

YELLOWSTONE

NATIONAL PARK TRIP PLANNER

Essential
Tips to
Plan Your
Vacation

A Park
Map



National Park Trips

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5 Road Trips

Here are five of our all-time favorite road trips to the park — each with its own scenic wonders, cultural sites and one-of-a-kind attractions.



ON THE COVER: White Dome Geyser in Yellowstone National Park (Grant Ordelheide)

EXPLORE THE BEST ROAD-TRIP ITINERARIES TO YELLOWSTONE.

Scan this code to access detailed itineraries filled with where to stay and what to do along the way to Yellowstone. →



Park Map

Get a sense for where everything is in Yellowstone National Park.



MAMMOTH
HOT SPRINGS



GRAND CANYON
OF THE
YELLOWSTONE

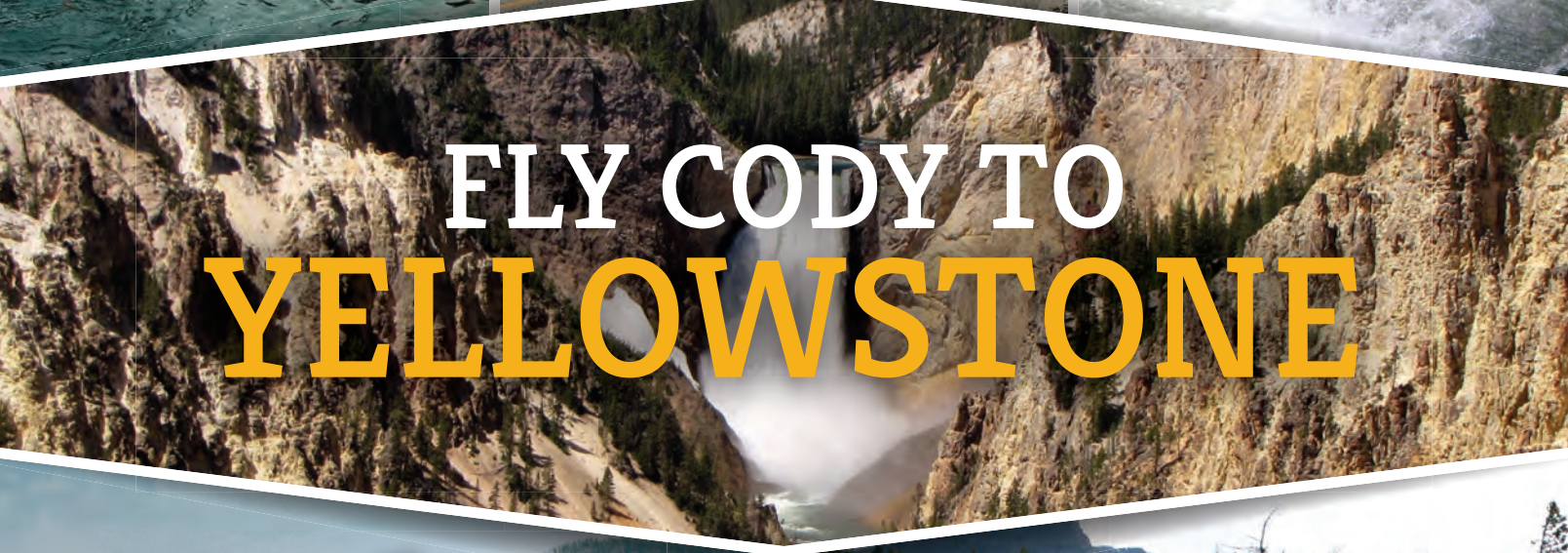


OLD FAITHFUL
GEYSER



WEST THUMB

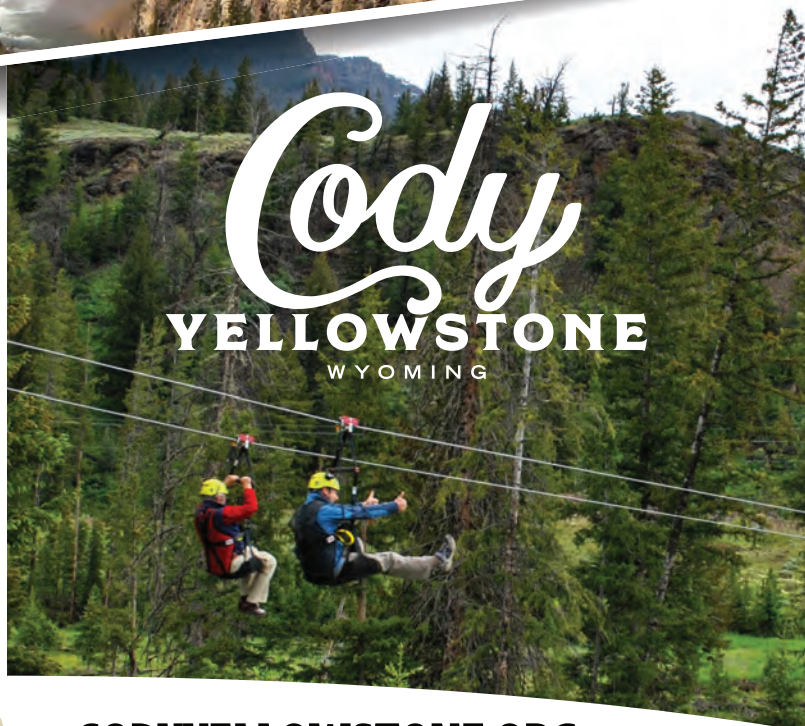
PHOTOS: Mammoth Hot Springs, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone (Depositphotos), Old Faithful Geyser, Black Pool Geyser in West Thumb (Grant Ordelheide). Map by Hernan Sosa



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THE FIVE YELLOWSTONE ENTRANCES

Located mainly in northwestern Wyoming,
Yellowstone National Park has five entrances.

By Tori Peglar

1 NORTHEAST ENTRANCE

Closest to Cooke City, Mont., and its sister village Silver Gate, this entrance gives you the best access to Yellowstone's legendary Lamar Valley where grizzlies, black bears, bison and wolves roam. The tiny outpost of Cooke City (year-round population is 100) has a downtown that spans only a few blocks but offers good dining and lodging options. In the summer, travelers can reach Cooke City via the Beartooth Highway or the park. In winter, this entrance is closed and the only way into Cooke City is through Yellowstone's North Entrance near Gardiner, Mont.

2 NORTH ENTRANCE

Want to experience some of the West's most spectacular scenery in a town that can feel like a cross between *Northern Exposure* and *Animal Planet*, given its wild neighbors living up the street in Yellowstone? Head to Gardiner, Mont., just five miles from Yellowstone's steaming terraces of Mammoth Hot Springs, one of the park's many natural wonders. Sitting at the only year-round entrance to the world's first national park, pretty much everything in Gardiner is colorful from the scenery and people to the names of dishes on menus, adding a poetic slant to your visit.

3 EAST ENTRANCE

The closest town to Yellowstone's East Entrance is Cody, Wyo., 53 miles away. Named after one-time resident and western showman Buffalo Bill Cody, it's home to a world-class museum complex, an Old West replica town and historic reenactments. There also are lively rodeos, charming hotels, down-home restaurants and even a zipline that puts you up to 84 feet off the ground. The closest year-round airport to Yellowstone National Park (Yellowstone Regional Airport) is here, making Cody an especially convenient launching point for trips to the park.

4 SOUTH ENTRANCE

Take one part historic cowboy charm, add a healthy dash of modern glamour and finish with a heaping portion of world-class mountain scenery, and you've got Jackson, Wyo.—Yellowstone's southern gateway town. Situated on the doorstep of Grand Teton National Park and 57 miles from Yellowstone's South Entrance, Jackson's (Jackson Hole refers to the entire valley) fantastic dining, outdoor scene and cultural attractions make it a great basecamp. It's also home (at least part-time) to a number of famous residents, including former Vice President Dick Cheney and actor Harrison Ford.

5 WEST ENTRANCE

This entrance is the park's busiest, so it's no wonder that West Yellowstone, Mont., is a bustling gateway with dining, shopping and attractions for travelers. Located just across the Wyoming border in Montana, West Yellowstone is a convenient entrance town for those coming from Idaho or western Montana, especially Missoula. Visitors will find Wild West flavor, plenty of lodging and a mix of cultural and outdoor activities. Catch a show at the Playmill Theatre or study up for your park trip at Yellowstone Giant Screen Theatre, which shows IMAX movies about Yellowstone and beyond.

PHOTOS: Trading Post in Cooke City, Mont., (Grant Ordelheide), Panorama of Gardiner, Mont. (Rick Landry), Old Trail Town (Courtesy of Cody Yellowstone Country), Cowboy Bar in Jackson, Wyo., Downtown West Yellowstone (Grant Ordelheide),



1



2



3



4



5

YELLOWSTONE'S TOP SIX

Here are some of our favorite things to do from hiking to exploring some of Yellowstone's most historic treasures.



1

WAKE UP WITH THE WOLVES

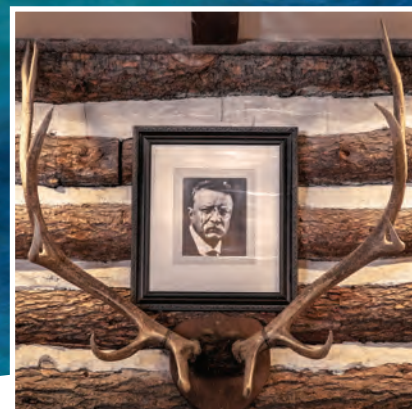
For your best chance of seeing a wolf, get up before sunrise and head to the Lamar Valley in the park's northeast corner.



2

HIKE MOUNT WASHBURN

It's a great 6-mile round-trip hike to the 10,243-foot summit of Mount Washburn. Because of potential road closures, check with park staff to make sure you can access the Dunraven Pass Trailhead 4.5 miles north of Canyon Junction.



3

EAT AT ROOSEVELT LODGE

Built in 1920, this log cabin restaurant has a front porch with rocking chairs where you can have a drink and wait for a table to open up inside.



4

SEE MAMMOTH HOT SPRINGS

Walk on a mile-long boardwalk to see the colorful travertine terraces formed by hot springs rising to the surface and depositing dissolved limestone in dramatic patterns.



5

STROLL MIDWAY GEYSER BASIN

See one of the world's largest, deepest hot springs, Grand Prismatic Spring. It's larger than a football field at 370 feet across and deeper than a 10-story building at 125 feet.



6

DINE AT OLD FAITHFUL INN

A trip to Yellowstone would not be complete without seeing the largest log structure in the world built from 1903-04. Breakfast and lunch are first-come, first-served, but you need to make dinner reservations in advance.

PHOTOS: Grand Prismatic Spring (Depositphotos), Wolf (Shutterstock), Mount Washburn, Roosevelt Lodge (NPS/David Restivo), Mammoth Hot Springs (NPS/Jim Peaco), Midway Geyser Basin, Old Faithful Inn (Grant Ordelheide).



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Features



Stunning
Waterfall



Mountain
Lake



High
Country



Away
from
Crowds

Difficulty:



Easy



Moderate



Difficult

PHOTOS: Trail on Avalanche Peak (NPS/Diane Repkni); Cairn marking (Depositphotos)

▶ AVALANCHE PEAK



Get great views of Yellowstone Lake, the Tetons and the Absaroka Range on this short-but-steep 4-mile round-trip hike to a broad, 10,566-foot summit. From the trailhead, climb through a forest of spruce, fir and whitebark pine (watch for grizzlies) to a meadow. Above treeline, cross scree slopes to reach the dramatic summit.

WRAITH FALLS



Enjoy views of the 79-foot-high Wraith Falls on an easy, 1-mile, round-trip hike. Walk through sagebrush meadows, marshland and a conifer forest before the falls. The trail starts at a pullout 0.5 miles east of Lava Creek Picnic Area on the Grand Loop Road.

FAIRY FALLS



At 220-foot-high, Fairy Falls is the tallest frontcountry waterfall in the park. There are two trailheads and two different approaches to hiking to the falls. You can park 1 mile south of Midway Geyser Basin at the Fairy Falls Parking Lot. Or park at the end of Fountain Flat Drive. Walk through a lodgepole pine forest to the falls along a 5-mile round-trip route.

TROUT LAKE



A short uphill climb leads you to the tranquil Trout Lake, which feels much farther away than the one mile you hiked. Bring a picnic to eat alongside the lake. To get there, park at the pullout 1.5 miles south of Pebble Creek Campground on Northeast Entrance Road.

STORM POINT



Enjoy incredible views of the enormous Yellowstone Lake during this 2.3-mile easy loop hike. The trail begins at a turnout at Indian Pond, 3 miles east of the Fishing Bridge Visitor Center. Hike along the shoreline, through a meadow and a lodgepole pine forest and look for bison, eagles and bears. Because of the extremely cold temperatures of the lake water, which averages 41 degrees F, swimming can and has been fatal and is strongly discouraged.

MOUNT WASHBURN



This justifiably popular 6-mile round-trip trail has fantastic wildflowers in July and August, wildlife-watching (look for bighorn sheep, elk and bears) and spectacular views from the summit fire tower. Start early, so you can avoid being on the mountain during summer afternoon thunderstorms. From the pass, hike up to a ridge that leads to the 10,243-foot peak where you will spot the Hayden Valley, several geyser basins and the southern edge of the Yellowstone caldera.

MAMMOTH HOT SPRINGS



The Mammoth Hot Springs 1.75-mile boardwalk trail enables you to see this iconic landmark up-close. It takes about an hour to explore the Upper and Lower terraces, home to about 50 hot springs. On the Lower Terrace, the Liberty Cap cone rises up 37 feet and allegedly got its name because of its resemblance to the peaked caps worn during the French Revolution.

Leave No Trace

Before you hit the trail, become familiar with how to recreate responsibly.

✓ PLAN AHEAD & PREPARE

Research trails, campsites and weather ahead of time and plan and pack accordingly. Always carry plenty of water, snacks and layers.

✓ TRAVEL & CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES

Stay on trails to help concentrate foot traffic and limit your impact on plants and living soil in the park.

✓ DISPOSE OF YOUR WASTE PROPERLY

Pack out everything you bring in, including fruit peels and toilet paper. Throw all your trash in garbage cans at the end of your hike.

✓ LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

Take nothing but pictures. Leave rocks, fossils, flowers and archaeological artifacts for others to enjoy.

✓ MINIMIZE YOUR CAMPFIRE IMPACTS

Check fire restrictions in the area. Only light a fire in a well-built fire ring and make sure the fire is completely out before leaving or going to bed.

✓ RESPECT WILDLIFE

Never feed wildlife and view them from a respectful distance. Stay at least 50 yards away from elk and bison and 100 yards from bears and wolves.

✓ BE CONSIDERATE

Be mindful of how you're impacting other visitors' experiences. Avoid playing loud music or shouting.



UNDER CANVAS

Experience the best of Yellowstone at two Under Canvas locations:

Under Canvas West Yellowstone and Under Canvas North Yellowstone—Paradise Valley. The West Yellowstone camp offers easy access to some of the park's most iconic natural wonders, while the North Yellowstone camp features more than one mile of access to the Yellowstone River, renowned for its world-class fly-fishing, float trips, and variety of wildlife. At both locations, you'll find upscale, safari-inspired tents with king-sized beds, plush linens, ensuite bathrooms, and wood-burning stoves. Combine these two Under Canvas destinations for the ultimate Yellowstone getaway.



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PHOTO: Front portico of the Lake Yellowstone Hotel (Jody Lyle/NPS)

OLD FAITHFUL INN



Built in 1903-04, the Old Faithful Inn is arguably Yellowstone's most iconic hotel. It's a National Historic Landmark and the world's largest log cabin structure. Its lobby was designed to create a sense of community, and you'll find people from all over the world gathering and listening to the live music in the lobby. It's a two-minute stroll from Old Faithful. Make dinner reservations at Old Faithful Dining Room or eat breakfast or lunch there since it is first-come, first-served.

OLD FAITHFUL LODGE CABINS*



Built during the 1920s, the Old Faithful Lodge Cabins offer great access to the iconic Old Faithful geyser. It's about a two-minute stroll to Old Faithful from the cabins. Old Faithful Lodge Cabins should not be confused with its older neighbor, the Old Faithful Inn. The log cabins are behind the one-story Old Faithful Lodge built with large logs and stone pillars and home to a gift shop, guest check-in and a cafeteria-style food court.

LAKE YELLOWSTONE HOTEL & CABINS*



While many think the Old Faithful Inn is the oldest in the park, they are incorrect. Built in 1891, Lake Yellowstone Hotel & Cabins wins the prize. Located near the shores of Yellowstone Lake and Hayden Valley, known for its wildlife, this beautiful hotel with large white columns underwent a \$28.5 million renovation in 2014. In the summer, a string quartet plays during the evenings in the lobby while travelers play board games or swap stories from the day. You can also stay in cottages equipped with two double beds and a bathroom next to the hotel. Pets are allowed in the cabins, not hotel.

OLD FAITHFUL SNOW LODGE & CABINS



Built in 1999, this lodge is the newest lodge in the park. It's really well-done, located near the legendary Old Faithful Geyser and offers a full-service dining room, the quick-service Geyser Grill and a gift store. Built in 1989, the Snow Lodge's spacious cabins each house two queen-sized beds and a full bathroom. Handicap-accessible cabins are also available.

MAMMOTH HOT SPRINGS HOTEL & CABINS



Stay here and be minutes from Mammoth Hot Springs, the peculiar terraced hot springs that you can explore via boardwalk. Located near the North Entrance of the park near Gardiner, Mont., and built in 1936, this grand hotel finished a major renovation to hotel rooms and public spaces in 2019. Today, all hotel rooms have private bathrooms. There are also cabins with or without bathrooms and a hot tub cabin that features a 6-person outdoor hot tub. Get a drink and listen to a live pianist at the end of the day in the newly remodeled Map Room.

ROOSEVELT LODGE CABINS*



Located in the Tower-Roosevelt area of Yellowstone, which is in the northern central area of the park, this area is really close to the Lamar Valley, one of Yellowstone's best wildlife watching areas. You can sleep in two types of cabins and then stroll to Roosevelt Lodge for a sit-down meal in one of the most charming and intimate restaurants in the park. Just to be clear, the lodge itself is a restaurant, not a hotel. From the front porch of Roosevelt Lodge, have a drink and sit on a rocking chair while you wait for a table.

LAKE LODGE CABINS*



Located near the shores of Yellowstone Lake down the street from Lake Yellowstone Hotel, the Lake Lodge Cabins' lodge is a charming shingle and log-hewn building with a large porch with rocking chairs. Inside are two fireplaces, one with leather couches and chairs around it. Choose among 186 cabins, some built in the 1920s, that come with a variety of amenities.

CANYON LODGE & CABINS*



Located on the park's east side near the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River, the Canyon Lodge & Cabins is the biggest lodging property in Yellowstone. It also underwent a two-year lodging redevelopment that was completed in 2016 and included the construction of five new lodges and 400 guest rooms. When you walk in, you'll find wainscoting and coat racks made from reclaimed wood from pine trees decimated by the pine beetle. You'll also see countertops made from recycled glass, much of it from the park, and recycled fly ash, a byproduct of coal burning. In addition, there's LED lighting and low-flow toilets.

GRANT VILLAGE



Closest to Grand Teton National Park, which lies south of Yellowstone, Grant Village was built in 1984 and is in the West Thumb area of Yellowstone. It has six two-story lodges with 50 rooms each. There's Lake House Restaurant, which serves breakfast and dinner and has large windows looking onto the lake. Grant Village Dining Room is a full-service restaurant that also offers views of the lake. It serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Dinner reservations are required.

*Pets are not allowed in hotel rooms, common areas or on trails, boardwalks and the backcountry.



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INTO THE WILD

Look for these animals as you explore Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks.



WOLF

About 94 wolves roam in eight packs in Yellowstone, with about 450 wolves in the greater Yellowstone area. Highly social, they hunt elk, deer and bison. In 1995, the first 14 wolves from Canada were reintroduced.

SEE THEM: In Yellowstone, wolf packs roam the Lamar Valley, Hayden Valley, Canyon area and Blacktail Deer Plateau. Dawn and dusk are the best times to look. In Grand Teton, see them in Willow Flats.



ELK

In summer about 10,000-20,000 elk live in Yellowstone. The population drops to 5,000 in winter. Many elk winter in the National Elk Refuge near Jackson, Wyo. Adult bull elk weigh up to 700 pounds, while adult females may weigh up to 500 pounds.

SEE THEM: In Yellowstone go to Mammoth Hot Springs, Lamar Valley, Norris Junction, Gibbon River and Madison Junction. In Grand Teton, go to Teton Park Road, Willow Flats and Two Ocean and Emma Mathilde lakes.



MOOSE

Moose have long snouts, bulbous noses and dewlaps under their throats, which set them apart from other hooved animals. Look for them in areas full of willows.

SEE THEM: In Yellowstone, look for moose in Willow Park, Yellowstone Lake, Fishing Bridge, West Thumb and Hayden Valley. In Grand Teton, see them along Oxbow Bend, Blacktail Ponds, Mormon Row and Antelope Flats Road.



GRIZZLY BEAR

Grizzlies, also known as "brown bears," have a distinctive hump between their shoulders, blonde-tipped fur, a long snout and smaller ears than black bears. Their front claws are between 2-4 inches, while black bears' claws are 1-2 inches. About 700 live in the Yellowstone region.

SEE THEM: In Yellowstone go to Lamar, Hayden and Pelican valleys and Yellowstone and Heart lakes. In Grand Teton, go to Willow Flats, Two Ocean and Emma Mathilde lakes, Oxbow Bend and Cascade and Death canyons.



BISON

In 1916, America's wild bison, which once numbered 60 million, had dwindled to 23 animals. Yellowstone's bison today, which number around 5,000, are descendants of those survivors. Bison can weigh up to 2,000 pounds. While they may seem docile, they are unpredictable and have injured visitors who approach them.

SEE THEM: In Yellowstone, go to Lamar, Hayden and Pelican valleys. In Grand Teton, go to the Snake River from Jackson Lake Dam south to Moose, Wyo.



BLACK BEAR

These omnivores can weigh up to 400 pounds and stretch from two to four feet tall. They can be black, blond or brown, which can lead visitors to misidentify them as grizzlies.

Throughout summer and fall, they retreat to higher elevations, chasing berries and trout. They hibernate in winter and mate in summer.

SEE THEM: In Yellowstone see them in Lamar and Hayden valleys. In Grand Teton, find them in Two Ocean and Emma Mathilde lakes, Colter Bay and Teton Park Road.