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# Glacier National Park

September 25-30, 2007

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## *Foreword*

In the dark, I begin fumbling for my rental car keys as the wind nearly blows my camera bag off my shoulder. My right arm swings to keep it in place and my left cradles the Styrofoam cup filled with dark, hot, magic juice that will hopefully jog the memory of where I am. Suddenly, the searing black coffee spills onto my numb hand and I remember: I am in the parking lot of the Glacier Park Lodge at 6:00 AM on the SmugMug Glacier National Park shootout. Five days, 15 meals, 40+ photographers, 120,000 shots, 98 hours of consciousness, thousands of bad jokes, gale-force winds, driving rain, fleeting sun and frigid snow. Even Moose Drool beer, to boot.

What a blast!

Usually when I am taking photos in the wilderness I am alone. I become extremely focused and tune out anything around me - unless of course I am surrounded by dozens of SmugMuggers. Like a pack of hungry wolves they descend upon any scenic location armed to the teeth with the latest in digital photographic gear strapped, hung, stretched and crumpled all over and around their bodies. The group begins their ritual stretching of tripod legs, moving to unfold their large camera bags, finally jousting for position. As the light begins to creep forth they all respond with a roar of shutter fires. When the deed is done, the bad jokes begin. This is not a remote wilderness experience but the most amazing things happen. Never before have I seen so many great photos created in such a short period of time as during a SmugMug shootout.

My relationship with SmugMug began at the very first annual shootout in Yosemite Valley back in 2005. The experience was energizing to say the least, with so many enthusiastic people brought together from all corners of the globe to share their experience and demonstrate their passion. What could be better? Only more SmugMuggers! Spurred by the incredible work shown on the Dgrin forum, the shootout has doubled in size in three short years, culminating in a total of 70 photographers signed up for the Utah shootout in 2008. As Artist In Residence of Landscapes I have been privy to the photos posted over the years. Having spent much time browsing the shots I can say with confidence that the level of imagery they share has gone through the roof. Wow, do these SmugMuggers learn quickly! I am thrilled to be surrounded by the pack, caught up in the frenzy and plumb full of beautiful photos. The following pages are filled with our favorites. Enjoy!

See you in Utah, 2008  
Marc Muench



*Grinners gather before the onslaught of winter*  
Marc Muench

## *Introduction*

The towering spires of Glacier National Park hold an ancient, natural power that is impossible to ignore. Even when approaching the peaks from the warm brown flatlands of eastern Montana the sudden change in terrain is shocking. From rolling prairie rising into gentle green peaks, the very last thing one expects are the sudden fortress-like line of iron gray crags blocking passage to the west and north.

They are awe-inspiring, ancient, and embody the naked essence of strength.

From the very first people to lit their gaze upon the rocks, these mountains have had a massive spiritual and creative significance. The natives passed down countless legends set against the backdrop of the north Rockies, more than technology and literature can adequately hold.

This area has supported human life for 10,000 years. The Piegan tribes maintain a legend of the Old North Trail that extended from Canada to Mexico. Such tales are an impressive depiction of a true archaeological finding: the crossing of Mongolians from Asia to North America. The stage is set for a dynamic and volatile history.

The story of Glacier is extensive and exhaustive. The delicate balance created by boundaries of natives on all sides, the infiltration of white men and tourism was a milestone in National Park history that would forever change the way Glacier was viewed in our country. Buffalo hunters, the Salish and Kutenai, surrounded the park on the western border while the Blackfeet occupied the plains and prairies to the east. In the 19th century, European trappers approached the mountains from the south in search of valuable furs to trade. A soon-to-be-familiar situation: crowded and jostling for the park's attention. The Blackfeet sequestered an area for their reservation in 1855 as far west as the Continental Divide. This land was eventually sold to the US government in 1895 and was the first step in establishing Glacier as a national park and preserve.

Enter George Bird Grinnell - a true pioneer in vision for the likes of Glacier park. For 20 years he traveled the park, lived amongst the Blackfeet and lobbied for the protection and preservation of the area to keep the natural, pristine beauty available after the land was exhausted of resources. Mining and drilling were temporary, heated ventures that were mostly unsuccessful and Grinnell understood the mountains to be worth much more than the capricious appearance of oil and gold. In 1910 he was successful and the "Crown of the Continent" was established as a National Park.

The Great Northern Railway was the earliest lifeline providing an inquest of tourists into the wild country of Glacier. The rail lines crossed the Continental Divide at the wooded, south end of the park known as Marias Pass. The company lobbied to protect the trees as a forest preserve, coupling naturalism with the fiscal desire to promote tourism. Using the picturesque wilderness for advertising they attracted many travelers to the area. For the first time, the park was experiencing an influx of visitors who made difficult and arduous journeys to witness the powerful presence of nature itself - not for mining, trapping or drilling as was previously seen.

The 1890s were a turning point for Glacier with this change, for even though the interior of the park was still relatively inaccessible the thrill of horseback journeys and boat rides to this uncharted land was tempting enough for visitors to endure. To get farther than the last rail stop at West Glacier, tourists had to travel by boat on Lake MacDonald, a ride that culminated in multi-day horseback treks through rough terrain to Many Glacier. A subsidiary of the railway company, Glacier Park Company, founded many Swiss-style *chalets* in the early 1900s to house these travelers, modeling them after the hotels seen in the European Alps. "America's Switzerland" was a profitable venture for the early days of this debut National Park.

Over time, the glittery explosion of tourism was dulled. Although the Going-to-the-Sun Road was an engineering masterpiece, tempestuous economics caused the downfall and disrepair of many of the charming chalets. Today only 3 remain, the others having been closed and razed as long ago as World War II.

The park that Dgrinners saw that short, golden week was not very different from the landscapes of the natives. A perfectly preserved ecosystem so far removed from civilization has its merit in that the opportunity and stillness was as rare as can be. Perhaps the irony of digital photographers trapped in the raw wilderness for 5 days was lost in the rush to capture sunrises, but we scarcely missed the mundane, urban life. Work, appointments and obligations were checked at the door, and what was left was pure photographic bliss.



## The Liquid Earth



*Winter Rocks*  
ChrisP

Glacier NP is, quite obviously, known for not only the rugged terrain once carved by moving rivers of ice but for the glaciers that still remain today. With the current concerns about global warming, the story behind these giant structures is important indeed. A Little Ice Age that occurred between 1550-1850 was a welcome cool period in which the glaciers were allowed to expand for a short interlude. Glaciers continually shrink and expand with the seasons, but significant snow accumulation is imperative for their continued survival. Since the discovery and exploration of the park in the mid 19th century, all glaciers have reduced their total area by over 30%. Extensive study began as late as 1980 and evaluation predicts that none of these impressive formations will remain in the park by the year 2030.

The rural location of the park is key to its pristine environment. Distant urban centers and thin local population results in minimal pollutants to impinge upon the ecosystems within. If any, pollution comes in the air in the form of weather-borne winds that deposit into rivers and lakes. Otherwise, these bodies of water are considered sterile and score the highest possible rating granted by the state water quality bureau. Water is a precious resource that is protected fiercely by environmentalists and park services because the downstream flow is divided into three major drainages: the Hudson Bay, Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. This interesting three-way feature - located at Triple Divide Peak - is a unique phenomenon in North America.

From the hundreds of streams, rivers, and lakes that lie like myths on the map to the gritty snowflakes that numbed the skin, we all made quick acquaintances with the water of the park. Clear and smooth as glass or rushing white, the temperamental lifeblood of Glacier is truly a sight to behold - both to the naked eye and through the lens.



Dave Porter



*St Mary Falls*  
Marc Muench



*Victoria Falls*  
Ann McRae



*Floating Rock*  
ChrisP6



*Falls, Many Glacier*  
Andy