Trip Information Packet 2027

Logistics, Daily Itinerary, Map Info, Additional Resources and Gear List

Hello from Dropstone Outfitting –

Thank you for joining us this summer! This document includes a general itinerary, logistics information, map recommendations (we provide you with a route map as well), additional resources, and a gear list.

Contact us if you have questions, and we look forward to spending time in the mountains with you!

Daily Itinerary

The day before the trip begins: Please arrive in Great Falls, Montana (if flying) no later than 3 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 **4 PM.** At 4 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 located about 5 minutes away. We will 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. We also have several camp grounds we can recommend if you'd like to camp the night before your trip.

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. We will start hiking around 9 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, and coffee is usually ready by 6:30 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. We will begin hiking around 8 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 on their way to 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 around 6:30 PM.

Daily schedule for backpacking trips: We will begin boiling water around 6:30 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 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. We have a group rate set up with them.

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.

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

Tipping - *We are often asked about tipping the guides and crew. While it is completely up to you, we recommend 10 - 15% of your trip cost if you feel you received good service. Gratuities will be shared equally among staff unless you specify otherwise.*

Phone use – *Most of us use our phones for photos. They take such great pictures! However, we ask that you use your phone discretely if you need to use it for other purposes. Many of our guests' value time away from technology and its relative absence is one of the wonderful aspects of wilderness travel.*

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 the 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 Geologic Service (USGS) can be purchased on-line at: https://store.usgs.gov/product/254522. You may also want to buy more in-depth topographic maps (1:24,000 scale). These maps can be purchased at http://store.usgs.gov as well. 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.

Many people use their phones to downloads maps using various apps. If you would like help locating the map area to download or a recommendation for a map app, let us know.

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. Each individual should bring their own water treatment option to use on the trail. 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 under the **"Trip Resources"** tab.

Gear List

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 provide camp chairs.

CLOTHING – Quick dry fabrics preferred. 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 - 4 pairs of socks (NO COTTON)
- Warm hat and gloves
- Bandana/scarf that can get wet
- Sunhat
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Any medication you may need during the trip

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
- Hand Sanitizer
- Any blister care/1st aid products you may need
- A small stash of toilet paper
- A sit-upon *(optional)*
- Camera and/or Binoculars (optional)
- Pack cover. *We have ones you can borrow.*

- 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 at least 64 oz. of water). If you use a Camelback-like system, we recommend bringing at least one water bottle too to make on-the-go filtration easier.
- 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)
- A sit upon - *a small foam or insulated pad for more comfortable seating on the trail* (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 if you need one. Sea to Summit makes great light weight dry bags that are good for packing gear as well.

** 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.