



SYSTEMS BY SUSIE
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Systems by Susie National Parks Family Road Trip Itinerary

Check out our [Amazon Shop](#) with our favorite travel products purchased for this trip.

General Takeaways:

- We traveled for 16 days total. Instead of one mega road trip, you could split our trip into 3 smaller trips.
 - Utah: Zion, Bryce, (maybe Canyon Reef), and Arches
 - Grand Tetons (Jackson, WY) and Yellowstone
 - Glacier National Park
- We are not a very “outdoorsy” family. We take occasional local hikes but don’t camp, mountain bike, or do many active things as a family. This trip was a stretch for us in many ways, but I’m so glad we went for it. It felt amazing to adventure out in nature for a bit. There were plenty of easy hikes and we got better at reading maps and navigating the trails. Since the trip, we have been doing much more hiking as a family.
- Having the right equipment helped. We splurged on good hiking boots, hiking socks and hats for each person from the Merrill and Columbia Outlet Stores at Queenstown. We each had a walking stick that I purchased in advance from Amazon. We also brought 3 Camelbacks for water. That gear made all the difference! Check out what we bought on our [Amazon Shop](#).
- I’d encourage you to explore our national parks even if you aren’t up for camping or renting an RV. We liked staying in a hotel each night and renting a minivan. Do whatever you enjoy most!

Travel Planning:

- We used a travel agent, [Andrea Trellis](#), to help plan our route and book our hotels. She provided us with background info for each location, national park, and the key things to do in each location with descriptions, maps and links. This was a **game changer**, as I don’t enjoy travel planning. We honestly couldn’t have done the trip without her. We paid her \$150 for the detailed itinerary, but otherwise it would have been at no cost to us! HIGHLY recommend contacting Andrea Trellis [@andreaplansmagic on Instagram](#). She does more than just national parks. She loves planning Disney, Universal, cruises and custom trips all over the world. Her goal is to help travelers have the most amazing time, with the least amount of stress, so they can focus on building relationships and enjoying themselves. Within her family travel umbrella, She also specialize in neurodiverse travel. She is a Certified Autism Travel Planner, and is raising her own neurodiverse kiddos so it's a group that's near and dear to her. I love that she believes travel is for everyone!

- I was nervous that we didn't plan each day in detail, but Andrea's itinerary was all we needed (until we reached Glacier, which we planned on our own). We stopped at the visitor center of each National Park and consulted with a ranger about what to do with the time and energy we had. I'm glad we didn't have too rigid of a schedule because so much depends on the weather and energy levels of the group that day.
- We had initially planned to go to Yellowstone, which would have been MUCH easier logistically and saved us hours of driving. But, the week before we left, Yellowstone experienced unprecedented flooding, and our lodging reservation inside the park was canceled. So, we came up with a Plan B to instead drive to Glacier National Park. Since Glacier was our Plan B, we didn't have time to prepare or research the area, and didn't have Andrea's help in planning it. We noticed the difference! Now that we've been there, I'd recommend planning well in advance for your visit if going to Glacier. It wasn't like the other parks we visited where you could "wing" it. The lodging options on the east side are mostly old motels and without a vehicle pass you can't get in key entrances, so it's worth the pre-planning.
- If you go to Glacier, I'd recommend getting reservations EARLY (a year in advance) at Many Glacier Hotel, St. Mary Lodge & Resort, Glacier Park Lodge, or one of the other properties inside the park on the east side. It will save you so much time driving and give you that classic lodge experience. So many of the logistical challenges would have been solved with an in-park lodging reservation. The same is true for Yellowstone.

Food:

- We ate free breakfasts at the hotels which saved us money and filled us up. Plus, we could grab apples and fruit for our backpacks. We generally just ate snacks for lunch as we hiked and then ate a good dinner. Paying for one meal a day as a family of 5 saved us so much money!
- We brought 3 Camelbacks for water and filled them up with ice and water each day at the hotel. By the time we started hiking, we had cold water from the melted ice.
- When we arrived, we went to Walmart and purchased an inexpensive cooler and bottles of water to leave in the car. We'd refill the cooler daily with ice from the hotels and it was so nice to have ice cold water after hikes.
- Each person brought their own water bottle from home and refilled it along our trip.
- We also stocked up on snacks at Walmart (apples, chips, pretzels, bars and nuts) and bought some ziplock sandwiches bags to make our daily snacks for our hikes. We also bought microwave popcorn for the hotels at night.

Lodging:

- If traveling with teens, we sometimes rented 2 separate rooms to give them a little break from being with the family non-stop. It was also nice not to share a bed for a few nights!

Traveling Tips:

- We found a good audio book that the whole family could enjoy during our longer driving segments. We didn't have cell reception for most of the trip, so be sure to have a downloaded book.

- Doing laundry took time and a lot of quarters! The hotel was able to make change and we packed some Tide pods and dryer sheets from home. Pack a few kitchen trash bags to collect dirty laundry.
- We packed all our shoes in one big rolling duffel which contained all the dirt from our hiking shoes.
- We gave each child cash in advance for souvenirs and gas station snacks for the trip. When it was gone, it was gone. They could buy whatever they wanted with their money.
- We purchased a Christmas ornament from the National Park Gift Shop for each place we visited and the kids collected stickers from each place.
- I threw out all the maps and brochures once we left that town and I had recorded the details I wanted to remember on my Notes app. Really helped from clutter building up in our car. Having a central trash bag kept our car clean.

On to our itinerary...

Day 1- Vegas

- Hung out at the pool during day at MGM Grand (hot and hard to find shade). The pool floats for the Lazy River were \$30 each!
- Everything was so expensive in Vegas. Food is outrageous and a bottle of water was \$7!!
- Went to see Blue Man Group at Luxor hotel. Super funny and original. Our teens loved it.
- Saw the fountains at the Bellagio Hotel. Must see.
- Saw the exploding Volcano at the Mirage Hotel. Starts erupting at 8pm on the hour.
- Ate dinner at Amelia's at Hotel Paris (The beet salad was amazing. Best I've ever had.) Prices were fairly reasonable for Vegas prices and food was great.
- Stayed at MGM Grand hotel. Hotel was inexpensive and was a good room size. Suggest requesting that your room have a view of the Strip. If I had it to do over, I would have booked us at Hotel Paris. They had so many good food options on their lower level.

Day 2-Hoover Dam & Valley of Fire

- Did the Power Plant tour at Hoover Dam. Made reservations in advance but could have bought tickets on site. Our kids didn't want to wait to do the Dam Tour but that would be cool if you had the time.
- Walked on top of Dam and saw the state line between Arizona and Nevada
- Valley of Fire Park- Drove through and pulled off to see Beehives, Arch Rock, Atlanta petroglyphs. Beautiful rock formations and cool photo spots.
- Drove 2.5 hours to Zion
- Spent night at Springhill Suites in Springdale (Zion). Great hotel!!! Right at base of mountains. Very well maintained hotel with pool, splash pad, and was located right at Zion Shuttle Stop #6. Highly recommend.

Day 3- Zion National Park

- Breakfast at hotel (included)

- Took Springdale free shuttle from hotel to Zion shuttle (20 min)- be sure to bring your national parks pass with you!
Took Zion shuttle to Visitors Center (20-30 min)
- Got off on Shuttle stop #6.
- Hiked the Kayenta Trail to the Lower, Middle and Upper Emerald Pools. On the way down we veered right towards the Middle Emerald pools along a half mile path that took us to Zion Lodge, shuttle stop #5.
- Lunch and rest at Zion Lodge on the grass under the giant tree.
- We split up and 2 people did the moderate Watchman hike (2 hours).
- The rest of us got off at Shuttle Stop #3 and walked along Pa'rus Trail back to the Visitors Center. We all agreed that path was better for a bicycle ride than walking, but it was still pretty. You could rent ebikes at the Visitors Center.
- Dinner at Dulivia's right next to hotel. Good, but expensive Italian food. We valued convenience above all else. Amazing gelato. Jacks sports bar on the other side of Dulivia's has reasonable, good casual food. We ate there for lunch the next day.

Day 4- Zion National Park- The Narrows Hike and Kolob Canyons

- Woke up at early at 6am, had breakfast and caught the shuttle. There is a 20 min wait between shuttles.
- Our agenda for the morning was to hike the Narrows. Rented water shoes and a hiking stick right at the Visitors Center for \$30 each. Don't be frugal and attempt the hike without the right gear. It makes ALL the difference and is worth **every** penny.
- You hike for 30-40 min along the Riverside Trail to get to the entrance of the Narrows. Easy hike along a paved path.
- Narrows hike was incredible. SO glad we did it. It is a must see. Such a unique hike and just breathtaking. We weren't sure how our 11 year old would do, but it was fine! There were far younger kids doing it. The water was ice cold but your legs get numb and it wasn't that bad after awhile. My daughter slipped once, but was fine. You can turn back at any point. We made it in about 2 miles. My husband and son went further to the 4 mile mark and the canyons and crowds both decreased. They got some amazing photos and said it was incredible. They were pretty wiped out afterwards though. It is challenging to push against the current while hiking. Highly suggest getting an early start (8am or before) to beat the crowds. There were mobs of people on our way back.
- On the drive to our hotel we stopped at Kolob Canyon, also a part of Zion National Park. You'll need your park pass.
- Did the scenic drive. Did the Timber Creek Overlook Trail at the end of the drive. Not really necessary because it's almost the same view as in the parking lot. Incredible panoramic views of Timber Creek, Kolob Terrace, and the Pine Valley Mountain.
- Stayed at Springhill Suites in Cedar City. I do NOT recommend. Really outdated hotel. Consider staying at the Courtyard by Marriott. Nice and new hotel. 1.5 hours from Bryce so even better would be the Bryce Canyon Lodge. Not sure about the quality of the hotel but it's located right inside the park and looked like a fun place to stay. It's been there since the 20's and looks like an upscale log cabin. Also Best Western Plus is right outside the park and looked nice.

- I will say dinner at Centro Woodfire Pizza in downtown Cedar City was fantastic. Good prices, huge salads, and amazing pizzas. Definitely the hippest place in town.

Day 5-Bryce National Park

- Checked in at the Visitors Center. Talked to the Park Rangers about our plan for the day, picked up a map, and watched a short movie in the theater. Really helpful to get a visual of how the hoodoos were formed.
- For food within the park, stop at the Bryce Canyon Lodge or General Store at the Sunrise Point stop.
- Did the scenic drive to the very end. Park Ranger suggested we do the Bristlecone Loop (1 mile, 1 hour) easy hike but we decided to skip it.
- She said not to stop on lookouts on the drive there and to stop on the way back.
- Stopped at Rainbow Point, Aqua Canyon, Natural Bridge, and Sunset Point along scenic drive. Amazing views.
- We parked at Bryce Point. If there is no parking you could return to the Visitors Center overflow parking lot and catch the free shuttle. We did the Upper Rim trail to Sunset Point. Easy 1.5-2 hr walk. We could have made it shorter by stopping at Inspiration Point or could have walked further to Sunrise Point.
- The hoodoos in Bryce Amphitheater are amazing. Pictures don't do it justice. Took so many panoramic photos!
- We were hoping to take the Queens Garden Trail from Sunrise Point down into Bryce Amphitheater (1.8 miles) but my crew was too tired.
- We took the free shuttle from Sunset Point back to our parked car at Bryce Point.
- We stopped for ice cream right outside the park at the old fashioned Bryce Town.
- Dinner at La Gringa Mexican restaurant in Richfield. Yummy fresh guacamole!
- We stayed at Fairfield Inn in Richmond, UT. It was 1.5 hours away, but on the way towards Moab, which saved us some time for our drive the next day. So much nicer than our previous hotel!!

**I heard from a follower that the drive from Bryce to Capitol Reef is beautiful. We didn't visit Capitol Reef National Park but it sounds like a great spot to visit before moving on to Moab.*

Day 6- Moab- Canyonlands

- Had to drive 2.5 hours to get to Moab.
- Beautiful drive! Looked like we were driving through the Grand Canyon at times. Constantly changing landscape.
- Ate lunch at Moab Giants Cafe, a very touristy spot right at the turn off to Canyonlands. Surprisingly better than it looked from the outside.
- Spent the day in Canyonlands National Park. (My daughter thought we were saying "Candylands" and was hugely disappointed when we arrived. 😊)
- Drove and visited all the outlooks.
- Took a short hike to Mesa Arch. It was HOT and after just a .6 mile, we decided to skip any other hikes today.
- The area on Canyonlands that we explored was called Island of the Sky.

- Stayed at Springhill Suites in Moab. Really nice for families. Located right at the entrance to Moab. Fun pools with rocks, waterfalls and a splash pad!
- Ate dinner at Dewey Brewery in downtown Moab.
- Walked around the shops and got ice cream at. Bought some inexpensive t shirts at Moab T Shirt Co.
- Heard from the hotel front desk that the Broken Oar Restaurant in Moab is good and has the BEST sweet potato fries.
- At 6pm MST they released timed entry passes for Moab on recreation.gov. We snagged one for the 8-9am time slot.
- Played checkers, corn hole and ping pong table near the pool before bed. An evening swim would have been amazing if we weren't so tired!

Day 7- Moab- Arches

- After breakfast we set out for Arches. The Visitors Center has a movie and great gifts but we tried to beat the crowds and headed right to The Windows Section.
 - The Windows Section of Arches included Balanced Rock (short walk), North and South Window (short walk), Turret Arch (short walk), Parade of Elephants (rocks seen from road), and Double Arch (short hike we chose not to do).
 - The most famous Arches arch and the symbol of Moab is the Delicate Arch. We weren't up for the 3 mile hike on Wolfe Ranch Trail, so we did the moderately strenuous hike to the Upper Viewpoint for Delicate Arch. In my opinion, the view from the Lower Viewpoint was just as good.
 - If it wasn't so hot we would have hiked to Double Arch, Skyline Arch, and Courthouse Wash Panel.
 - Fiery Furnace Viewpoint was a cool selection of rock formations
 - We didn't hike to see the Sand Dune Arch, Broken Arch, or Tapestry Arch.
 - Skyline Arch was visible from the viewpoint and a cool arch.
 - We drove back through Arches to the Visitors Center.
 - Had lunch at Sweet Cravings Bakery. Good food and a great option for to-go lunches when out for the day.
 - Checked out of the hotel and drove 4 hours to Salt Lake City. We wanted to break up the driving to Jackson (8.5 hours from Moab).
 - If we had stayed in Moab, we would have done some kind of adventure (Jee rental, boat tour, etc).
 - A follower suggested booking a tour guide for Arches, which I think would have added a lot to our trip.
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- On the way to the hotel in Salt Lake City, we stopped at Sundance Resort for dinner at their casual Oak Bar. I had eaten here when the TV Show Family Rules flew me out to record a segment and it felt like such a magical spot. We didn't have time to take the gondola up the mountain (1hour ride) but I highly suggest it.
 - Stayed at Springhill Suites Sugar Hill only because we were redeeming our Marriott points for a free night (less points than staying downtown).

Day 8- driving Day from Salt Lake City to Jackson, WY

- 4.5 hour drive
- We decided to take a slightly longer route through scenic Idaho
- We couldn't get over how much sky there was! It sounds corny, but as we drive past farmland, you could see so far in all directions. Incredible blue skies with white puffy clouds.
- We stopped at Victor, ID and went to the highly recommended Victor Emporium for some old fashioned huckleberry milkshakes. They lived up to the hype.
- Victor is a cute town and they had some nice shops, along with Grand Teton Brewery where they had a nice selection of beers, popcorn machine, and open field. No food, though.
- Drove over the Teton Pass into Jackson and it's a beautiful drive through the mountains.
- Stopped at the Jackson Visitor Center on the way into town and got a map and a plan for the next few days.
- Checked in at Springhill Suites in Jackson. Very nice hotel with outside pool, large jacuzzi and view of the ski resort in walking distance to everything in town.

Day 9- Jackson- Part 1

- Following advice from a park ranger, we drove along the east side of Grand Teton National Park. We went to see the Gros Ventre Slide area where there was a massive rock slide in 1924 that ended up creating Slide Lake.
- We crossed over through Antelope Junction and stopped at Dornans for gas and sandwiches (pricey but delicious sandwiches!).
- We decided today would be more of a driving tour around Grand Teton National Park. We hit most of the overlooks in the park and took short walks to see beautiful views.
- We pulled over at Schwabacher Road and took a short walk to a beautiful view of the Tetons along the Snake River.
- Next up was the Snake River Overlook. The Teton Mountain range was framed by the winding Snake River in front of it. Each overlook has incredible views.
- Oxbow Bend Turnout was next, followed by views of Jackson Lake, and Signal Mountain Lodge where we stopped for some coffee and ice cream.
- We drove up Signal Mountain Road and took a short walk to an amazing view of the park. It's the highest spot you can drive to, so there were incredible panoramic views of the mountains and valley below.
- On the way, there was a "moose jam" where cars were pulled over to see a large moose grazing on the side of the road.
- We drove the rest of the loop back to downtown with plans to do some of the more popular hikes over the next few days.
- Are at Teton Woodfired Pizzas. Delicious!
- Ice cream at Moo's Homemade Ice Cream, supposedly the best spot in town.
- Hung out at the Town Square. The town of Jackson is so darling. I loved how all the restaurants and cute shops have a similar vibe. Definitely nailing the cowboy theme.

Day 10- Jackson- Part 2

- We got up early to hike one of the most popular hikes around Jenny Lake. We were told to get there before 8:30-9am. We arrived by 8am and had no problem finding parking. We decided to take the boat shuttle both ways across Jenny Lake (\$60/family pass) so that we could do another hike afterwards. If you have enough time, it would be nice to just take the boat shuttle one way and then return by hiking around the lake.
- We hiked up to Inspiration Point and the hike was one of the prettiest I've ever done. Gorgeous views of Jenny Lake below. The hike up was along a roaring cascading river. Pretty easy hike but definitely some vertical parts that were rocky. 1.8 miles round trip via shuttle, 2.5 hours, 550 ft incline.
- On the way down we did a quick detour to Hidden Falls. Incredible 200 ft waterfall. Don't miss it, even if you don't make the hike all the way up to Inspiration Point. Only 1 mile round trip if you take the boat shuttle.
- We returned across Jenny Lake via the boat shuttle.
- Next we drove to the Taggart Lake Trailhead. We hiked the Taggart Lake- Bradley Lake Loop. 5.6 miles round trip. 3 hours. 860 ft total climbing. We saw 2 lakes created by glaciers that were crystal clear. We hiked through fields of flowers and a nice shaded trail along a river. The hike from Taggart Lake to Bradley Lake was uphill and more demanding. If I had it to do over, I would have just done the hike to Taggart Lake.
- We did more than 22,000 steps today!
- We ate lunch at Liberty Burger in town, and then returned to the hotel to nap.
- We went to the Jackson Rodeo from 8-10pm. They did have a military discount if tickets were purchased at the gate. We arrived early, around 7:20pm. We all had a much better time than we expected. Glad we went. They have a rodeo every Wednesday and Saturday in the summer.

Day 11- Jackson WY- Part 3

- We got up early and drove to the Phelps Lake Trailhead. The parking lot was full so we changed plans and decided to hike the Phelps Lake Overlook Trail. It was 2 miles round trip and took us an hour. The trail was beautiful with wild flowers on both sides of us and nice streams of snow run off throughout.
- The view of Phelps Lake was beautiful!
- Next we went to Coulter Bay hoping to rent a kayak. The water levels were too low so we couldn't. We walked down the rocky shore and put our feet in the ice cold water.
- We drive back to the hotel and spent the afternoon at the pool while doing laundry.
- Dinner at Merry Piglets Tex-Mexican restaurant. Really good food and fast service.

Day 12-Jackson WY to Butte, Montana (5.5 hours)

- Driving day. Drove towards Butte, Montana.
- Stopped at Mesa Falls in Idaho.
- Stopped in Big Sky Montana for lunch.
- Stopped in Bozeman, MT at MAP Brewing Company.
- We wanted to drive up through Yellowstone but, because of the flooding, there was no entrance allowed because our license plate didn't end with an odd number.

- We also wanted to drive further to Missoula, but couldn't cancel our hotel reservation at Fairfield Inn in Butte. If we had to do it over again we would have driven the major highway from Jackson to Missoula to get the majority of driving done.

Day 13-Butte, Montana to Glacier National Park and Whitefish, Montana (4 hours)

- Drove 4 hours from Butte to the West Entrance of Glacier National Park.
- Beautiful drive to the park. Fields of yellow flowers.
- Once we got to Glacier, we had to wait until 4pm to get inside the park (because of their vehicle restrictions). We had rented a campground online, thinking it would guarantee us entrance to the park, but it turns out that the campground could be accessed another route outside the park, so they wouldn't let us in. If we had it to do over, I would have made vehicle reservations way in advance, gone on recreation.gov at 8am the day before to get a free 3 day pass, or booked a boat tour on Lake McDonald and St. Mary's Lake. Any kind of tour reservation inside the park will grant you entrance.
- Drove along side Lake McDonald on Going-to-the-Sun Road. It was only open up to Avalanche Creek. They were still plowing through 20 ft of snow to get the rest of the road open. We loved what we saw of it. The water is so crystal clear and a perfect "glacier green" color
- We did all the pull offs and outlooks.
- Enjoyed the sun setting on Lake McDonald.
- Drive 45 minutes to Whitefish, MT and stayed at the Pine Lodge. Great hotel along the Whitefish River. Super friendly and helpful. Had an indoor/outdoor pool and free s'mores packets to use around their fire tables. They also had kayaks, ebikes and scooters to rent.

Day 14- Glacier National Park- East Glacier

- Drove 70 minutes from Whitefish to East Glacier Village to the Two Medicine Area. There were no vehicle restrictions at this entrance.
- We didn't stop at Essex half way there, but heard it's a good place to check out. There is a historic hotel with good food and it's also a train depot.
- There are two beautiful lakes at Two Medicine. Two Medicine Lake and Lower Two Medicine Lake. You see both along the beautiful drive.
- There are many great hikes in this area: Aster Falls & Aster Park, Scenic Point, Dawson Pass, Cobalt Lake, Oldman Lake. You can shorten some of these hikes by taking the boat shuttle over to Upper Medicine Lake.
- There are 3 short waterfall hikes: Running Eagle Falls, Aster Falls, and Appistoki Falls.
- We first did Running Eagle Falls, which was .3 miles along an easy over path.
- I'm a sucker for a waterfall. Quick walk with a nice reward. I heard that it becomes a swimming hole when the water is a little warmer.
- Next we chose Aster Falls & Park (overlook of the lakes). Aster Falls was .8 miles and Aster Park was another mile with a steep incline. If you have to choose one, just do the falls. The overlook was beautiful but it was a long hikes with lots of switchbacks to get there.
- On our way back we saw a moose by a river getting some water.

- It was super windy and started to rain, so we decided to leave after our hike. I would have preferred to do a historic boat tour on the lake, but the wind was 40-60 miles an hour so we skipped it.
- We stopped in East Glacier Village at the Whistle Stop Cafe to eat.
- We drove back to the hotel and spent the rest of the day swimming in the pool and hot tub. The kids needed some down time.
- The hotel and everywhere we went in Montana had the most beautiful flower pots. All the downtown shops had hanging flowers as well.
- We had s'mores by the fire and called it a night!

Day 15- Glacier National Park- St. Mary Area

- We checked out of our hotel in Whitefish and drove 2.5 hours to the St. Mary Entrance of the park. There were no vehicle restrictions to enter at this location. It was a LONG drive but worth it! The drive itself was incredibly beautiful.
- If the Going-to-the-Sun-Road was open, we could have driven straight through the park from the West Entrance to the East Entrance, but it was the latest it's ever been closed. It was closed from Avalanche to Gunsight Pass. They expected it to be open by July 12, and usually it's open by the last weekend in June.
- We entered at the St. Mary entrance and no vehicle pass was required (even though I had secured us a pass on recreation.gov the day before).
- We drove along the east side of the Going-to-the-Sun Road up until where it was closed for the season at The Gunsight Pass Trailhead, stopping at any overlooks on the right side.
- After turning around we stopped at all the overlooks on the left side. St. Mary Lake was the prettiest lake I've ever seen. Emerald Green water with majestic snow-capped mountains behind it. Just breathtaking!
- We were told by a friend that you can park at St. Mary Falls or Sunrift Gorge if there is parking and hike to see 3 waterfalls. Baring Falls, St. Mary Falls, and Virginia Falls. All total is 6 miles. We all walked to St. Mary Falls from the St. Mary Falls Trailhead and it was a beautiful walk through fields of flowers. The forest had been burned in a fire in 2016, so it was open and the views to the lake were incredible.
- St. Mary Falls itself was a beautiful waterfall, with a cliff wall next to it and crystal clear green water. It's a nice place to sit for awhile.
- Further ahead is Virginia Falls, which we could see from the road. It's a good ways further up the mountain, but you see several smaller waterfalls along the way. It was worth the extra effort to see the big falls. We almost got knocked over by the breeze and mist from the falls. There was a rainbow at the end and it was just beautiful! Easy hike back to the car.
- We drove ahead to Sunrift Gorge trailhead and tried to hike to Bering Falls, but a deer was along the other and wouldn't budge. We decided to skip the hike rather than wait.
- We had hoped to do a boat tour on St. Mary Lake but they didn't have availability. I would highly recommend making reservations ahead of time and doing a lake tour. Of all the lakes, I would have LOVED to be out on the aqua-marine water.

- I heard that Beaver Pond Loop was another nice hike.
- We stopped at St. Mary's Lodge for milkshakes and souvenirs and headed to Glacier Park Lodge.
- We saw a bear on the side of the road as we were exiting the park. It was our first "Bear Jam!" Lots of cars pulled over to the side of the road with people taking photos of a bear.
- We have realized that we should have stayed on the east side of Glacier Park the whole time instead of the West. There is just SO much more to see and do on the east side. Thankfully, there was a room available at Glacier Park Lodge so we booked it for our last night. This grand hotel was built in the 1920's and is only open 4 months of the year. It's what you picture a classic mountain lodge to be, made of huge wooden logs and the inside looks like it hasn't changed much since the 1920's. It saved us 1.5 hours of driving in the evening. When we arrived there was a huge fire going and someone playing the piano in the lobby.
- We ate dinner at the Lodge, watched the sunset over the mountains (at 9:40pm!), played some cards on their sun deck, and went to bed in our room with 4 Queen beds! No air conditioning, but there were a few box fans.
- Since Glacier was our Plan B, we didn't have time to prepare or research the area. Now that we've been here, I'd recommend planning well in advance for your visit. It wasn't like the other parks we visited where you could "wing" it. The lodging options on the east side are mostly old motels and without a vehicle pass you can't get in key entrances, so it's worth the Pre-planning.
- I'd recommend getting reservations EARLY at Many Glacier Hotel, St. Mary Lodge & Resort, Glacier Park Lodge, or one of the other properties inside the park. It will save you so much time driving and give you that classic lodge experience.
Glaciernationalparklodges.com
- Reserve a red bus tour well in advance at glaciernationalparklodges.com
- Glacier Park Boat Co was the official company that runs all the tourist boats inside the park. Make reservations online ahead of them at glacierparkboats.com.
- I feel like we barely touched Glacier. There was so much more to explore. I'd come in July and August so more was open and so we could utilize the shuttles that start on July 1. It was by far the biggest scale and more majestic than the other parks. Already looking forward to a return trip!

Day 16- Drove from East Glacier to Bozeman Airport (4.5 hours)

- That's a wrap! We drove a total of 3,000 miles with 70 hours of driving over the course of our trip. It was a trip of a lifetime for us! We loved seeing more of the west and I hope it encourages you to get out and explore as well!