



**DROPSTONE**  
OUTFITTING

# **Trip Information Packet - Covid 19 edition**

Logistics, Daily Itinerary, Covid-19 Policy, Map Info, Additional Resources and Gear List

## **Hello from Dropstone Outfitting -**

Thank you for joining us this summer! Included in this document is a general itinerary, logistics information, our Covid - 19 policy, map recommendations (we provide you with a route map as well), additional resources (bear safety and water treatment options) and a gear list.

On most of our trips, we will have both in and out-of-state guests. We will clean and disinfect gear and shared spaces between trips and practice social distancing and thorough sanitation while on the trip. We will also be taking several health checks before and during the trips. We aim to be as transparent as possible. We know everyone has a different comfort level with travel in Covid-19 times, so we ask for people to be considerate of others, look over this information closely and let us know what questions or concerns you may have. We want our trips to be enjoyable for all.

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## **Daily Itinerary**

**The day before the trip begins:** Please arrive in Great Falls, Montana (if flying) no later than 4 PM where we will pick you up in our van. We provide a free airport shuttle service, so please email us your flight info as soon as you know it. If driving, please arrive in Choteau no later than 5 PM. At 5 PM, we will rendezvous at the Stage Stop Inn (located on the north end of town on highway 89 headed towards Glacier National Park) and then caravan to our headquarters. We will take health checks, talk about our Covid-19 protocol, sort gear, make lunches for the following day, and have a brief orientation before dinner. We will provide dinner the evening before the trip. ***If you are on a stock supported trip of any kind: Keep all necessary medications and personal items with you. We will be weighing and packing your 20 lbs. of gear the night before the trip – you won't see it again until the afternoon of the following day.*** During the trip, you are welcome to park your vehicles at our headquarters.

If you are staying in Choteau the night before the trip leaves, we have reserved rooms at the **Stage Stop Inn**. Their number is (406) 466-5900. Tell the front desk that you're with Dropstone Outfitting--we have blocked the rooms out but you will need to call with your credit card information to finalize booking. We encourage you to make your hotel reservations soon. *If you do not feel comfortable* with staying in a hotel, we have several camp grounds we can recommend. We can also share the Stage Stop Inn cleaning policy with you.

**First Day:** We will leave Choteau between 6:30 - 8 AM depending on the distance to the trailhead. We will specify the departure time the night before. The Stage Stop Inn has a breakfast or the Outpost Deli just down the road opens at 6 AM. Cotton masks must be worn in the van. We will start hiking between 9 - 10 AM and arrive at camp in the late afternoon.

**Daily Schedule for stock-supported trips:** Breakfast will be ready between 7 and 8 AM depending on the day's activity. Coffee is ready by 7 AM. Lunches will be made after breakfast or the evening before. The following day's itinerary will be discussed each evening so you will have an idea of what we will encounter including the timeline, how much water and food to pack, the expected difficulty of the hike and any water crossings. If it is a moving day, we will often ask you to have your gear ready by a certain time, usually 8:30 AM. We will begin hiking around 9 AM, stopping regularly to enjoy the scenery, drink some water and eat a snack. Feel free to move at your own pace as we have a lead and tail guide to accommodate different hiking speeds. We will all re-group and break for lunch around 12:30 PM. Sometime during the middle of the day, the pack train will pass our hiking group to begin setting up our next camp. We will arrive at camp in the late afternoon, giving you time to set up your tent, refresh, and relax a bit before dinner. Dinner is served between 6:30 and 7:30 PM.

**Daily schedule for backpacking trips:** We will begin boiling water between 6:30 and 7 AM for coffee and breakfast. Participants are responsible for getting down their food bags. After breakfast, we will take down our camps and pack our backpacks. The following day's itinerary will be discussed each evening so you will have an idea of what we will encounter including the timeline, how much water and food to pack, the expected difficulty of the hike and any water crossings. We will begin hiking around 9 am, stopping regularly to enjoy the scenery, drink some water and eat a snack. Feel free to move at your own pace as we have a lead and tail guide to accommodate different hiking speeds. We will all re-group and break for lunch around 12:30 PM. We will arrive at camp in the late afternoon to early evening, giving you time to set up your tent, find a food hang tree, refresh, and relax a bit before dinner. We usually begin boiling water for dinner around 6:30 PM.

**Final Day:** The final day will look much like the other days on the trip. We will reach the trailhead in the early afternoon and then drive back to Choteau to unpack and sort gear before going our separate directions. We will have a shuttle that goes to Great Falls that evening for those who need it.

Recommended Hotels in Great Falls: *Be sure to mention you are with us when you book*

**Comfort Inn and Suites** - They have a complimentary breakfast as well as an airport shuttle service that begins at 4:30 am. The hotel is minutes from the airport. There are a few restaurants within walking distance as well as a 24hour grocery store. The number to the Comfort Inn is (406) 455-1000 or visit them at [Comfort Inn - Airport Great Falls](#). Rates here are generally \$92 + tax.

**Hotel Arvon** - This is a locally owned, nicer hotel that has been renovated from an old brick building. It sits in historic downtown Great Falls right next to an Irish pub/eatery and close to several other restaurants. They provide a free airport shuttle service, but you need to let them know in advance that you need it. Rooms come with a free breakfast from the Celtic Cowboy next door, which opens at 6:30 am. The number to Hotel Arvon is (406) 952-1101 or visit them at [Hotel Arvon](#). We have a group rate set up with them. Rates are generally \$109 + tax.

Plan your departure for the day after the trip gets out.

*\*\*\*Gratuities are appreciated and are shared equally among the staff.*

# Dropstone Outfitting LLC Covid-19 Policies

## Before Your Trip

- Keep up the good work! Practice thorough personal hygiene and social distancing to keep yourself healthy.
- You will be required to complete a short health screening and return it to us 7 days before your trip. We will again do a screening upon your arrival to determine your level of COVID risk. **Any person displaying signs of illness, including a temperature of 100 F or over, will be unable to join us on the trip.** Please be respectful of others, and if you are feeling unwell, do not participate in the trip.
- You will need to bring your own personal **hand sanitizer, cloth face masks (2), soap, and towel** (for hand washing and personal use). Unfortunately, biodegradable soap is not sufficient. Please bring the liquid or bar soap you have been using from home.
- Pack your gear in a trash bag/s. We will be packing your personal items in duffels we provide. Daily disinfecting of the outside of the duffle bags will be part of our procedure and we don't want your gear getting damaged by our disinfecting alcohol solution.
- We will be gathering the evening before the trip for an orientation. We will still provide dinner; however, all meals will be plated. If you do not wish to stay at the Stage Stop Inn the night before the trip, we can recommend several campgrounds. We have a letter from the Stage Stop explaining their cleaning policies that we are happy to share.

## Our Pre-Trip Practices:

- We will thoroughly disinfect any group gear (cookware, hand washing stations, water filtration systems, tables, duffle bags, chairs, rented tents/sleeping bags/pads) between trips.
- We will disinfect the entire van.
- We will bring additional hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes into the backcountry.
- We will monitor our health regularly. Any staff member displaying signs of illness will be removed from daily operation. We will follow the current public health protocol to determine the next step if a staff member tests positive for Covid-19.
- We will be using additional safety measures while food shopping and meal prepping including frequent disinfecting, hand washing, and the use of cloth masks.

## On the trip:

- Everyone is required to wear a cloth mask in the van. Please hand sanitize before and after van ride.

- Each backcountry camp will have two hand washing stations. One at the latrine and one near the kitchen. All participants will wash hands when leaving camp, coming back to camp, after using the restroom and before cooking or preparing any meals.
- We will also have a hand washing station at lunch for you to use.
- Only staff is allowed in the kitchen area and food boxes. We will plate, package, pour and serve all food. You may only handle your own food.
- At the beginning of each day, you will be given a brown paper lunch bag with your lunch (you will dictate to us what you would like in your lunch). At the end of each day, we will burn these bags. Anything that you do not eat that day must be thrown away.
- We will make an alcohol solution fresh daily to spray down all duffle bags before packing them together. Duffle bags will be provided.
- All dishes will be soaked for 30 seconds in bleach solution before drying.
- All shared surfaces will be disinfected at the end of every day (tools, tables, other gear).
- Spouts of group water jugs will be disinfected regularly.
- NO sharing of personal food, water bottles or utensils.
- We will adhere to social distancing standards on the trail and in camp.

### **Responding to Illness or COVID-19 Symptoms in the Field & Evacuation**

- Everyone must disclose any illness or COVID-19 symptoms prior to starting a trip or during a trip.
- Anyone exhibiting signs of any illness while on the trip should alert staff and immediately self-quarantine in their tent while symptoms are monitored until the person can be evacuated.
- Self-Isolate the member exhibiting symptoms of fever, cough and trouble breathing and begin making plans to evacuate. Staff will notify the county dispatcher and the Forest Service.
- Affected individuals should wear a mask at the onset of symptoms and anyone coming into close contact. We will carry a limited supply of N-95 masks for evacuation.
- When it is safe to do so, we will evacuate the patient. First priority is hiking out. If that cannot be done, arrange for a horseback ride out. Last resort is air evacuation.

Thank you for your help in keeping us all healthy and able to enjoy the mountains this summer! If you have any questions, please contact us at [info@dropstoneoutfitting.com](mailto:info@dropstoneoutfitting.com) or call (406) 289-0863.

## **Map Information**

If you wish to purchase a map before the trip, we recommend maps published by Cairn Cartographic, a mapping company based out of Missoula, MT. These maps include mileage approximations that can be helpful. They can be purchased on-line at <http://www.cairncarto.com> or directly from us when you arrive. There are two maps published for the Bob Marshall - one that covers the north half and one that covers the south half. You may purchase both or ask us which portion you need.

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex Map, produced by the United States Forest Service, can be purchased on-line at <http://www.nationalforestmapstore.com>. Search under Montana, and then look for the title "Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wilderness Areas".

You may also want to buy more in-depth topographic maps (1:24,000 scale) produced by the United States Geological Survey (USGS). These maps can be bought at <http://store.usgs.gov> or call 1-888-275-8747. If you would like the list of the 7.5-minute quads we will be traveling into, let us know and we will provide one.

We carry all of the 7.5-minute quad maps as well as large scale Bob Marshall Wilderness maps that you are welcome to look at and use anytime during the trip. Also, we provide a one-page map including approximate distance and location of campsites to everyone on our trips.

## **Additional Resources**

**Traveling in Bear Country:** The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex is home to the largest Grizzly Bear population in the Lower 48. This is one aspect that makes the Wilderness Area so unique. All of our guides are familiar with proper bear etiquette and carry bear spray. We also have free bear spray available to anyone who would like to carry a canister and will go over proper use during our orientation. No firearms will be allowed on trips. Please take some time to educate yourself about traveling safely in bear country by visiting [our website](#). We have a section titled "**Bear Safety**" located under the "**Trip Resources**" tab for more information.

**Backcountry Water Treatment:** Passing birds, animals, or humans can contaminate all backcountry water sources, including fast-flowing, glacier-fed streams. We will have a group gravity filter in camp, but you are responsible for how and if you treat your water for personal use. Because of extra Covid-19 precautions, we would appreciate if people used their own water treatment method as much as possible. Aquamira water treatment drops are available from us; however, there are many other options available to you. Take some time to learn more by looking at our "**Water Treatment Options**" section on [our website](#) under the "**Trip Resources**" tab.

# Gear list- Covid 19 edition

**Please note that you will be limited to 20 POUNDS of personal gear to be carried by the stock.** This includes the weight of your tent, sleeping bag, and sleeping pad. We are strict about the weight limit because we bring as few pack animals as possible to minimize our impact to the landscape. You will also be carrying a daypack when you hike. What you bring in this pack is not included in the 20 pounds. **We will be supplying duffle bags for personal items as we are required to disinfect personal gear bags every day and do not want to ruin yours.** \*We will provide camp chairs that we will disinfect daily.

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CLOTHING – Quick dry fabrics preferred; the exception is the cotton t-shirt. Our temperatures can range from 60 – 90F during the days, 50 – 70F during the evening and 30 – 50F at night. Afternoon thunderstorms are common.

- Undergarments
- 2 T-Shirts
- Long underwear top and bottom (NO COTTON)
- Light weight pull over or vest (NO COTTON)
- Mid weight pullover or jacket (NO COTTON)
- Light weight down or synthetic jacket (optional – good for June and September trips)
- Rain gear—BOTH top and bottom, every day
- A pair of hiking pants
- A pair of shorts (optional)
- 3 pairs of socks (NO COTTON) + sock liners (optional)
- Warm hat and gloves
- Bandana/scarf that can get wet
- Sunhat
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Any medication you may need during the trip
- Blister-care/1st Aid (Guides carry complete 1st Aid Kits too)
- Toiletries (baby wipes are a nice addition). We bring toilet paper for camp but not for the trail.
- A small bottle of Hand Sanitizer
- Headlamp (New batteries or bring extras)
- Two water bottles/Camelback (enough to hold 64 oz. of water)

## Of the items on the gear list, what should I carry in my daypack?

- Rain gear – *BOTH top and bottom, every day*
- Hat and gloves – *every day*
- Light-weight pull over
- Water bottles/Camelback – *at least 64oz.*
- Water filtration method\*\*
- Lunch and snacks – *provided*
- Sunscreen, sunhat, sunglasses
- Sandals/Crocs (*if needed for stream crossings that day*)
- Bandana - *that can get wet to cool yourself or wrap around your neck for warmth*
- Any blister care/1<sup>st</sup> aid products you may need
- A small stash of toilet paper
- Covid-19 Kit
- Camera and/or Binoculars
- Pack cover. *We have ones you can borrow.*

- Waterproof stuff sack or plastic bag for isolating wet/dry items
- Water filtration method \*\*
- Hiking Boots or shoes (MUST be broken in. Blisters = our #1 medical issue)
- Gaiters (optional)
- Sandals/Camp shoes (something appropriate for stream crossings)
- Hiking poles (available for rent)
- Small backpack for day use (available for rent)
- Tent—Consider sharing tent if coming with someone else. (available for rent)
- Sleeping bag (available for rent)
- Sleeping pad (available for rent)
- Camera and/or binoculars (optional)
- A small book or journal (optional)

#### **Packing for Trips:**

-We recommend using a waterproof compressible stuff sack for your sleeping bag.

-Keep personal items separate from tent/sleeping bag/pad. It makes it easier for us to make loads

- We will provide a duffel bag for personal items and other bags for tent/sleeping bag/pad. We will disinfect gear bags daily.

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#### **Covid-19 Kit: (to be carried with you at all times)**

- Hand sanitizer
  - 2 Cloth face masks
  - Soap (biodegradable does not work on virus)
  - Small towel
  - Small pack of disinfectant wipes
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\*\* We will provide Aquamira drops for water purification along the trail, but if you prefer a different method, feel free to bring it along. To reduce use on the group water filtration system, we prefer you treat your own water. For more info about backcountry water treatment, view the **“Water Treatment”** PDF on our website.