

A Day of Hiking in Flathead National Forest: Jewel Basin Hike



This guide is meant for an engaging day hike in the Jewel Basin within the Flathead National Forest, ensuring a memorable experience with scenic views, challenging trails, and local Montana hospitality.

Preparation

- **Date:** Choose a clear day from June to September for the best experience.
- **Start Time:** 7:00 AM
- **End Time:** 5:00 PM
- **Gear:** Hiking boots, layered clothing, rain jacket, 2L water per person, snacks, lunch, bear spray, map and compass/GPS, and a first-aid kit.
- **Trail:** Jewel Basin Hiking Area

Morning

- **7:00 AM:** Depart from Bigfork, MT. Ensure you have a full tank of gas.
- **7:30 AM:** Arrive at the Jewel Basin trailhead parking area at the end of Forest Service Road 5392. Parking is limited; arrive early.

The road to the trailhead is a narrow gravel road with blind corners. Drive carefully.

- **7:45 AM:** Begin your hike at the Mount Aeneas Trail. This is a popular trail, offering panoramic views of the Flathead Valley and numerous alpine lakes.
- **8:30 AM:** Stop at Picnic Lakes for a short break. Enjoy the serene views and have some snacks.

Midday

- **12:00 PM:** Reach the summit of Mount Aeneas. Enjoy your packed lunch here with views over the Flathead National Forest and Glacier National Park.

Must-Do: Use binoculars to spot mountain goats and possibly bald eagles.

- **12:45 PM:** Begin descent. Take the loop around Birch Lake for added scenery, rather than retracing your steps.

Afternoon

- **3:00 PM:** Arrive back at the trailhead. Rest and refresh. Change into comfortable shoes if you brought a pair.
- **3:30 PM:** Drive to Bigfork. Stop at "Flathead Lake Cheese" for a quick tour and some locally made cheese, perfect for an after-hike snack.
- **4:00 PM:** Early dinner at "The Raven," located on the shores of Flathead Lake. Offers outdoor seating with lake views and a variety of dishes suitable for refueling after a day of hiking.

Evening

- **5:00 PM:** Head back to your accommodation or explore downtown Bigfork for some evening relaxation.

Additional tips

- Always check the weather and trail conditions before departing.
- Let someone know your hiking plan and expected return time.
- Stick to the trails and respect wildlife; remember, you're a guest in their home.
- Leave no trace. Pack out everything you bring in.