



Case Study:
Glacier Park, Inc



Glacier Park, Inc and PAR Springer-Miller Systems Enabling Full-Service Properties in Remote Locations

Glacier National Park, running up to the Canadian border at the northwestern end of the Big Sky state of Montana, is a great place to get away from it all and revel in the wonders of the Rocky Mountains. But the same things that make the park a prime destination—its distance from “civilization”—make it a challenge to efficiently run seven full-service lodging properties in and around the park. Glacier Park Inc. relies on technology from PAR Springer-Miller (PSMS) to streamline its internal operations, simplify multiple property bookings and management, and improve its ability to provide great guest experiences.

Consider some of the hurdles faced by Glacier Park Inc., which is authorized by the U.S. National Park Service to operate five properties within the park itself, plus the Glacier Park Lodge just outside the park’s southeast entrance and the Prince of Wales Hotel at Canada’s Waterton National Park in southern Alberta.



Glacier Park Lodge

“Remoteness is our biggest challenge,” says Cindy Ognjanov, President and General Manager of Glacier Park Inc., which is owned by Phoenix-based Viad Corp. “There’s no cell phone service at any hotel except the Glacier Park Lodge, so our electronic communication is primarily through satellite dishes that provide consistent but slow connections. Some properties are connected only via traditional phone lines, and we use those as backups,” she explains.

Communication is crucial because not only is the park itself remote, but Glacier’s properties are located far from each other. From the Glacier Park Lodge, it’s a 55-mile trip in one direction to two properties within the park, and a 60-mile trip in another direction to a third property. Traveling the 50-mile “Going to the Sun” road that bisects the park can take as long as two and a half hours by car or bus.

Full-Service Facilities in Remote Locations

The Glacier Park hotels and lodges are not bare-bones operations; each is a full-service property, with all but one operating at least one restaurant and retail outlet. Nor is time on the company’s side: the entire lodging season runs only from mid-May to late September, although the park itself is open year-round. Glacier Park Inc. essentially hires a brand-new staff each year, and they are kept busy: its properties, which offer a total of 753 rooms, operate at 75% to 85% occupancy in June and September, and at 99% occupancy in July and August.

In addition to the hotels and a camping supply retail store, the company also books and operates the Red Bus tours, which use 33 circa-1936 convertible Red Buses to show off the park’s wonders with a dash of charming nostalgia. Glacier Park Inc. also acts as a travel agent/reservation center for activities including rafting, horseback riding and boat tours of the park’s lakes.

Given these complexities, reliable, highly functional technology is a must. Glacier Park Inc. has used Springer-Miller solutions since 1994, and has frequently adopted new modules as they have become available and as its needs have changed.



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Room Availability Updated System-Wide in Near Real-Time

The ^{SMS}|Multi-Property Management module of ^{SMS}|Host, for example, allows Glacier Park's central reservations department, located in Columbia Falls, MT, to book rooms at all seven hotels at any time of the year. Even more important, during the season employees at any property can check room availability, and book reservations for guests, at any of the other six properties. This provides a big benefit because each location is so different: guests may spend one night at one property, two nights at another and two more nights at a third location.

"Everyone sees the same room availability, available pretty much in real time," says Amanda Rucko, Rooms Division Operations Manager for Glacier Park. "The front desk staffs at all seven hotels can see what I see at the central reservations office."

Glacier Park uses the ^{SMS}|World module to allow guests to book their own rooms online. Rucko admits that she was hesitant about offering online booking capabilities. "We're so unique that we were worried that the information we provide verbally over the phone couldn't be communicated effectively online," she says. "But it's been successful, even though we've lost some control over how the actual room inventory is distributed. For example, a guest booking a reservation online for two people might choose a room that could actually accommodate as many as four people. If our agents were handling this over the phone, they could direct the booking for a more efficient use of our available space."

However, the benefits of online booking outweigh any downsides. "The addition of online booking with ^{SMS}|World has allowed us to cut our head count at the central reservations center in half, from 25 employees to 12, even during the peak mid-summer season," says Ognjanov.

The PSMS solutions' ability to streamline operations has also helped the company reduce head counts for other back office functions. For example, the ability to conduct nightly audits for all seven properties from a single, central location has allowed Glacier Park to employ one night auditor rather than needing an on-site auditor at each property.

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Cindy Ognjanov, President/General Manager, Glacier Park Inc.



Red Bus Tour

Taming the Complexities of the Red Bus Tours

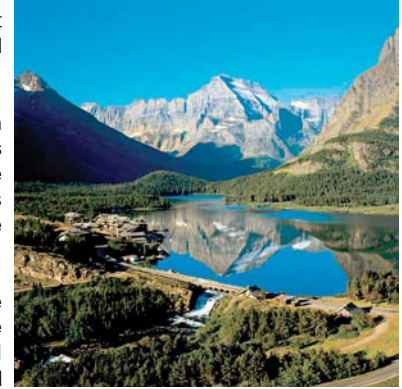
Glacier Park uses the ^{SMS}|Spa/Rec Scheduling Module to book boat tours, rafting, etc., and to post charges for these to the appropriate individual guest or group folio. "This year we're having our reservation agents use the Booking Center functionality, which should save time because they can book lodging and activities from a single screen," explains Rucko.

The company also uses the ^{SMS}|Spa/Rec Scheduling module to book the Red Bus tours, which present their own set of complexities. Each bus only offers 17 seats, but a tour originating from one property might have anywhere from two to five different pickup points. "Every single tour has a unique set of pickups, and each pickup point has a different time and a different price attached to it," explains Rucko. "Traditionally that has made it difficult to print manifests and passenger rosters, as well as to send accurate confirmation emails."

PSMS solutions help Glacier Park simplify many of these processes. "We use the system to put the charges on the guest's folio, which involves taking a deposit when the tour is booked and then charging for the actual tour on the day it takes place," says Rucko.

Because of these complexities, as well as the challenge of dealing with both U.S. and Canadian currencies, Ognjanov likes the accounting functionality of this module and of the PSMS solutions in general. "Accounting is a main benefit of PSMS, along with knowing how many seats we've sold on each of the Red Buses," she says. "Before we began using the Springer-Miller solutions in 1994, we didn't have any kind of reservation systems for the buses at all—it was done by the seat of our pants. This has given us a lot more control."

As for working with PSMS as a company, Ognjanov says it's a good relationship—albeit one with the same ups and downs as any long-term relationship. "Sometimes the modules are difficult to learn, which is frustrating at times, but nobody at PSMS ever gives up—that's what I like the best," she says. "I like the way the company tracks issues. It's comforting to be assigned a number and to know that the issue has been documented, and that someone is working on it. That way we don't have to go through the whole routine of explaining it each time.



Many Glacier Lodge

"One of the most helpful things for us has been the HUG [Host Users Group] and its conference," she adds. "That's one of the most beneficial things the company does, because it allows us to talk to other operators. PSMS is smart enough to understand that the operators are the ones who best know how to use the systems."



About Glacier Park, Inc

Glacier Park, Inc. is a concessioner of Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park as well as an independent hotel operator committed to giving our personal best in hospitality so that we may enhance guest and employee experiences in these unique and historical settings. For more information on Glacier Park, Inc call 406-892-2525, or visit their website at www.glacierparkinc.com.

About PAR Springer-Miller Systems

PAR Springer-Miller Systems is a leading provider of hospitality management solutions that meet the technology needs of all types of hospitality enterprises including city-center hotels, destination spa and golf properties, timeshare properties and casino resorts worldwide. The SMHost Hospitality Management System is distinguished from other property management systems with its truly integrated design and unique approach to guest service. The SMHost product suite, including more than 20 seamlessly integrated, guest-centric application modules, provides hotel/resort staff with the tools they need to personalize service, exceed guest expectations and increase revenue. For more information on PAR Springer-Miller Systems, visit our Web site at www.springermiller.com.

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