Montana’s Glacier National Park
With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

July 24 – Aug. 1, 2021
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This great tour is back by popular demand! Join us to explore the fabulous “Crown of the Continent” ecosystem. Montana’s Glacier National Park and neighboring Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada span some of the most spectacular scenery in the Rockies. The dramatic rock foundations here rank among the oldest on Earth; on scenic roads and trails we find spectacular geologic layers that have allowed scientists to unlock the mystery of much of earth’s ancient history. Water, ice, and wind have sculpted these mountains into a fantastic array of cirques, horns, ridges, and dramatic U-shaped valleys, while also painting them in beautiful deep colors.

This is an active natural history trip with hiking, though our hikes are designed to go at a naturalist’s pace with time to observe birds and wildlife, wildflowers and natural history. We work with a local expert from Glacier Wilderness Guides who is out regularly and knows thoroughly the wonderful wildflowers and fantastic wildlife of the area. July is peak flowering season, and we should find meadows awash with flowers and bright stalks of Glacier’s signature plant—Beargrass. In the high country we scan for Mountain Goat and Bighorn Sheep, while in lush forests we look and listen for a variety of northern birds such as Gray Jay, Clark’s Nutcracker, Townsend’s Warbler, Lazuli Bunting, Boreal Chickadee and more. Along streams we find families if American Dipper teaching their young how to feed.

New this year, our journey starts and ends on the eastern side of the divide in Great Falls, Montana. From historic lodgings in Fort Benton, this affords

Tour Highlights
- Discover the Crown of the Continent, a mountain area of incredible beauty!
- Learn geology and natural history while hiking and exploring
- Visit prime wildlife areas and global birding hotspots near Great Falls
- Stand at historic sites that Lewis and Clark visited at Fort Benton
- Get to know Glacier: Going to the Sun Highway, Two Medicine and Many Glacier valleys
- Watch an American Dipper feed its young along a rushing stream
- Cross into Canada—and stay at the stunning park lodge at Waterton Lakes
- Take in sublime beauty boating the length of Waterton Lake to our trail head into a chain of lakes perfect for finding Moose, Pine Grosbeak and both Red and White-winged Crossbills
- Stay and Dine at the gracious East Glacier Lodge
- Immerse yourself in wildflowers—species like Beargrass and Delphinium stand as tall as you do!
- Renew your spirits walking through lush greenery and waterfalls
- Be a part of the authentic West in this classic part of Montana

Tour Summary
9-Day / 8-Night Active Sampler Tour w/ Peg Abbott
$3995 from Great Falls, MT
Airport is Great Falls International Airport (GTF)
us a chance to sample birdlife of the prairies and wetlands and to learn of the epic journey of Lewis and Clark along the Missouri River.

Join us to explore the quintessential beauty of one of North America’s outstanding wild places: Drink in views of rugged peaks, glacier-carved valleys, deep mountain lakes, and cold, clear rivers—often with cascading waterfalls. While in the parks we have chosen national park lodgings so you can be in the heart of the park in the most scenic places. While these lodgings add a bit to our typical tour cost, we think they are very worthwhile.

**Itinerary**

**Sat., July 24  Arrivals in Great Falls | Local Birding**
Welcome to Big Sky Country, Montana! Those arriving by 2 PM can explore Giant Springs State Park, where fish are reared in springs that flow 156 million gallons of water per day into the Missouri River. Large trees and lawns of this State Park afford us some good birding, with first looks at Belted Kingfisher, Willow Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Swainson’s Thrush, Bullock’s Oriole and Black-billed Magpie.

After exploring a bit, we will head over to Fort Benton, a famous site for the Lewis and Clark Expedition on the Missouri River and site of our lodgings for the next two nights. Built in 1882 in the high plains of Montana, the Grand Union Hotel is Montana’s oldest operating hotel. The historic hotel has been renovated over recent years to include modern amenities and offers fabulous farm-to-table dining in their Union Grille restaurant. Rooms are comfortable and thoughtfully furnished drawing inspiration from the hotel's early days, and the adjacent Upper Missouri Wild and Scenic River is a great place to stretch your legs after a long day of travel. Rich in history and hospitality, the hotel is truly a charming relic of the old west!

**Accommodations at the Grand Union Hotel, Fort Benton (D)**

**Sun., July 25  Fort Benton National Wildlife Refuge | Fort Benton Museums**
Enjoy some local birding along the river, and after breakfast we head over to Fort Benton National Wildlife Refuge, a drive of about 40 minutes. This 12,383-acre prairie and marsh refuge is designated a Globally Important Bird Area and notably also a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network site. July is quieter than migration
seasons, but resident waterfowl are feeding young and there are a surprising number of interesting species to observe. Shelterbelts, small groves of trees, break up the expanse of grassland and marshlands and are good places to find Loggerhead Shrike and Eastern Kingbird.

In wetlands we look for Eared Grebe; Franklin’s Gull; three possible species of terns: Common, Forster’s and Black; Cinnamon Teal; Sora; Wilson’s Phalarope; American Avocet; Black-Necked Stilt; Marbled Godwit; and Willet. In marshes and open margins of the marshes we may find raucous Yellow-headed Blackbird; Common Yellowthroat; Marsh Wren; White-Faced Ibis, Black-Crowned Night Heron, Long-billed Curlew. In grasslands, or perched up along fence posts and wires, and margins of fields we look for Vesper, Savannah, and Clay-Colored Sparrows; and Chestnut-collared Longspur. With some luck we could find Sharp-Tailed Grouse, Short-Eared Owl and perhaps Burrowing Owl.

In the afternoon, we return to our comfortable lodgings, leaving time to visit the Fort Benton Museums & Heritage Complex. The complex includes Historic Old Fort Benton, Museum of the Northern Great Plains, Homestead Village, The Museum of the Upper Missouri, Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Interpretive Center and two western art galleries. Tour the various museums according to your interest—all are highly regarded and a fabulous way to see Montana history unfold. 

**Accommodations at the Grand Union Hotel, Fort Benton (D)**

**Mon., July 26  First People’s Buffalo Jump | Freezeout Lake National Wildlife Refuge**

After breakfast, we pack up our gear and start our drive north to Glacier National Park, taking much of the day to sample the fine scenery and break up the straight-through three-hour drive. Along the way we visit birding and natural history hotspots.

Our first stop has historic interest as well. The 1600-acre First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park (formerly Ulm Pishkun State Park) protects a fascinating prehistoric bison kill site. The same sandstone cliffs that allowed early hunters to run these large and dangerous animals to their death (making it possible to hunt them) today provides habitat for soaring raptors and nesting cliff swallows. Listen to the music of Western Meadowlarks and other grassland birds as we explore.

First on the agenda is time to watch Prairie Dogs and with them possible Burrowing Owls, most active in the morning. We then listen for Rock Wrens calling from the cliffs, and in the grassland, we scan for Long-billed Curlew; Grasshopper Sparrow, Swainson’s Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk and possible Golden Eagle. Learn more about the kill site at the Visitor Center where we should find confiding Say’s Phoebe, most likely with young fledged from the nest. Walking about with great luck we might scare up Gray Partridge or even Sharp-tailed Grouse.
We continue from here on to Freezeout Lake. While it is not prime season, this is one of the best birding hotspots in Montana, and while we won’t see the clouds of Snow Geese that it is famous for, the refuge has great birds year-round. July is post-nesting so we should find adults with young using the wetlands, shelterbelt woodlands and grasslands. Freezeout Lake Wildlife Management Area, like Fort Benton National Wildlife Refuge, is an Important Bird Area and Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network site.

In the smaller ponds and wetlands, we hope to find Eared Grebe, Franklin’s Gull, Common Tern, Forster’s Tern, Black Tern, Cinnamon Teal, Sora, Wilson’s Phalarope, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Marbled Godwit, Willet and noisy Yellow-headed Blackbird. In adjacent grassland, we look for Eastern Kingbird, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Clay-Colored Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, and Marsh Wren.

In the larger Freezeout Lake itself we look for Western Grebe, Clark’s Grebe, Red-necked Grebe, American White Pelican, Bald Eagle and Swainson’s Hawk. At the north end of the lake we may find Upland Sandpiper, Say’s Phoebe and Western Kingbird.

Some early shorebirds may be coming back through after going up to the Arctic to breed. We keep our eyes peeled for early finds of Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Baird’s Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Common Snipe and Red-necked Phalarope.

We continue north, stopping for rest breaks and have our lunch at a local restaurant. We arrive at our lodgings in time to take in the grand views and freshen up before dinner. St. Mary’s is a fabulous location in one of Glacier’s most dramatic settings. The lodge complex is large and busy but in a prime area. We will get you oriented so you can navigate from rooms to our selection their several dining options to meet for dinner tonight. Some may want to browse the pleasant shops.

*Accommodations at St. Mary’s Lodge, Glacier National Park. (B,L,D)*

**Tues., July 27  Crown of the Continent | Highline Trail**

We leave just after breakfast for our first hike—one of the most spectacular! Our guide from Glacier Wilderness Guides joins us today. We see so much beauty just driving up the Going to the Sun Highway to our trailhead!
The hike today is all in the high country along the Highline Trail, an ideal trail that provides excellent vistas with little climbing, and it’s a great place to look for White-tailed Ptarmigan.

The 52-mile Going to the Sun Highway, a National Historic Landmark, is both an engineering feat and one of the most scenic roads in North America. Every spring, U.S. Park Service road crews labor to remove over 80 feet of snow from the road, a job that often entails re-surveying to locate the road under the snow while facing the threat of dangerous avalanches. You will be amazed by the scenery and the winding route this road takes, hugging the sides of the mountains as it passes by rugged peaks, waterfalls and lush alpine meadows.

We approach the summit of Logan Pass from the east side of the Continental Divide. From 1921 to 1933, crews worked under extremely dangerous conditions to build a “road out of rock” that crossed the continental divide and unified the eastern and western portions of the park.

This area is one often used by Mountain Goat, which have frisky young at this time of year. Scenery is of a grand scale; at our feet are diminutive alpine flowers. With luck we should find Horned Lark, American Pipit and Gray-crowned Rosy Finch. A fabulous find would be White-tailed Ptarmigan with chicks!

Watch for Golden Eagle as we return to Logan Pass, where we peruse the exhibits at the park’s visitor’s center. Then it’s back to our lakeside lodgings at St. Mary’s Village to celebrate our first great day and all we’ve seen at dinner tonight.

Accommodations at St. Mary’s Lodge, Glacier National Park. (B,L,D)

**Wed., July 28  St. Mary’s Falls Hike | North to Waterton Lakes National Park**

This morning we take a nearby hike to a lovely waterfall in the St. Mary’s area. This has traditionally been a great place to find American Dipper as we sit beside the stream. The trail is lushly forested, a real contrast to yesterday, and a good time to find forest birds such as Steller’s Jay, possible Pine Grosbeak, Evening Grosbeak, Western Tanager and Cassin’s Finch.

Returning from our hike, we drive north to Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada, Glacier’s sister park. We drive along the east side of Glacier, with spectacular scenery along the way. In 1931, these two impressive parks agreed to become the world’s first International Peace Park as an everlasting symbol of the peace and friendship between two great countries. The parks are both World Biosphere Reserves and were jointly named as a World Heritage Site in 1995, highlighting the importance of this area to the entire world.

We pass by 9,080 ft. Chief Mountain, a geologic oddity that is a key feature of the Lewis Overthrust Fault. The mountain’s isolated location and striking form made it an important landmark for Native Americans and early settlers.
En route we check ponds and the winding river area as we enter Waterton Lake National Park for Common Loon, Barrow’s Goldeneye, Trumpeter Swan, Sandhill Crane, Osprey and Bald Eagle. In a recently burned forest area we look for Three-toed Woodpecker among the more common Hairy Woodpecker and Northern Flicker. We do cross the Canadian border so you will need proof of citizenship and proof of identity—your passport or a passport card. Then, welcome to Canada!

After settling into our accommodations at the Prince of Wales Hotel. Situated on a bluff overlooking Waterton, you will find just outstanding views of the lake and surrounding high mountains. Walk at your leisure on the grounds; enjoy traditional British high tea or a cocktail and keep an eye out for the resident nesting Prairie Falcon. Tonight, we dine together in the lodge’s elegant dining room. This hotel is truly a step back in time.

Accommodations at the Prince of Wales Hotel, Waterton, Alberta, Canada. (B,L,D)

Thurs., July 29  Waterton Lakes National Park | Hike to Kootenay Lakes of Glacier NP

These two parks sit side by side and today we cruise through Waterton returning to a hike in Glacier. Enjoy a full day in this lush and remote part of Glacier National Park, accessed by a scenic boat trip down the length of Alberta’s 203-square mile Waterton Lake. Enjoy the scenery effortlessly, and at the lake’s end we are back in the U.S., at Glacier’s remote Goat Haunt Ranger Station.

Our trail to Kootenay Lakes traverses lush forest with breaks for great scenery and wildflowers. Best of all, it climbs only about 200 ft. in elevation. At the lake we look for nesting Trumpeter Swans – which should have their cygnets hatched by this time – as well as Moose that frequent the area. Moose often feed on the lake’s lush aquatic vegetation, making for some great photography opportunities as they lift their huge, antler-clad heads to chew! With luck we may also find female Moose with their calves. This is a good area to look for Red-naped Sapsucker and Dusky Grouse as we pass through several aging Quaking Aspen stands. Enjoy a picnic lunch and return by boat across dramatic Waterton Lake.

In the evening, some may want to explore the town of Waterton where you can choose from a variety of local restaurants or relax with a simple meal in the bar or restaurant of our elegant hotel. Dinner is at your leisure tonight so you can decide. Several homes in town have gardens with hummingbird feeders; with luck those going in may spot Broad-tailed, Calliope or Rufous Hummingbirds.

Accommodations at the Prince of Wales Hotel, Waterton. (B,L)
Fri., July 30  Many Glacier Valley | Bull Lake Hike | East Glacier

After breakfast we return south, watching Osprey over the lush landscape of lakes and rivers. We cross the border back into the USA and turn up to the Many Glacier area of Glacier National Park. Today we get to explore another beautiful drainage for an afternoon hike to Bull Lake from the trailhead beyond Many Glacier Lodge. We will probably have lunch at the trailhead or at a scenic point on the way in.

Passing through a chain of colorful meadows, mountain lakes, and beaver ponds, we are surrounded by mountain splendor all afternoon. This hike is one of our favorites, affording beautiful views of classic Grinnell Peak without serious elevation gain. Fox Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting and Wilson’s Warblers are often encountered in this area. Several ponds attract Canada Geese, Lesser Scaup and other waterfowl species. Wildflowers are abundant on the hillsides, and we walk through veritable gardens of Fireweed, Lupine, Mountain Hollyhock and Beargrass. MacGillivray’s Warblers sing from the shrubby thickets, and Winter Wren, Varied and Swainson’s Thrush and flocks of Golden-crowned Kinglet frequent groves of conifer trees.

After our hike we continue to East Glacier. Tonight’s lodgings are a treat—the historic Glacier Park Lodge. The hotel was built in 1913 by the Great Northern Railway and lies at the foot of Dancing Lady Mountain within the boundaries of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in East Glacier. Great forty-foot Douglas fir trees frame the lobby, welcoming guests for over a century. Stroll the lodge’s famous flower gardens or relax and enjoy the sights and sounds of the surrounding forests. Dinner is in the delightful hotel dining room where entire trees support the massive structure. Rooms are cozy and simply furnished, the lobby is just stunning!

Accommodations at Glacier Park Lodge, East Glacier (B,L,D)

Sat., July 31  Two Medicine Valley | Return to Great Falls

Today before heading back to Great Falls mid-afternoon, we spend the day hiking and exploring the natural history of Two Medicine Valley. This striking mountain valley was carved by an immense glacier that once spread like an apron onto the Great Plains. The area is rich in Native American history; its name derives from the annual sun dances once held by two Blackfeet tribes, the Bloods and the Piegan, in adjacent medicine lodges.
To explore this area in detail, we take a boat across Two Medicine Lake to reach our trailhead. Our destination is Upper Two Medicine Lake, a beautiful spot surrounded by sheer cliffs and high peaks, with the option of visiting Twin Falls en route.

A picnic lunch is the perfect way to take a break while still soaking in the scenery! Mixed forests give us a chance to look for Dusky Flycatcher, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Townsend’s Solitaire, Hermit Thrush and Veery. And of course, we are always on the lookout for bear and moose!
Then sit back and enjoy the scenery as we drive back to Great Falls, and our lodgings close to the airport. This is about a two-and-a-half-hour scenic drive. Once there we check in, and over a fun local dinner we recount our grand adventures, tally up our checklist and describe our favorite bird and wildlife sightings.

_Accommodations in Great Falls (B,L,D)_

**Sun., Aug. 1  Great Falls | Departures**

Our hotel has a convenient airport shuttle. For those that do not have to leave before NOON, enjoy some local birding, to a hotspot chosen by your guide, and enjoy one last chance to pick up some additional species! (B)

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**Guide Peg Abbott**

Peg Abbott is the owner and lead guide of Naturalist Journeys, LLC. She has been designing, guiding, and organizing natural history tours for more than 25 years, working for the National Audubon Society and other organizations before launching Naturalist Journeys, LLC in 1998. Her work has taken her from Alaska to Africa and Argentina, as well as many other locations around the world. She has conducted research on several bird and mammal species and keeps a close interest in Yellowstone and Mexican wolf reintroduction projects. Her interests include all aspects of natural history and geology. After 20 years in and around the Yellowstone area, Peg relocated in 2003 to the birding mecca of Portal, AZ.
Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!
Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Their website will show a grid of tour cost and your age category for you to make selections. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Cost of the Journey
Cost of the journey is $3995 DBL / $4990 SGL per person, from Great Falls, MT, based on double occupancy.

This cost includes airport transfers, transportation during the journey, all accommodations, most meals specified in the itinerary (one evening is free to provide choices), professional guide services including those of Glacier Wilderness Guides, park and other entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses.

It does not include: roundtrip airfare to and from Great Falls, items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone, or drinks from the bar; or gratuities for porterage or personal services.

Travel Information
The airport for arrival and departure is Great Falls International (GTF) in Montana. Plan to arrive by 2 p.m. on July 24 and depart after Noon if possible if you want to bird the last morning—otherwise by a short taxi ride to the airport you can leave as you wish on August 1.

Photo Credits
Many Glacier Hotel Lake, courtesy of Many Glacier Hotel; Missouri River Fort Benton, courtesy of Grand Union Hotel; Western Bluebird, Greg Smith (GS); Mountain Goat, John Carlson (JC); Pika, JC; Prince of Wales Hotel, courtesy of Prince of Wales Hotel; Loggerhead Shrike, Steve Wolfe (SW); Bullock’s Oriole, GS; Grand Union Hotel, courtesy of Grand Union Hotel; Western Tanager, Barb Stone (BS); Willow Flycatcher, Hugh Simmons Photography; Peregrine Falcon, GS; Grand Union Hotel, courtesy of the hotel; Short-eared Owl, GS; Eared Grebe, Pat Lueders; Long-billed Curlew, SW; St. Mary Lodge exterior, courtesy St. Mary Lodge; American Dipper, Naturalist Journeys Stock; Prince of Wales Hotel, courtesy of Prince of Wales Hotel; Osprey, Sandy Sorkin; Northern Flicker, Barry Ramdass; Black Bear, BS; Glacier Park Lodge Dining view, courtesy of Glacier Park Lodge; Moose, GS.

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