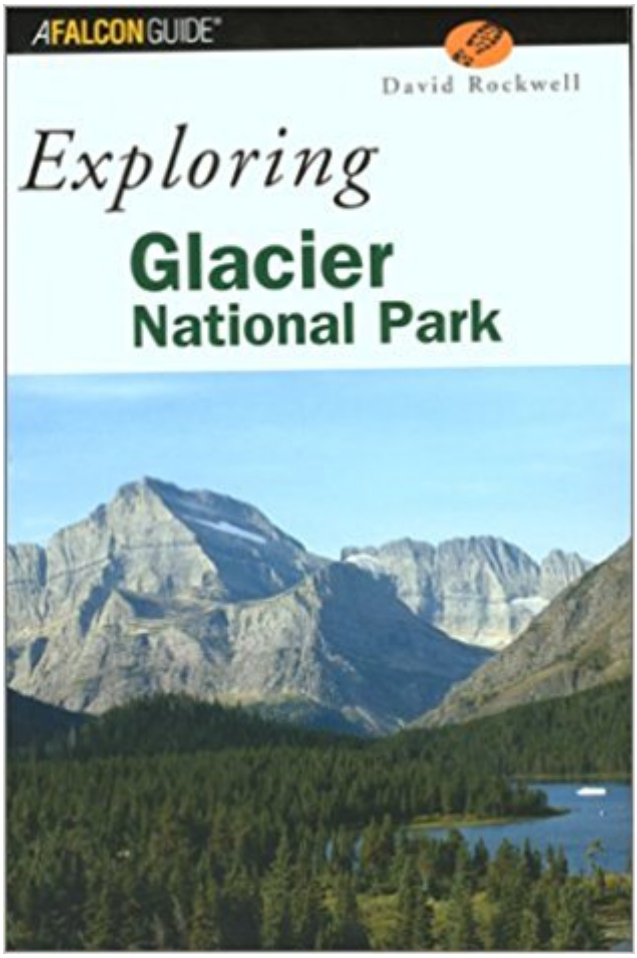
Exploring Glacier National Park (Exploring Series)



Synopsis

Glacier National Park in northern Montana offers visitors the chance to be immersed in a pristine landscape, and an opportunity to experience the Rocky Mountain West in all its unspoiled glory.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One of the jewels in the national park system, Glacier National Park encompasses the dramatic landscape where the vast watersheds of the Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean, and Hudson Bay converge. Here plants and animals unique to those three basins come together, making it one of the richest, most diverse natural places in North America. Wolves, grizzly bears, and moose wander its woods and high alpine meadows. Western redcedar, whitebark pine, and glacier lily thrive and mingle on the slopes of its glacial valleys.Â Author and naturalist David Rockwell explains the evolution of the park’s geology from the erosion of Australian mountains more than a billion years ago to the glaciers that gave Glacier National Park its distinctive landscape. He explores the natural history of the plants and animals of the park’s six distinct regions. You’ll learn about the park’s greatest predators, grizzly bears, mountain lions, and wolves, and about their complex relationship with their prey. The result is a fascinating and intimate portrait of one of the world’s last truly wild places. (6 x 9, 320 pages, color photos, b&w photos, maps)

David Rockwell has worked in the field of natural resource conservation for more than 25 years as a consultant, manager, writer, and teacher. His previous books include Nature of North America and

Giving Voice to Bear. He lives in Dixon, Montana.

I was looking for more of a travel guide, but allowed myself to dig into this beautifully written tribute to both Glacier Park and nature itself. I began as an ecology novice and finished with a new passion for preservation of nature.

I don’t recommend this book, except if you’re interested in learning about how the area around the park was formed a long time ago. Otherwise, this book is of no help on a trip to Glacier.

I did not make it through most of the book before my trip to Glacier, however this book was worth it for the first two chapters I read on geology alone. Some people pay $45-80 to go on one of the guided bus tours of Glacier. Read the parts of this book you find most interesting and get out of your vehicle and see the wonders for yourself for a fraction of the cost.According to this book, there are only two places in the lower 48 that still have all their original predators they had 250 years ago: and they are the northwest (North Fork) and northeast (Belly River) corners of Glacier NP. During the week and a half I was in Glacier, another hiker saw a wolverine at the top of the trail to Sperry Glacier (there are only about 60 wolverines in the entire 1 million acre park).Geology is another big part of what makes Glacier National Park so unique and colorful and astounding. The geology of glaciers carving out valleys is why Mt. Cleveland is one of the steepest cliffs anywhere in the lower 48, rising about 4,000ft in a fraction of a mile. In contrast to so many other parts of the Rockies to the south, there’s absolutely no granite in Glacier National Park. And unless you read a book like this you will not understand why there are entire jaw-dropping mountains made entirely of deep red rock (such as some near Redgap Pass near the Belly River basin, and near Siyeh Pass), or wide bands of green rock the color of the Statue of Liberty. I found myself pointing out the cracks and wave ripples in the rocks created 1.0-1.4 billion years ago to other nearby hikers, who were truly fascinated to realize what they were looking at on all sides of them and under their feet. And explaining how both the red rocks and the sage green rocks had lots of iron in the sediment, and the key difference was not the type of sediment, but whether they were soil and sediment above ground that oxidized in the air (at times when the shallow sea dried up) or soil and sediment deposited on the floor of shallow sea where a different chemical reaction took place in the absence of air. Or pointing out how the less common black rock we walked over as we approached Iceberg Lake was probably the same stripe of black rock that can be seen at the very top of the cliffs surrounding Iceberg Lake (diorite - though I didn’t remember that name at the time while I was in the park).If you

find science uninteresting then this book is probably not for you. However if you have even a glimmer of interest in geology and wildlife and the balance of nature, David Rockwell does an amazing job of making the scientific wonders of Glacier interesting and awe-inspiring. For instance, to make things tangible he describes picking up a small rectangular piece of rock that recently fell onto the trail before his feet, and then explains in a paragraph how this piece of rock started as sediment eroded off land over a billion years ago, was trapped and compressed under tens of thousands of feet of similar sediments and encased deep underground for a billion years, this layer was lifted up and tilted and the rock fractured, then ripped away by glaciers, and now just recently fell out of a cliff to be exposed to air again for the first time in the present day. Making scientific information colorful and fascinating like this takes a gift, and David has that gift.

Obviously this is not a book intended to help you plan a trip to Glacier National Park, so the one-star review below was evidently given simply out of ignorant spite at having bought the wrong book!If, however, you are looking for a book that discusses the geology, the flora, and the fauna of the stunning wilderness that is Glacier National Park, you can hardly do better than this one. And, if you have a brain that’s turned on and are travelling in the park for any considerable length of time, as I did recently, believe me, you will have hundreds of questions about how that mountain got shaped that way or why those flowers only grow in this region or when the big-horned sheep are likely to be visible--and you will be looking for such a book.This book discusses the different habitats and ecological niches that the park comprises, from the McDonald Creek Valley to the Alpine, includes checklists of native plants and animals, where in the park to find particular species, maps, and beautiful full color photos, and provides enough background on general principles of geology and ecology that you won’t need any other resource.On my visit to the park I saw many people with separate books for animals, for birds, for flowers, and so on. But this book has it all. I highly recommend it.

This is *not* a travel guide or a hiking book. Instead, it is intended to provide a background in natural history for any visit to Glacier NP.It does this admirably. The chapters on geology emphasize the "big picture" story of how these mountains were formed, and where you can see particular formations. Rockwell does not get lost in the details of rock type and strata names, as all too geologists do.The book also has several chapters on habitats such as aspen parklands, the North Fork Valley, Macdonald Creek, subalpine and alpine. Again, Rockwell avoids a dry description of plants and animals and instead tells stories of how the habitat as a whole works.Finally, Rockwell

includes some tour-guide material, such as where to find particular kinds of geologic formations or animal habitats from the road.If you'd like greater depth than you'll get from the visitors' centers, while still being accessible to laypeople, this book would be an excellent choice.

This is a comprehensive review of the geology and natural history of the Glacier area and will enhance a visit to the Park. It is not a guidebook in the traditional sense of listing accommodation and restaurants, itineraries etc. It has some colour photos, although most are black and white.

If interested in a detailed coverage of geology, ecology, botany, and environmental issues, this book is for you.