

UPDATED Oct. 1st

Whitefish Trip Information & F.A.Q.



From Trip Leaders: Dave & Pam White

The Red Eye Ski & Snowboard Club economy trip to Whitefish Montana is being offered again as a “hobo”, land only trip. We supply the heavily discounted slope-side condominium lodging and Whitefish Mountain lift tickets at bargain “group” pricing. You arrange your own transportation, hence the term “hobo”. There are direct air options between MSP and Kalispell, MT (FCA). Amtrak also offers passenger rail service via their “Empire Builder” between MSP and Whitefish (WFH). For those with an “Indy ski pass”, driving is an attractive option with potential pass use opportunities at Terry Peak (SD) and Red Lodge (MT). You choose and arrange your own transportation.

Flights and schedules are constantly changing, and there are multiple flight options to Kalispell on both DELTA and UNITED, but as of this publication (Oct. 1st) there is only one non-stop flight –

“DELTA AIRLINES” Minneapolis St. Paul (MSP) – Kalispell, MT (FCA)

Departing MSP on SUNDAY February 25th at 6:50 pm. DELTA flight DL2608

- The variety of seat and ticket options will vary in pricing based on demand. Round trip “Economy” (non-refundable) pricing today is \$658, but if you watch the Kalispell flight pricing it’s often available at \$558.

That flight will arrive at Kalispell, MT (FCA) at 9:01 pm.

The Return Flight

Departing FCA on FRIDAY March 1st at 5:30 am. DELTA flight DL552

- That flight will arrive at Minneapolis at 9:22 am.
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FOR TRAIN TRANSPORTATION –

“Amtrak Empire Builder” Minneapolis (MSP) – Whitefish, MT (WFH)

Departing from Union Depot (MSP) on SATURDAY February 24th at 11:13 pm.

Trains #7 and #27 are one in the same so it does not matter which of those you choose.

- Coach and Roomette options will vary in pricing based on demand. One-way pricing today is \$150 “coach”.

The train will arrive at the Whitefish, MT depot at about 10:06 pm on Sunday February 25th.

The Return Train

Departing from Whitefish, MT (WFH) on FRIDAY March 1st at 7:26 am.

Trains #8 and #28 are one in the same so it does not matter which of those you choose.

The train will arrive at Union Depot (MSP) at about 8:33 am on Saturday March 2nd.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q. - Why is this trip being done as a land only “hobo” trip with no transportation included in the package?

A. – Several reasons. First - there are so many options for getting to Whitefish it’s difficult to meet everyone’s personal preference without making the trip overly complex. By letting each person configure the transportation to their exact liking everybody is happy. Second - as a club we get some tremendous group discounts on both lodging and lift tickets. That’s not the case with either Amtrak or the airlines. With no group discounts to pass along, it’s difficult to justify the obstacles and potential errors associated with booking group transportation. Third - the popularity of the “Indy” pass leads us to believe that a number of Red Eyes will choose to car pool with ski opportunities along the way. Fourth - with so many of our club members already familiar with Whitefish Mountain, Delta Airlines, and Amtrak, it seems like the perfect destination for the “hobo” style ski trip.

Q. – This trip seems really low in price. What’s the catch?

A. – There is no catch. To begin with, Whitefish is not Vail in size, cost, or life style. It’s a family friendly mountain ski resort in northern Montana supported predominantly by local residents who still value the dollar. It’s probably the most group friendly resort in the United States. Depending on age, we’re skiing 4 days for significantly less than it would cost for a 2-day pass at Vail. Also keep in mind that this is only a “Ski & Stay” package. You still have to purchase your own transportation.

Q. – Why such a big age based price difference?

A. – It's the lift tickets. For many years Whitefish offered "free" lift tickets to skiers over age 80. They no longer offer that, but with our group discount the skiers age 70+ can still ski for just \$24/day!

Q. – What is the \$20 "OPTIONAL" guaranteed separate bed UPGRADE?

A. – Our condominium lodging pricing is based on every bedroom being double occupancy. We do have a good number of single beds and "split king" beds available, but because these are limited we are offering the individual beds (single or split-king) at a \$20 per person premium. While we're on the subject of rooms, having a pre-arranged roommate makes things easier for everybody. So if you have a room partner please indicate that on your sign-up form.

Q. – Will there be a motor coach transfer between Eau Claire and MSP, and Kalispell (FCA) and the resort?

A. – There are no ground transfers included between Eau Claire and MSP. The pricing and availability of motor coaches for the Eau Claire – MSP group transfer have made that option impractical. There will also be no ground transfers provided as a part of the trip however there are ground transfers available that are reasonably priced between both Kalispell and the Whitefish Amtrak station and the resort. Once you know your travel plans, email us and we will supply you with contact information for reserving those ground transfer services.

Q. – How many days can I ski?

A. – Four. We arrive on a Sunday and depart the following Friday so it will be a 4 day ski opportunity.

Q. – What if I want to stay longer?

A. – That's entirely up to you. You are already arranging your own transportation so that's easy. If you would like to book additional lodging accommodations for either before or after our group trip, I can provide you with contact information for Whitefish Resorts.

Q. – Is there transportation available to get downtown?

A. – Yes. The free "Snowbus" shuttle runs almost hourly between the Resort and downtown Whitefish. You will definitely want to take advantage of that.

Q. – Is there a recommended Trip Insurance provider?

A. – No. If you would like to purchase trip insurance there are multiple companies that will sell that to you online. Keep in mind that unused lift passes are almost always refundable so the value of any trip insurance is limited. As always, read the fine print carefully with any insurance policy for coverage exclusions and limitations.

Q. – How far is it from the condo to the lifts?

A. – The Kintla and Morning Eagle condominiums are adjacent to each other and located right in the village. Ski storage locker rooms are located at ground level and the Chair-3 lift is less than 100 feet out the door. The always popular Beer Stube is just across the street, and right next to the “Snowbus” bus stop. Everything is very convenient.

Q. – I’ve never been to Whitefish. What do you recommend for transportation?

A. – It depends... If you have never ridden a train, this is your chance to take a 23 hour trip on the Amtrak Empire builder. At \$300 roundtrip “coach” it’s clearly the most economical travel option. The upgrade to a double occupancy roomette is grossly overpriced, but it’s more comfortable for sleeping and the cost includes all of your meals in the dining car. The scenery is fabulous and the train travel experience is unique. The downside to the train option is the late departure time from St. Paul (Union Station) and the equally late arrival time in Whitefish.

If you have an “Indy Pass”, I think car pooling could be very practical. I’ve skied at both Terry Peak (South Dakota) and Red Lodge (Montana). Both accept the “Indy Pass”, and both can be fine day trip destinations on the way to and from Whitefish.

If you prefer to fly, or have some Delta frequent flyer miles to use up, the daily non-stop flight between MSP and Kalispell, MT (FCA) is an option. **Unfortunately DELTA just recently announced the discontinuation of their mid-day direct flight.** The only remaining direct flight is now an evening flight to Kalispell, and even worse, the return flight is an unmanageable early 5:30 am departure from Kalispell.

Our personal plan was to use some DELTA frequent flyer miles and fly direct, but DELTA’s cancellation of the mid-day flights, and the alternative flight offerings are a no go for us.

So here are my current recommendations >>>

- #1. – If you’re okay with traveling “coach”, the Amtrak train is clearly the best option right now.
- #2. – Flying DELTA one-way TO Kalispell, and then returning one-way on the AMTRAK train is an attractive option and prices at about \$540.
- #3. – Flying DELTA TO Kalispell, and then returning on an afternoon UNITED flight is a little more expensive (\$768), but way more manageable than DELTA’s current round trip offerings.

Q. – Is pre-stocked grocery service available for the condos?

A. – It has been in the past, and I think it still is, but I’m still working on the details for that. Stay tuned.

Q. – So what is the “Ski & Stay” (Land Only) package price again?

A. – Age 19 to 64 = \$875. Age 65 to 69 = \$835. Age 70+ = \$685. Sign-up forms are available on the club’s website. www.redeyeskiclub.org