



Understand Yellowstone & Grand Teton

THE PARKS TODAY..... 228

From wolves to snowmobiles, conservation and controversy seem to go hand-in-hand in Yellowstone.

HISTORY 230

The world's first national park has set a shining example to the nation and beyond for 140 years, despite a few ups and downs along the road.

GEOLOGY..... 239

Yellowstone's hotspot is what gives the park its unique 'oomph.' Learn what's behind all those crazy geysers, hot springs and mud pots.

WILDLIFE..... 244

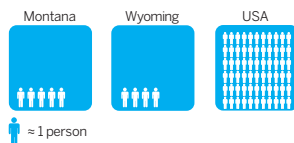
Majestic herds of bison, packs of wolves and lone grizzlies are the stars, but even the humble lodgepole pine has some secrets.

CONSERVATION..... 253

Understanding the complex interconnections within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is key to protecting its future.



population per sq mile



The Parks Today

Grand Teton is the only national park in the lower 48 that allows hunting and the only national park with its own commercial airport, receiving 60,000 flights a year.

HUNTING

Created by the *Yellowstone National Park Act* (1872) as a 'public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people,' this mother of all national parks straddles a tense line between preservation and recreation, access and excess, encapsulating along the way the very best and worst of the national parks system.

Loved to Death

Yellowstone and Grand Teton are more popular than ever, each attracting up to 30,000 visitors daily and more than three million visitors annually – a volume that writer Edward Abbey termed 'industrial tourism.' When bison or elk graze by the Grand Loop Rd, the result is close to a mob scene, with traffic backing up for hundreds of yards. Debate rages over how best to manage this influx. While the democratic approach to public access remains the parks' greatest strength, their great appeal ironically threatens to destroy the very features that attract such numbers.

Managing Mother Nature (& Other Controversies)

If you want to start an argument in Yellowstone country, simply start a conversation on any of the following: wolf reintroduction, the park's fire policy, bison hazing, grazing rights, snowmobile access, oil drilling or the health advantages of tofu over Angus steak. Fractured regional politics means that a cloud of legal challenges descends over almost every major wildlife policy decision made in Yellowstone.

The successful reintroduction of the wolf to Yellowstone since 1996 has been wildly popular among park visitors, restoring an ecological balance and integrity to the park, yet opponents of the wolf remain among ranchers and hunters, who believe that wolves are decimating the local elk pop-

Top Books

» **Lost in My Own Backyard** (Tim Cahill) Engaging, funny and our personal favorite.

» **Travels in the Greater Yellowstone** (Jack Turner) Series of essays from fly-fishing to hiking the Beartooth Plateau. See also Turner's elegant *Teewinot*.

» **Walking Down the Wild** (Gary Ferguson) Account of a 500-mile walk through Greater Yellowstone from the Red Lodge resident.

» **Free Fire** (CJ Fox) Yellowstone thriller featuring Mammoth, Bechler, Grand Prismatic Spring and Old Faithful Inn.

Top Documentaries

» **Silence and Solitude** (2003) Follows photographer Tom Murphy into the Yellowstone backcountry in the depths of winter.

» **The National Parks: America's Best Idea** (2009) Ken Burns' engaging visual history of America's national parks.