

STEAL THE ITINERARY

FREE NATIONAL PARK ITINERARIES • GUIDE NO. 004

One Perfect Day in Glacier National Park

The whole Going-to-the-Sun Road done right — Lake McDonald, Avalanche, Logan Pass, and St. Mary in a single day, timed around Glacier's new 2026 parking and shuttle rules.

GUIDE 004

1 DAY

BEST: JUL–SEP

EASY–MODERATE

ROUTE	Lake McDonald → Avalanche → Logan Pass → St. Mary (full Sun Road)
DRIVE	~50 miles one way — budget the whole day with stops
ENTRANCE	\$35 / vehicle (7 days) — park is cashless
2026	No reservation needed, BUT Logan Pass has a 3-hr limit + ticketed shuttle
START	Be at the West Entrance by 6:30–7am — this is the whole game
BEST	Mid-July to mid-September (full road open)

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HOUR BY HOUR • WEST TO EAST

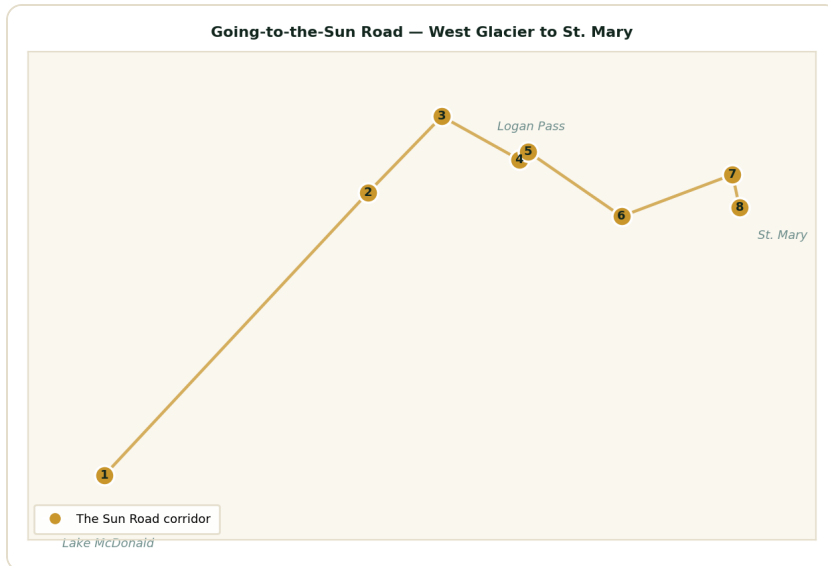
The Full Going-to-the-Sun Road

Timed so you hit Logan Pass before it's mobbed — your car if you're an early riser, the shuttle if not.

- 1 6:30 AM — Sunrise at Lake McDonald.** Pull into Apgar for your first look at the park's biggest lake — glass-still at dawn, colored stones glowing beneath. A quick stop; the reflection is worth it.
- 2 7:15 AM — Trail of the Cedars & Avalanche Lake.** 4.6 mi round trip, easy–moderate (~2.5 hrs). Cedar boardwalk up a gorge to a waterfall-ringed alpine lake. Short on time? The flat 0.9-mi Cedars loop alone is worth it. This lot fills fast.
- 3 10:30 AM — Bird Woman Falls, Weeping Wall & The Loop.** The road leaves the forest and starts cliff-hanging. Roll the window down at the Weeping Wall — it sprays the car.
- 4 Logan Pass & the Hidden Lake boardwalk.** 2.8 mi, easy. Grab the free timestamped kiosk permit (3 hours), then walk through wildflower meadows to the overlook. Goats and bighorn sheep near-guaranteed — the best bang-for-effort hike in the park.
- 5 1:30 PM — Down to St. Mary Lake.** Jackson Glacier Overlook (a real glacier from the road), Sunrift Gorge, Sun Point, then Wild Goose Island — the most photographed scene in Glacier. Turn around here if looping back west.
- 6 Optional — St. Mary Falls.** Legs and daylight left? A short 2.4-mi easy waterfall walk (on to Virginia Falls) caps the day before you head back over the pass or exit east.

The one rule that makes or breaks your day: start before dawn. Through the West Entrance by 6:30–7am means soft light, Logan Pass parking, and no tour buses. Sleep in and you'll spend the day hunting for spots — or book the ticketed Logan Pass shuttle on Recreation.gov (\$1/person) and skip parking entirely.

Map This Route



SCAN FOR THE LIVE MAP

Opens the interactive Google Map of the full Sun Road corridor — tap any pin to navigate.

One-Day Survival Tips

- **Start before 7am.** The single biggest factor in a good day — early means parking, soft light, no buses.
- **Mind the 2026 rules.** No reservation needed, but Logan Pass has a 3-hr parking limit (Jul 1–Sep 7). Grab the free dashboard permit when you park.
- **Can't do dawn?** Take the ticketed shuttle to Logan Pass (Recreation.gov, \$1/person) and skip parking stress.
- **Gas up in West Glacier.** Services along the road are minimal, and the park is cashless.

What to Pack

- **Layers.** Logan Pass runs 20°F colder than the valley.
- **Grippy shoes** for the Hidden Lake boardwalk and Avalanche trail.
- **Water & sun protection** — the alpine sun is strong.
- **A card** — the park is cashless.
- Full gear guide: stealtheitinerary.com/national-park-gear-guide/

One day, done right, is genuinely enough.

Fifty miles of the most jaw-dropping scenery in North America. Have more time? Add Many Glacier and Two Medicine with the 3-day and 5-day Glacier itineraries.

stealtheitinerary.com/glacier

Last updated for the 2026 season. Access rules, shuttle tickets, and construction status can change — confirm current conditions on the official NPS Glacier page before you go.