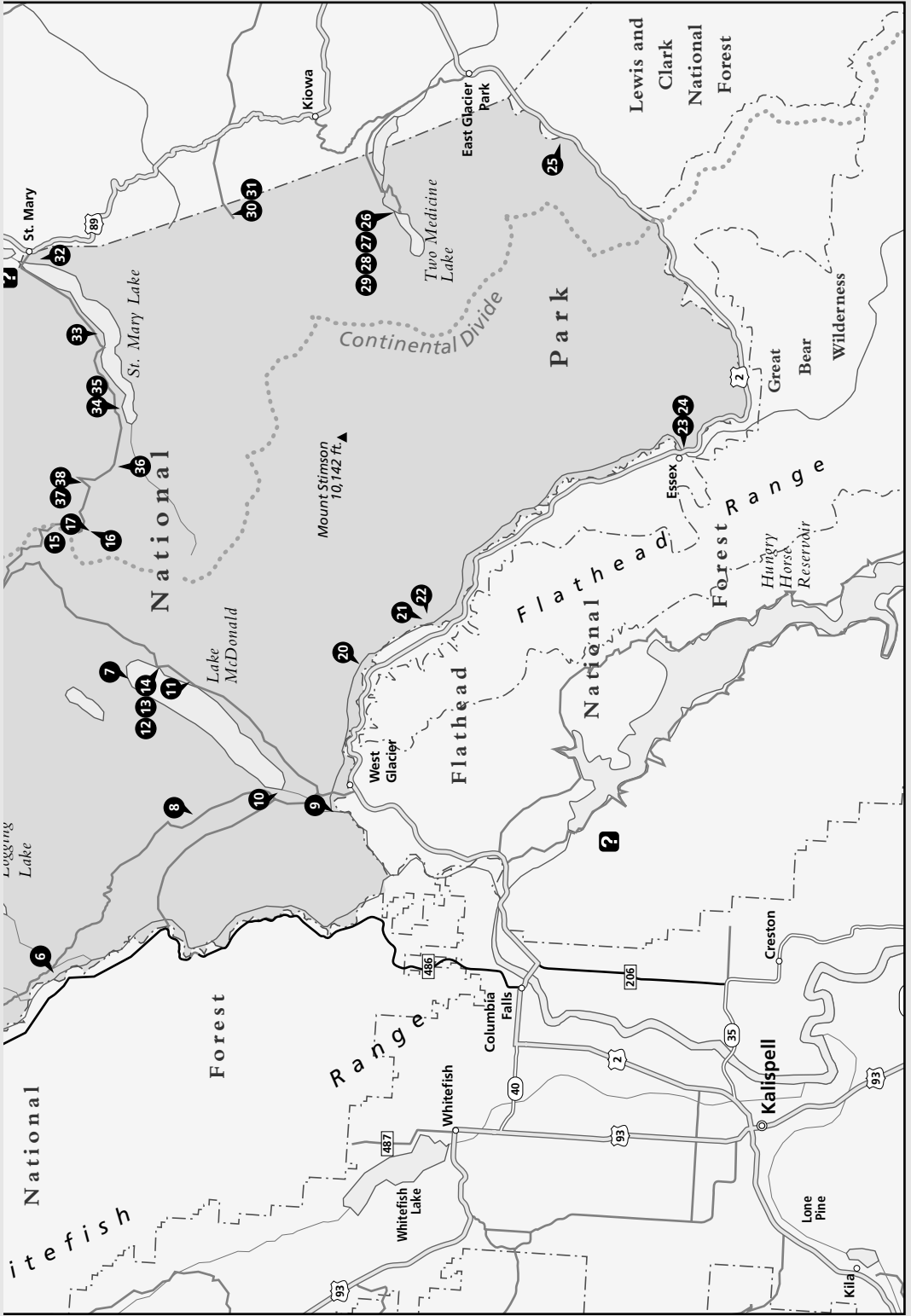
Next you'll find directions to the trailhead followed by a detailed interpretive description of the trail, including geologic and ecological features, fishing opportunities, campsites, and other important information. Photographs have been included to give the reader a visual preview of some of the prominent features along the trail.

The key points at the end of each hike provide a mile-by-mile breakdown of the trail using landmarks, trail junctions, and gradient changes. Note that most trail signs in the park have distances posted in kilometers; an easy rule of thumb is that 5 kilometers is roughly equal to 3 miles.

Planning Your Trip

Only backpackers with backcountry permits may camp and build fires in designated areas on the Glacier trail system. These permits cost \$4.00 per person (over the age






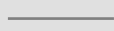



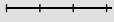


Map Legend





Boundaries

	National wilderness/ preserve boundary
	National park boundary
	State park boundary
	Reservation boundary
	International boundary
	State boundary


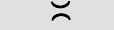

Transportation

	U.S. highway
	State highway
	Primary road
	Other road
	Featured trail
	Optional trail
	Other trail
	Railroad




















Hydrology

	Intermittent stream
	Falls
	Lake
	Glacier

Physiography

	Continental Divide
	Pass
	Spot elevation

Symbols

	Trail start
	Trail marker
	Interpretive Trail
	Wheelchair-accessible trail
	Developed campground
	Undeveloped campground
	Backcountry campground
	Ranger station
	Port of entry
	Visitor center
	Picnic area
	Food and lodging
	Riding stable
	Boat dock
	Lookout
	Overlook
	Point of interest
	Town
	Falls

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A previous edition was published in 1996 by Falcon Publishing, Inc.

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Text design by Nancy Freeborn

Maps created by XNR Productions Inc. © Morris Book Publishing, LLC

Photographs are by Erik Molvar, unless otherwise credited.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Molvar, Erik.

Hiking Glacier and Waterton Lakes National Parks : a guide to more than sixty of the area's greatest hiking adventures / Erik Molvar.- 3rd ed.

p. cm. - (A Falcon guide)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7627-3632-4

ISBN-10: 0-7627-3632-1

1. Hiking-Montana-Glacier National Park-Guidebooks. 2. Trails-Montana-Glacier National Park-Guidebooks. 3. Hiking-Alberta-Waterton Lakes National Park-Guidebooks. 4. Trails-Alberta-Waterton Lakes National Park-Guidebooks. 5. Glacier National Park (Mont.)-Guidebooks. 6. Waterton Lakes National Park (Alta.)-Guidebooks. I. Title. II. Series.

GV199.42.M92G5647 2006

96.5'10978652-dc22

2006004805

Manufactured in the United States of America
Third Edition/First Printing

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