



DON'T SWIM ALONE: DESPITE THE MELTING OF GLACIER'S GLACIERS, ST. MARY AND OTHER LAKES ARE STILL HYPOTHERMICALLY COLD.

Bear Patrol

TRAVERSE THE WILDEST PART OF THE LOWER 48'S LAST GREAT GRIZZLY HIDEAWAY.

The Hike Raging waterfalls, sheer precipices, and glacially sculpted valleys define Glacier National Park. But ask any backpacker what tops his Glacier wish list and you'll hear about the chance to spot a grizzly bear in the wild. The best way to see it all, including a griz? Walk straight through the heart of the park on a 40.9-mile point-to-point beginning at St. Mary Visitors Center. You'll follow the St. Mary Lake shoreline on the Red Eagle Creek Trail for the first 7.6 miles before bearing right onto St. Mary Lake Trail. In another 7.3 miles, you'll reach Reynold Campground, crossing a series of hanging valleys with menthol-blue waterfalls. Camp here, then follow the 20-mile Gunsight Pass Trail through the berry- and bear-filled St. Mary River Valley. Through

August, grizzlies come for the berries and stay for the cool air of higher elevations. Aspen give way to mixed-conifer forests as the trail winds around sky-blue Gunsight Lake and the postcard-perfect campsites on its east bank. You'll have fantastic views of Gunsight Mountain's double summit to the north. Descend into the Sprague Creek drainage and bear left onto the Snyder Ridge Trail to finish up at Lake McDonald.

The Crux Seeing a griz without startling one in the Lower 48's most bear-dense park.

The Key Make noise, be alert, and remove those earbuds. Bears are most dangerous when surprised, especially if they're with their cubs. In spots with short sightlines, make noise as you hike—clapping and singing both work. Be especially wary (and

noisy) along Red Eagle and Sprague Creek Trails, and on switchbacks leading over and down Gunsight Pass where visibility is limited. Remember, when you're near rushing streams or in heavy winds, the noise will drown out handclaps or a little bear bell, but that Axl Rose impression of yours will probably do the trick.

The Way From Kalispell, take US 2 30.8 miles to Going-to-the-Sun Rd., which leads 49.4 miles to the St. Mary Visitors Center. When your hike is done, pick up the shuttle from Lake McDonald back to St. Mary. Check the bus schedule at nps.gov/glac/planyourvisit.

Plan It (406) 888-7800; nps.gov/glac. Map: *Trails Illustrated* #215: *Glacier National Park Waterton Lakes National Park* (\$12, natgeomaps.com)