



Yellowstone National Park

Includes »

Sights	57
Driving	88
Day Hikes	89
Overnight Hikes	105
Biking	114
Other Activities	116
Sleeping	120
Eating & Drinking	128
Information	130
Getting Around	131

Best Hikes

- » Mt Washburn (p96)
- » Bunsen Peak (p90)
- » Yellowstone River Picnic Area Trail (p93)
- » Beaver Ponds Trail (p89)
- » Sepulcher Mountain (p91)

Best Places to Stay & Eat

- » Old Faithful Inn (p127)
- » Lake Yellowstone Hotel (p126)
- » Backcountry Campsite (p105)
- » Mammoth Hot Springs Dining Room (p128)
- » Lake Yellowstone Hotel Dining Room (p130)

Why Go?

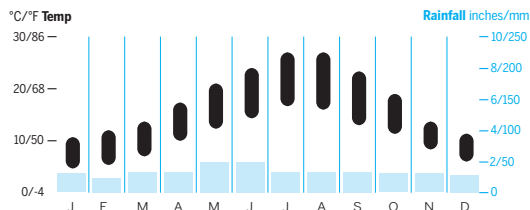
Yellowstone National Park is the crown jewel of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. From the steaming geysers and sublime lakes of the south to the golden canyons and wild-life-rich valleys of the north, the park has several distinct regions, and it's worth investing time to visit at least a couple to get a sense of the park's complex diversity.

Yellowstone's spectacular roadside sights are reward enough, but the park's real joys lie off the tarmac, 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 or 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 the extra time if you have a surprise encounter with a moose or bison.

When to Go

Mammoth, WY



July & August

Warm weather and snow-free trails, but packed lodging and campgrounds.

September & October

Bugling elk, fall colors, fewer crowds and discounted rates.

January–March

Skis, snowshoes, no crowds, lots of shivering wildlife: a different side to Yellowstone.

Entrances

The following are open to vehicles 24 hours a day during open months.

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.

See p57 for full details on opening dates.

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 Yellowstone canyon and around the Upper Geyser Basin. See the Day Hikes section of this chapter (p89) for details on these hikes. 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 both Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks costs \$25/20 per vehicle/motorcyclist or \$12 for cyclists or hikers on foot. Credit cards are accepted. An annual pass to both parks costs \$50. See the boxed text, p260, for other passes.

» 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.

GATEWAY TOWNS

- » North Entrance: Gardiner (p154)
- » West Entrance: West Yellowstone (p167)
- » Northeast Entrance: Cooke City (p143)

Fast Facts

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

Reservations

If you are camping you can get away without reservations, but for in-park accommodation and Western cookouts you should reserve up to six months in advance through **Xanterra** (☎307-344-7311, 866-439-7375; www.yellowstonenationalparklodges.com). Reservations open in May for the next year.

Resources

- » Official park site: www.nps.gov/yell
- » Lodging, restaurant and activities from the park concessionaire: www.yellowstonenationalparklodges.com
- » Useful private site: www.yellowstone.net
- » Full park information on everything from geysers to hiking trails: www.yellowstonenationalpark.com
- » State tourism website: www.wyomingtourism.org