

THE OPEN SECRET

Locals want to share this wilderness in hopes of getting it designated.

→ Everyone knows Glacier's beauty doesn't just end at park boundaries, but the tricky part is getting trail-weathered long-timers to divulge their favorite spots—because, really, what's in it for them? More RV-clogged trailheads? Well, in the case of Alpine Trail No. 7, there's more to be gained than lost: Locals want the high-country route through the Swan Range and the surrounding terrain protected as wilderness.

Alpine Trail No. 7,
Swan Range, MT



Your Guide

KEITH HAMMER

Years on location:

50

Favorite day-hike: Trail 293 on Broken Leg Mountain

Best post-hike meal: The Laughing Horse Lodge in Swan Lake; laughing-horselodge.com

Why? Grizzlies, bobcats, and moose roam these woods, and the meadows are overrun with wildflowers. "This area is so underused, sections of the trailbed have glacier lilies growing in them," local conservationist Keith Hammer told me when I went in search of the region's insider hikes. These delicate yellow flowers bloom all summer in patches of melting snow, along with Indian paintbrush, anemones, and yellow wood violets. "The scene is just as incredible as Glacier," Hammer says.

See why locals want to protect it on a two-night, 25-mile shuttle hike. Pack water for a dry first day, head up the ridge from Napa Point, and follow the Swan Crest's alpine tundra north, with views west over the pine-studded, river-crossed Lost Creek drainage and east through

the Bob Marshall Wilderness, an area so vast even year-round residents barely scratch the surface. (If you're up for it, scramble Warrior Mountain, Gildart Peak, or Thunderbolt Mountain, which are all just shy of 8,000 feet.) Camp at Crevise Lakes (mile 10), a pair of tarns pooling on glaciated rock atop the Swan Crest, with Thunderbolt's north face casting long shadows in the evening.

Stay on the crest for 8 miles to Trinkus Lake on the second day, and rinse off in its cool, green water. Day three, follow Bond Creek's meander for 7 miles through huckleberry patches (ripe in August) to the trailhead 2 miles south of Swan Lake.

—JACOB BAYNHAM

TRIP PLANNER Shuttle

47.909928, -113.834496*; 37 miles southeast of Kalispell on Bond Creek Trail (private option: Flathead Glacier Transport; \$45/hour, 3-4 hours; 406-892-3390; glaciertransportation.com) Trailhead 47.786475, -113.733909; 51 miles southeast of Kalispell on Center Loop Rd. Contact (406) 758-5208; fs.usda.gov/flathead



*Plug these lat/long coordinates into Google maps for turn-by-turn driving directions.