



Boating



St. Mary Lake - Photo by Mark Wagner

Glacier National Park offers a variety of boating experiences.

The rivers and lakes in this mountainous region are very cold. All users (boaters, skiers, and swimmers) should be aware of the dangers of hypothermia at any time of the year.

Help Protect Glacier's Waters: Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!

A concern we must all address is the spreading of harmful aquatic plants and animals including zebra mussels, quagga mussels, New Zealand mud snails, purple loosestrife, Eurasian watermilfoil, etc. These aquatic nuisance species can hitch a ride on boats, float tubes, fishing equipment, and other items used in the water and have devastating impacts on na-

tive aquatic systems. Please wash your boat, motor, trailer, and other equipment; and remove any aquatic plants, animals, and mud before entering the park. Drain any water from your boat, motor, bilge, and live wells. With your help, we can keep Glacier's waters free of non-native nuisance species.

Rules and Regulations

National Park Service boating regulations will be found in Title 36, Part 3, of the Code of Federal Regulations and are available at park headquarters and staffed ranger stations.

It is your responsibility to know and obey the U. S. Coast Guard and State of Montana regulations for boat operation & safety.

Park rangers may inspect or board any boat for the purpose of examining documents, licenses, and/or other permits relating to the operation of the boat and to inspect the boat to determine compliance with regulations.

Registration

All motorboats and sailboats 12 feet in length and longer must be registered and numbered according to State of Montana regulations. Hand propelled boats are exempt, and boats from other states or countries may be used temporarily without Montana registration.

Required Equipment

One U. S. Coast Guard approved, wearable, personal flotation device, of the appropriate size for the intended user, readily accessible, and in good condition, must be carried on board. All children under 12 must wear a personal flotation device.

A flame arrestor (USCG approved) on each carburetor on inboard gasoline engines is required. All craft with inboard engines and outboards with enclosed fuel compartments must carry a fire extinguisher (B-1 type) or a fixed fire extinguisher system.

Each motorboat 16 feet and longer must carry a horn or similar sound producing device.

Navigation lights for motorboats and sailboats must be used between sunset & sunrise.

Rules of the Waterways

Keep to the right in channels and when approaching another boat head-on or nearly so.

Yield right-of-way to vessels on your right in crossing situations and to vessels you overtake or pass. Boats propelled by oars, paddles, or sails have the right-of-way over boats propelled by motors.

Regulations Prohibit the Following:

- Reckless/negligent boat handling so as to endanger or be likely to endanger the lives of others.
- Boat handling by any person under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Riding the gunwales, transom, or foredeck while boat is moving faster than five mph.
- Swimming from boat while underway.
- Interference with other boats or with free & proper navigation of waterways.
- Leaving a boat unattended for more than 24 hours without specific authority from the park superintendent or his/her duly authorized representative.
- Using trailers to launch or recover vessels at a site other than at a designated boat launching site.
- Overloading of boats.
- Installation of any obstruction in the water.
- Operating "airboats."
- "Para-sailing."
- Use of personal watercraft on any park waters.
- Operating a vessel in excess of five mph within 100 feet of a diver's marker, swimmer, or downed water skier.
- Discharging toilet wastes into the water.
- Depositing trash, refuse, or debris of any kind in the water.

Operate your boat in a safe manner so as not to disturb or endanger others.

The Blackfoot Indian Reservation (on the park's eastern boundary) requires a Conservation/Recreation Use Permit for most recreational activities on Reservation lands. A portion of Lower Two Medicine Lake is located within the reservation. A separate fishing permit is also required.

For further information call Blackfoot Fish and Wildlife at (406) 338-7207.

Accidents and Reports

Report any accident resulting in death, personal injury, or property damage to a park ranger no later than 24 hours after the incident. Boaters should render assistance to all persons needing help.

The operator of each vessel involved must complete a written report. This report needs to include the name and address of the boat operator and the identification of the boat to any injured person or to the owner of any property damaged.

Use of Watercraft in Glacier

Motorized vessels are allowed on McDonald, Sherburne, St. Mary, Upper Waterton, and Lower Two Medicine Lakes. No boat launch ramps exist on Sherburne Lake so only hand carried craft are permitted. Motorized vessels are also allowed on Bowman and Two Medicine Lakes but are limited to ten horsepower or less. Privately owned motor vessels are prohibited from all other park waters. **Personal watercraft (jet skis) are prohibited in the park.**

Hand-propelled boats and sailboats are permitted on park waters with the following exception: from April 1 through September 30, the section of Upper McDonald Creek between Mineral Creek and Lake McDonald is closed to all types of boating and floating to protect nesting Harlequin ducks. Boating may be restricted in certain areas for safety or to protect sensitive wildlife habitat throughout the park. Marker buoys and/or signing will be placed to designate the closures.

Shoreline Restrictions

In order to provide for the safety of the general public using Lake McDonald beaches for swimming and other similar activities, a “No Wake Zone” has been established. This zone is 300 feet north of the south shore (end) of the lake from the Going-to-the-Sun Road to the lake outlet located at Lower McDonald Creek. Marker buoys will be placed annually to delineate the zone.

Noise Restrictions

A federal regulation prohibits the use of watercraft exceeding 82 decibels of noise within all national parks. This regulation is strictly enforced on all park waters. Those operating high-powered boats should check their engine noise levels to be sure they comply with the regulations.

Water Skiing

Lake McDonald and St. Mary Lake are the only lakes within the park where water skiing is permitted. Water skiing is allowed from sunrise to sunset.

There must be at least two competent persons in the towing vessel, the operator as well as one additional individual to observe the person being towed.

Each person being towed must wear a personal flotation device. Ski belts (not USCG approved) may be worn by skiers. However, if the device being worn is not USCG approved, an approved device must be readily available in the towing boat.

Towing is prohibited within 100 feet of any person swimming or diving.

Boat Docks and Launching Ramps

Public boat docks are located at Lake McDonald (Apgar), St. Mary, Upper Waterton (Goat Haunt), and Two Medicine Lakes.

Boat launching ramps are available on Bowman and McDonald Lakes on the west side of Glacier, as well as Swiftcurrent, Two Medicine, and St. Mary Lakes on the east side of the park.

Canoes or rafts can be carried to many smaller waters. White water canoeing, kayaking, or rafting can be enjoyed on the Flathead River, which forms the south and west boundary of Glacier.

Boaters operating on Waterton Lake, who land in the United States, are subject to U.S. customs regulations and are required to check in at Goat Haunt Ranger Station.



Two Medicine Lake Boat Dock - NPS Photo

Camping and Overnight Use

A Backcountry Use Permit is required for all overnight backcountry camping. Between June 1 and September 30, a per person per night fee will be charged at the time of permit issuance. An additional fee will be charged for confirmed advance reservations. Please check Glacier’s Backcountry Camping Guide for details.

Undesignated camping is not allowed on lakes or lakeshores. Overnight camping on a vessel/boat within Glacier National Park is prohibited.

Pets

Pets are allowed in developed areas, frontcountry campsites and picnic areas, along roads, and in boats on lakes where motorized watercraft are permitted. Pets must be on a leash no longer than six feet, under physical restraint or caged at all times, including

while in open-bed pickup trucks. Pets are not to be left tied to an object when unattended. **Pet owners must pick up after their pets and dispose of waste in a trash receptacle.** Owners must not allow a pet to make noise that is unreasonable