Glacier National Park by Preston Kavanagh at preston.kavanagh@gmail.com

I spent 2019 working in Kalispell and getting into the park as time and weather permitted. It was a terrific place with great people. Here are some learnings:

* The north side of Kalispell and anyplace in Whitefish are plenty close enough to get you into the park early in the day.
* Take seriously the warnings about bears. Go to the Kalispell Walmart or Whitefish Army-Navy and get a can of repellent - that's about all the protection a non-local can handle.
* Peak season is an SOB. September 12 might be near perfect - visitor count down, cool but not yet snowy. Assuming the counts are still high, here's how to cope: Get early to West Gate and enjoy the view on G-t-t-S Road without stopping until you get to Logan Pass and look for parking. If a spot is open, grab it and launch yourself on the Highline Trail. It's long, incredible and don't even think of doing the full length - get to Haystack Pass and drag your sorry self back to the car. It's a narrow trail along a cliff face and you have to yield to mountain goats.
* If you can't park at Logan Pass, continue through to the eastern side, then head to St. Mary's Lake. St. Mary's Lake is flatter, few people get more than 500 yards from parking, and the alpine meadows are spectacular. Take the advice of the cashier in the little general store.
* Greatly underrated is the walk up to Avalanche Lake. Locals are dismissive and consider it "easy". In Montana, a trail is easy if you can't get lost - it does not reflect the wear and tear on your hips and knees. When you get to the lake, continue along the right hand side - an out of service trail takes you to the waterfall at the far end.
* Rotten weather happens a lot - when it does, take the long muddy road up to Polebridge and have coffee and a scone, then walk around the lake.
* Good boots, an Osprey day pack, water, aspirin and liniment...