



Yellowstone National Park

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Best Hikes

- ➔ Mt Washburn (p61)
- ➔ Bunsen Peak (p50)
- ➔ Yellowstone River Picnic Area Trail (p55)
- ➔ Beaver Ponds Trail (p49)
- ➔ Sepulcher Mountain (p53)

Best Places to Stay & Eat

- ➔ Old Faithful Inn (p120)
- ➔ Lake Yellowstone Hotel (p119)
- ➔ Backcountry campsites (p70)
- ➔ Mammoth Hot Springs Dining Room (p121)
- ➔ Lake Yellowstone Hotel Dining Room (p123)

Why Go?

Yellowstone National Park is the crown jewel of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. From the steaming geysers and sublime lakes of the south to the golden canyons and wildlife-rich valleys of the north, the park has several distinct regions and you need to visit several to get a sense of the park's complex diversity.

Yellowstone's roadside sights are the crowd-pleasers, but the park's real joys only reveal themselves at the end of a backcountry hiking or fishing trail, so try to fit in at least a couple of our hikes. From golden lakeshore sunsets to dawn mists rising over a steaming geyser basin, Yellowstone's beauty is both spectacular and subtle.

Our advice is not to try to pack everything into one visit. The crowds and traffic seem twice as bad if you're in a rush, and you'll appreciate some extra time if you have a surprise encounter with a moose or bison.

Road Distances (miles)

Old Faithful	50			
Grant Village	70	20		
Canyon Village	30	40	35	
Lake Village	50	35	20	20
Mammoth				
Old Faithful				
Grant Village				
Canyon Village				

Note: Distances are approximate

Entrances

Park entrances are open to vehicles 24 hours a day during open months (p124). The North Entrance station is at Gardiner, Montana, and the Northeast Entrance is near Cooke City; both are open year-round. The East Entrance is on US 14/16/20, from Cody, and the South Entrance is on US 89/191/287, north of Grand Teton National Park; both are open early May to early November. The West Entrance is on US 20/191/287 near West Yellowstone, Montana, and is open mid-to-late April to early November.

DON'T MISS

One of the best free services offered by the park service is its series of **ranger-led activities**. From boardwalk strolls explaining the interior plumbing of a geyser, to guided wildlife-watching at dawn and short, guided hikes, the commentary given by the park's affable rangers will really add to your understanding of the park. Check times in the park newspaper, *Yellowstone Today*, and time your itinerary around a couple of these presentations. At the very least, catch the nightly campfire talks given at most park campgrounds, some of which are aimed specifically at young families.

If you're nervous about hiking by yourself and would prefer to hike in a group, rangers also lead **guided walks** to several places in the park. Destinations vary year to year, but currently include short hikes to Mystic Falls, Beaver Ponds, Lake Overlook, Storm Point, the southern rim of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and around the Upper Geyser Basin. Walks are limited to a couple of hours, are free and include some of the most interesting strolls in the park.

When You Arrive

- A seven-day pass to either Yellowstone or Grand Teton National Park costs \$30/25 per vehicle/motorcyclist, or \$15 for cyclists or hikers on foot. Credit cards are accepted. An annual pass to either park costs \$60.
- Visitors receive a free map and the *Yellowstone Today* newspaper, which has a schedule of ranger-led activities, park facilities, road closures and opening hours.
- Notice boards at entrances indicate which campgrounds are full or closed.

SAFETY

Stay 30yd from bison and elk; 100yd from bears and wolves.

Keep on boardwalks at thermal areas.

Carry bear spray in the backcountry.

Fast Facts

- Area: 3472 sq miles
- Highest elevation: 11,358ft (Eagle Peak)
- Lowest elevation: 5282ft (Reese Creek)

Reservations

Reserve six months in advance for in-park accommodations and Western cookouts, and a couple of weeks in advance for Xanterra (p115) campgrounds. Reservations open May 1 for the following year.

Reservations are not accepted for park-service campgrounds.

Resources

- **National Park Service** (www.nps.gov/yell) Official park site.
- **Xanterra** (www.yellowstonenationalparklodges.com)
- **Yellowstone.net** (www.yellowstone.net)
- **General Yellowstone Information** (www.yellowstonenationalpark.com)
- **National Park Trips** (www.yellowstonepark.com)