

Whitefish, MT



If someone says Whitefish, most will reply, 'Where-Fish?' However for those in the know, those who adore the Great Outdoors and the myriad charms it offers, this somewhat off-the-grid hamlet in northwest Montana is a vacation destination not to be missed. The golf is top-notch. Golf Digest magazine ranked the area among the top fifty international golf destinations back in 2000, ahead of better known hot spots like Palm Beach, Bermuda and Puerto Rico, among others. Golfweek Magazine's state-by-state ranking of the nation's best public access courses found four of the five slots allotted to Montana in and around Whitefish and the greater Flathead Valley. But going to Whitefish just to smack the ball through the meadow is like going to Las Vegas simply to gorge on buffets. It's part of the picture, but far from the sole attraction.



Glacier Park

Considering the lyrically named Glacier International Airport is but twenty minutes from town, one will barely familiarize themselves with the controls in their National Rental Car before arriving. But not to worry; Glacier National Park's west entrance is forty five minutes from the airport and an hour from town, and the miles roll by quickly in anticipation of visiting one of the most thrilling natural landscapes in the world. Yellowstone Park is the original, Yosemite is more iconic, Grand Canyon Park more visited. But Glacier Park is unrivaled in terms of soaring, sweeping views, a magnificent alpine setting, sparkling lakes and tumbling waterfalls. Glacier is called the Crown of the Continent for good reason. It isn't some marketing hype or catchy slogan concocted by an ad man.



Glacier's Going to the Sun Road

Golfers everywhere dream of rolling down Magnolia Lane (Augusta National) or cruising down 17-Mile Drive. (Pebble Beach, Cypress Point.) But these are akin to soulless, anonymous interstates in comparison to Glacier's Going to the Sun Road. This is a winding, climbing, hairpin-happy, single-file, sweat-inducing, breathtaking stretch of macadam as unforgettable as its name. The views from the roadway (be sure to use the numerous turnouts, as neck-craning while driving is potentially lethal) are as scintillating as virtually anything in the lower forty eight.

Back in town, there is one golf option that stands above the others, first among equals, as they say. It's the [Whitefish Lake Golf Club](#), 36 holes of affordable, scenic, quality golf, and the perfect complement to the hiking-biking-rafting-kayaking gestalt that's pervasive in Whitefish, and mountain towns everywhere.



Whitefish Lake Golf Club

In a faltering golf economy, with many private clubs withering on the vine, it's heartening to see Whitefish Lake robust and thriving.

Summer at this latitude (only sixty miles from the Canadian border) can offer nearly eighteen hours of potential playing time. Members and visitors fill up the tee sheet consistently, from after dawn to nearing dusk, about 65,000 rounds annually. However conditioning is excellent, the courses in uniformly fine condition.

The "little brother" **South Course** is more target oriented, with a superb trio of front nine holes adjacent to the lovely Lost Coon Lake. Holes six and fourteen, a par-5 and par-4, respectively, necessitate precisely calibrated tee shots landing short of bisecting water hazards.

Mammoth hitters can have a go, the rank-and-file will need to dial back with a long iron or hybrid to stay dry.



Whitefish Lake – North Course

The **North Course** is a traditional layout dating from the 1930s, tree-lined and parkland style. The quirk comes early on the inward nine; the tenth is a petite, hard-bending dogleg par-4, followed by a downhill par-3 of nearly the same length. The twelfth is a tumbling par-4 where first-timers won't be sure of the target line.

For a downtown that basically consists of a couple of main drags and a smattering of cross streets, Whitefish has some superb dining experiences. The words 'sushi' and 'Montana' go together, as the English might say, like chalk and cheese. That said, Wasabi Sushi Bar delivers consistently fresh, innovative and delicious meals. Latitude 48 and their cozy, funky downstairs, the Red Room Basement Bar, has an eclectic menu, attentive service and a kaleidoscope of a cocktail menu.