

Glacier / Yellowstone

DATE

Sunday, Sept 23, 2007

lv. Kirkland 8 am

Moses Lake - thick dust  
cloud hanging over fields -  
wind erosion - very windy

64°, blue sky

4 hrs to Spokane

3:30 turn off @ St. Regis MT

Stopped in Idaho for lunch @  
rest stop

↓  
2:30 lecture  
time

Started raining in Idaho

~~9:30 on the way to Kirkland~~

rolling tan hills, wide flat rivers,  
black basalt & greenish shale  
outcroppings. Flathead Indian  
Reservation. Woman in Amish(?)  
dress & bonnet. Quaint cabins

with rock & timbers.

93 north to Kalispell.  
First Magpies! Dixon MT

Road signs also in local Indian  
language

Many places advertise buffalo  
burgers & huckleberry shakes

Snow on the hills just above us  
low hanging clouds, so can't  
see if there are higher mts  
visible beyond.

⊗ lots of crosses by the  
side of Hiway 93. Drunk  
drivers?

Flathead Lake  
Still raining

Hiway 93 is ugly - billboards  
galore, casinos, <sup>mountain</sup> sprawl

Arrive Hungry Horse ~ 7:30  
MT time - follow

campground sign but gave  
up after 5 miles in  
pitch black on a steep  
mt. road.\* Came back  
to eat in town at the  
Elkhorn Grill w/ Crazy  
Susan & her inebriated  
toothless cohort who fell out of his  
chair during dinner.

\* Across Hungry Horse dam, large  
& eerily lit in the pitch  
blackness.

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Monday Sept 24

Feeling much better after dinner, we decided to check a motel because the campgrounds were too hard to find at night. But upon being told at the one halfway decent ~~campground~~ motel in town that it would be \$77 + tax, Grant said "I'm feeling adventurous" and we headed up the road.

The Ranger Station sign/map said there was a campground 5 miles up the East Side Hungry Reservoir Rd. We were able to find it in the dark & it was a wide dirt road all the way. We almost

38° 10 am

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\$12 camping

moonlight!

gave up though @ ~~the~~ 5.5 miles but just then we saw Emery Bay Campground. We were the only ones there and it was beautiful, ~~to~~ except the reservoir was low. We were 90% warm enough, and cozy & comfy. Hot beverages tasted awesome in the morning. We slept in until 8 and hit the road at 10!

Beautiful fall color.

# Glacier Natl. Park

Enter park at west Glacier.  
Stop at visitor's center  
where a delightful older  
ranger regaled the line of  
people with charisma &  
charm!

Drove ~10 miles to where  
the road is closed at  
Avalanche Creek, then walked  
~3 miles up the road. There  
were semis hauling dirt,  
but other than that we saw  
only a few hikers & mt bikers  
in 2 hours of walking.

We saw the Garden wall,  
weeping wall, & other prime  
park sights. Clouds covered the  
tops, but still they were

gorgeous, as is McDonald Creek. The creek has red & pale aqua colored rocks, ~~cut in~~ shaped into rounded swirls, with crystal clear water. Saw 2 mergansers & an ouzel. Patches of sun & blue sky. The slopes are covered with fall color, mostly yellow. The ranger said we are here during the one week of fall color. He says one windstorm & it will be gone.

It was rainy & yucky here yesterday, but today it is dry - so lucky we came today!

Lake McDonald Lodge is great. We're in a cabin whose small window looks through trees to the lake 50 ft away. While Grant napped I strolled down the path past the other cabins to the ~~lake~~ lodge, then down to the lake. The lodge was built in 1914 in hunting lodge style, with exposed log beams, animal heads, & a huge stone fireplace with indian petroglyphs carved in the stone surround.

☛ The sun came out & I sat outside & read by the lake. There are rocking chairs on the log porch, and a pebbly beach with ~~the~~ red & green stones.

Tues, Sept. 25

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We cooked a yummy dinner on the covered back porch of our cabin: lentil soup, bread, coleslaw, & oatmeal cookies.

Now we're sitting in the lodge while we wait for the ranger talk to begin.

While we were showering after dinner, a big black bear ambled past the lodge & cabins, but we never saw it.

A beautiful pink & blue sunset. Attended a moderately interesting ranger talk about the human history of Glacier. Went to bed at 9:30 and got up at 6. On the road at first light at 7:30. 42°

A dry, overcast morning.

Peak week, snow level, wind,  
plains, museum, blue sky, sun,  
49 closed, snow flurries,

Going to Sun Road @ St. Mary's,  
Many Glacier, mt. goat, coyote,  
too cold & wet to camp

\* head south through burned  
forest, Grant loves the high  
plains scenery, roadside crosses  
4 & 5 together w/in a mile.

89 S through vast expanses  
of brown rolling hills, mts.

obscured by clouds - must be  
gorgeous when they are visible!

Dinner in rest area just  
north of Dupuyer.

Almost full moon.

Tues Sept 25

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Drove around south side of Glacier Park. Got cloudier & very windy through the mountains, then the sky turned blue as we came out onto the high plains. Still very windy though, with gusts so strong you had to lean in to walk.\* Drove to St. Mary & then up into the park again. 15 miles of the Going to the Sun road is open on this side. (The whole road is only 39 miles long.) Light snow flurries & clouds obscuring many of the peaks. White caps on St. Mary Lake. Still very beautiful.

~~Then drove~~

\* oops - first tried to take hiway 49 cutoff but road was

closed due to rockslide & snow\*, so backtracked to 89 via Browning. Stopped at Museum of Plains Indian. Beautiful examples of clothing, tools, etc.

\* Back to 49... drove up to Two Medicine to find out why 49 was closed. It is very beautiful up there & worth another visit. The fall colors were stunning in the park.

On the GTTS road we saw a coyote - a small, healthy one trotting alongside the road, oblivious to cars, intently searching for food.

Then drove north to Many Glacier. The hotel is closed for the season. It has a

great view of the lake & several glaciers, but it's big & stark & I think Lk McD. Lodge was much nicer.

At M.G. Campground we saw three mt. goats! We were able to see one of them well through the spotting scope hopping along a sheer cliff - amazing.

We had <sup>been</sup> planning to sleep at the campground, but it was cold & raining, and too early in the day. Grant's foot is hurting so we couldn't go walking, plus we would have needed arctic gear because of the wind chill. So we headed south. (See page 10\*)

Stopped in Fairfield just after dark. A prosperous farm town with a row of huge silos. Asked a really nice lady at a convenience store if there was a place we could sleep in our car for the night. She pointed us to the park. On the way we saw the Sheriff's office lit up & stopped to ask him if it was OK to sleep in the park. He was really friendly and said "Sure!"

Wed Sept 26

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Slept well, though a bit cold. Don't know why, as it was  $50^+$  degrees all night. It's a beautiful breezy morning,  $56^{\circ}$ , light clouds. Fairfield is a charming small farming town. It's only 34 miles to Great Falls, so there are commuters. Seems prosperous.

Went for a nice stroll. Can't imagine what it would be like to live in a town like this. Men sitting around a table in the convenience store, drinking coffee & ~~the~~ yakking.

Just out of town - camels!  
Two-humped kind in a corral.

Gorgeous scenery. Buttes.  
The mts. are clearer today.

Big fire in a field - burning  
crop residue?

64° in Great Falls

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Big ponds filled with birds  
on 89.

Casinos everywhere, incl. in  
convenience stores,

Bars are still smoking.

Great Falls is a lovely  
big town on the Missouri River.  
Stopped at visitor's center for  
directions to grocery store & to  
make sure the Beartooth Hiway  
is open. They let us use their  
computer to purge our spam.

Stocked up at a grocery  
store. Then 89 south again.

Gorgeous scenery. Kings Hill  
pass 7353'. No snow anywhere.

Cattle ranches & wheat farms.

Picnic lunch at beautiful  
Forest Service campground on creek.

12 east toward Billings.  
6 pronghorn antelope! 5  
female & 1 male.

Dry grassland - doesn't look  
like it rains much.

5 more antelope - 3 male.  
Fun to watch the alpha male  
chase off the other 2 males  
& herd the females. Then  
some mule deer. "... where the  
deer & the antelope play..."

We've seen a few wind  
farms - this is a good place for  
them!

Stopped in Haslerton on  
the Musselshell River, at their  
nice park (has camping). 69°!  
And quite windy.

Lots of sheep and more  
antelope.

75° in Billings at 5 p.m.

Stop on a high bluff to see Billings spread out in a green valley below. Buy salad stuff and head out I-90 west 16 miles to Laurel, where we'll turn south on '310 towards the Beartooth Highway. We've decided to camp and cook out again tonight.

Almost hit a flock of wild turkeys crossing the road near Joliet.

Had a wonderful dinner of soup, salad, and bread at the rest stop just north of Roberts. Camped here too, with a full moon shining in the window in a cloudless sky.

Thursday Sept. 27

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Woke just before the sun popped over the hilltop. It's  $41^{\circ}$  and a cloudless day - gorgeous! The full moon, pale white, is perched on the eastern horizon.

Heading south on 212 to Red Lodge.

Another flock of turkeys in a field.

Beartooth Hiway. North side is barren with craggy grey peaks dotted w/ snow fields. Most of the scary parts are on passenger side, but it wasn't too bad.

Stopped at 9500' rest area for spectacular view. Top of pass looks like the gobi desert - high, wild, flat, brown, with sparkly thin patches of snow.

Beartooth pass is 10,947'!

The south (Wyoming) side of the pass is spectacular!

Like the Enchantments, high alpine lakes with rock outcroppings & stands of stunted, windbeaten alpine fir. Busts of fall color, chiseled peaks in the distance.

Sage & pine as you drop lower, Shoshone Natl. Forest. Lots of

nice campgrounds both sides of pass.

Coyote, Mt. Goat, herd of ~50 Bison. 2 coyotes fighting over elk carcass, lots of pronghorn & bison. Stopped at Tower

Falls - very pretty. A herd of bison blocked the road below

Dunraven Pass. Kind of freaky. They are huge. At one point

there were some on every side of the car. The big ones are as big as the van - they could just push it over if they got mad. Lots of people doing stupid things like getting out of their cars to take pictures.

Artist Point is closed, but we stopped at the upper falls overlook - beautiful. Then back up to Canyon Jet, ~~east~~ west to Norris Jet, then north to Mammoth. Fewer crowds here - hallelujah - we're not liking all the people. I think summer would be unbearable.

We are very tired & crabby. It's hot. I never dreamed of heat so didn't bring any cool clothes.

We are in cabin C6 at Mammoth Hot Springs. It's in the back, against the hill, so feels quiet & private. There are windows front & back, & a covered porch with a view of the travertine terraces. The porch has 2 chairs & lots of afternoon sun. We ate a nice dinner of chili, bread, & salad out there. That was after we took nice hot showers - man did those feel good! Also nice to use a flush toilet - vault toilets are open to the breezes below and boy can that be cold on the backside!

After dinner we went for a stroll around the grounds. This is a large complex, with a big hotel, many cabins, park headquarters, & lots of visitors. Lake McDonald Lodge was much nicer & quieter.

A large herd of elk live here, where this is abundant grass & they are safe from predators.

We watched a large bull try to corral his harem of perhaps 20 cows & nearly as many calves. He bugged frequently (sounds like a power steering pump screech).

He runs very fast. You have to be careful not to get between him & a cow or calf.

Grant happy - got to see Magpies up close.

Fri. Sept. 28

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Another gorgeous morning!  
42° & clear. Walked around  
the hot springs early, before  
the crowds. Gorgeous!!

Volunteers work as Elk Patrol  
to protect visitors from elk  
& vice versa.

Heading south to Mammoth.  
Battery light came on...

We're now into caldera country -  
everywhere the earth is steaming!

Broad expanses of golden  
meadows with lazy streams  
winding through them, & perhaps  
a bison or two or twenty  
grazing or snoozing in the grass.

Grant powered diet coke  
on the battery terminal that  
had corrosion. The battery light

\* Any carbonated beverage  
would work - it's the  
carbolic acid.

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Stayed on, so we drove straight  
to the Old Faithful gas station.  
They checked the alternator and  
it is OK - hooray. Turned car off  
& on again. It started fine &  
the battery light went off, so  
the Diet Coke fixed it - hooray  
for clever Grant! \*

From there we walked  
over to Old Faithful - just in  
time to see it erupt! Then  
drove back north. Parked at  
Biscuit Basin & walked the  
Artimisia Trail across the road  
back to Morning Glory Pool -  
gorgeous! It's shorter than  
walking up from Old Faithful  
and there are many fewer  
people.

Sulfur smell  
Steam clouds  
Warm spot in pool

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The weather is alternately hot & cold, but always very windy. The sky is blue sometimes & overcast others. They're predicting snow.

Then we drove the Fire<sup>hole</sup> Lake loop road.

[On the way south to O.F. I forgot that we drove Firehole Canyon Rd - gorgeous.]

Then we stopped at Fountain Paint Pots. Grant's foot is sore so I walked the 1/2 mile loop alone. I saw a perpetual geyser, a roaring fumarole, and boiling mud!

Then we stopped at Midway Geyser Basin to see torrents of hot water

\* Grant said "It's  
like ~~standing~~ swimming in the  
yellow spot in the pool."

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flowing into the river. Then we walked through clouds of steam to see more beautiful hot spring pools. There is surprisingly little sulfur smell here. Walking through the steam it was very warm, and hard to see & breathe! \*

Lastly we went to Black Sand Basin where we saw yet more beautiful pools - they all start to look alike after a while...

Then back to Old Faithful to buy cream and check the weather report. Since it might snow, and it's only 3:30, we've decided to head for Grand Teton, ~~in case~~ so we

can see some of it while the weather is still good.

Now that we've left O.F. the traffic has really thinned.

We get tired in the afternoons, but it's too early to stop for the day. This is when we listen to music.

My ~~new~~ memory foam seat + back cushion is so comfy - it has really helped minimize my sciatica & back pain.

I want an altimeter for our next trip. We've been up at over 7000' most of this trip. It's  $63^{\circ}$  now at almost 8000' - hard to imagine how it could snow...

Back into fall color - awesome aspens & blazing birches.

Finally saw a bear! We're in Grand Teton, ~~at~~ just south of Jackson Lake dam. A black bear across the valley, trucking up a hill. Got a good look with the spotting scope.

Grand Teton~~s~~ <sup>is</sup> beautiful, we're a bit too tired to appreciate it. They say it will get down into the high 20's tonight, so we think we'd better stay indoors. We're hoping Jenny Lake Lodge will have a room. Well, they do, but it's \$525/night! Good views of several glaciers.

Jackson is very crowded & touristy. We couldn't find a place to eat that didn't have a long line, so we are heading south to Hobart. It's 7pm and we are hungry...

Finally found a restaurant about 10 miles south of Jackson. Horse something, across from the KOA. Nice atmosphere, good prices, but it was very busy and it took forever to get our food. The KOA cabins across the street were full, so we kept going to Alpine, through a dark mt. pass. The motels in Alpine were either full, expensive, or looked funky. We pulled into an RV park behind a tavern. The

video store across the street was on fire! Turns out it was a fire dept. training exercise. Soon it was a huge blaze filling the night with light, crackling, & roaring. Meanwhile we found the RV park "office" inside the tiny, cramped tavern. It was smoky, loud, & filled with drunk people. Even the bartender seemed inebriated. But the cost was only \$10 and included a heated restroom with hot showers. It was surprisingly dark & quiet. We slept well. ↘ for being next to a tavern!

Saturday Sept 29

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It rained in the night, but had stopped by morning. It was  $42^{\circ}$  and very windy. It started pouring just as we left, but stopped after about 20 miles. We're on 26 west. Some gorgeous fall color - lots of red - around Palisades reservoir. Now we're in Idaho. It's sprinkling and  $38^{\circ}$  as we drive through vast fields of cows & mown hay.

Several sod roofs on A-frame barns.

Now it's snowing/slushing. We're on 15 south to Pocatello. Now it's snowing & blowing - the fields & hills are dusted white.

86 west to Twin Falls.

$58^{\circ}$  & sunny in Boise.

Traffic-ugh!