

A Morning to Remember: Magic of Glacier National Park



By Frosty Wooldridge

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Let's take a break to enjoy the many wonders of America. John Muir and President Teddy Roosevelt brought us our National Parks. One of the most profoundly unusual ones must be Glacier National Park. I've bicycled up to Logan Pass many times to enjoy the sheer magnitude and beauty of what some call, "The Crown Jewel of the World."

Hop on your bicycle, motorcycle, car or even carry a backpack, and let's climb into beauty, wonder, majesty and splendor of America's treasures. David Christie and I will take you to the top.

The night before, we camped out at Avalanche Campground near Lake McDonald on the west side of Glacier. In the morning, we took off at 5:00 to beat the restrictions to be at the top by 11: 00.

We busted our tailfeathers grinding up "The Road Going to the Sun" on the west side of Glacier National Park. We cranked along deep green canyon walls. Snowfields erupted into white-water cascades rushing off the sides of cliffs like a gorgeous movie star's earring dangling from her ears. The rush of life carried past us with a clear water stream replete with fish, kingfishers and deer drinking at the shoreline.

Once we moved beyond the river, the road, at 6 percent grade,

began its methodical journey to the top of Logan's Pass at 6,400 feet.

Along the route, a combustion of wildflowers entertained our eyes and the scents of summer wafted into our nostrils. When you crank a bike through such wonders, it does a number on your senses: taste, smell, touch, vision, sounds. And more so, it affects your spirit. Nature fills you up to the top. It pampers you with its monopoly on wonder. Its showcase of colors. Its compelling power to mesmerize you with its profound splendor! Ironically, you're part of it on your bike as you wind up that serpentine "Road Going to the Sun." You become a fiber in the web of life.

(Frosty Wooldridge & David Christie riding into Glacier National Park)



As you pedal along a sheer rock wall on one side, and a sheer thousand-foot cliff on the other side, Glacier National Park starts giving up her secrets to you. First, you see 492-foot Bird Woman Falls. Then, you pass "The Weeping Wall" where rocks erupt with showers dropping onto the road. From there, you see snowfields caught in couloirs. All of it garnished in green trees and tundra in the high country.

Further in your journey, enormous mountain rivers cascade over gray rocks with crashing whitewater causing a roar felt in your ears and heightened by the visions in your eyes. All your senses grow acute at Glacier. You dismount from your bike to

take pictures. Where do you start? Heck, turn it on 'video' to get the entire scene captured for friends. But nothing can beat your front row seat. Your friends may love the pictures, but only you 'feel' it in your soul.

"It's great to be us," said David.

Six hours later, we reached the top. In the parking lot, a tourist walked up, "Wow," he said.

"You guys finally made it," he said. "We felt so sorry for you having to pedal those bikes with your heavy loads. Gees, it looks like you're carrying 100 pounds of gear. Shoot, we made it up in 30 minutes."

Lord, he made it up in 30 minutes with two people weighing 350 pounds inside a land yacht dragging 10 tons of steel, listening to the radio, spewing countless carbon fumes melting the glaciers, surrounded by glass and steel, along with air conditioning, and drinks from the fridge. We, on the other hand, hammered up that road, busted our legs, took over 50 pictures, watched hummingbirds suck nectar out of the wildflowers, felt Nature at its best, and reached the top with a feeling of total exultation, triumph and a gut feeling of, well, you **know** if you ride a bicycle. We felt the magic inside our bodies, minds and spirits. Trade it for 30 minutes in a land yacht? Not a chance!

I wanted to say, "Dude, you gotta be kidding, you feel sorry for us?" Instead, I said, "That's great man, you made it in 30 minutes, and it took us six hours. It's good that you enjoyed a much easier way of getting to the top."

In the end, everyone gets to choose their life path. I wished them good health and high spirits after our conversation.

At the top, just a complete mess of gridlocked cars and people crawling all over the place. Not a wilderness experience, whatsoever! More like a traffic and people congestion in

Chicago, LA and Atlanta! If you visit Glacier, drive into the park before 5:45 a.m. to beat advance registration and beat horrific crowds.

On the Eastern side, you ride along a raw, rugged canyon slipping southward into St. Mary's Lake. Your eyes take huge gulps of beauty, but it's impossible to swallow because it usurps your imagination with its enormity. When the glaciers formed this place, they didn't disappoint! It's amazing what Nature can do with a few million years, some glaciers and a little bit of erosion.



(David Christie, 71, riding down the eastern side of the Road Going to the Sun.)

We launched our bikes into 'gravity gear' for the ride down. Tons of waterfalls, lots of whitewater streams, splendid wildflowers and verdant, verdant green wonder everywhere as it butted up against the gray mountains that led to cobalt skies garnished with puffy white thunderheads.

It's almost impossible to describe a place like Glacier National Park. They call it "The Crown Jewel of the World" and it lives up to its name.

That night, we rolled into St. Mary's Campground with other cyclists. Everyone shared their amazing day. After dinner, a dark cloud rolled into camp. Soon after, the rains hit. They didn't just hit, they deluged us. I fell asleep in my tent with the biggest smile on my face as to a day well lived. "Ain't nobody feeling sorry for me," I muttered to myself.

In the morning, I crawled out of my sleeping bag to the entire valley with mountains fencing it on both sides. A long white cloud snaked along the lakeside between the mountains and the forests. Above, blue sky with fantastic 'fan' clouds creating an incredible view.

David crawled out of his tent, "That was a hell of a day yesterday, and it looks like another one coming up today."

"You know," I said. "It feels like a dream. Instead, we're right in the middle of it."

David said, "You got that right."

"It's GREAT to be us," I said.

Canada to Mexico, Continental Divide, waking up to a sunrise over St. Mary's Lake, Glacier National Park. With such energy in the air and such visual transformation, we felt blessed to see the sky, the long white cloud wafting over the valley, two grizzly bears, eagles, deer and wildflowers. Such an amazing journey for David Christie and Frosty Wooldridge. On tour through the magnificent moments of life.

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