Yellowstone National Park Trip Planner 2003

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1 Play It Safe

Emergency—dial 911

High Altitude Most of the park is above 7,500 feet (2,275 m). Allow time to acclimate and drink plenty of liquids. Visitors with cardiac or respiratory medical histories should contact a physician prior to their visit.

Weather Yellowstone's weather is unpredictable. Be prepared for changing temperatures, storms, and emergencies. Carry adequate clothing and gear.

Traffic Most roads are busy, narrow, and rough; some are steep with sharp drop-offs. Watch out for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, ***wildlife***, and road damage. Pull into turnouts to let other cars pass. Always wear your seatbelt.

Bicycling Wear safety gear, including helmet and high visibility clothing. Park roads are narrow and winding with few shoulders. In spring, high snowbanks make travel dangerous. Road elevations range from 5,300 –8,860 feet (1,615–2,700 m); long distances exist between services and facilities.

Falling Trees Avoid areas of dead trees (snags), which may suddenly fall—especially on windy days.

Stream Crossing High water conditions persist well into summer. If your plans include fishing or crossing streams, check at local ranger stations for water conditions.

Theft Lock your vehicle; keep valuables out of sight; label all valuable property with your name, address, or identification number; report theft or vandalism to a ranger.

CAUTION: Scalding Water

Beautiful but deadly: Yellowstone's hydrothermal features can kill you. Their waters are frequently near or above boiling. The crust surrounding them is thin and breaks easily, and often overlies more scalding water. People have died in these pools. Be safe, be careful—enjoy the hydrothermal areas from a distance.

- ***You must stay on boardwalks and designated trails.*** They exist to protect you and to preserve delicate formations.
- Pets are prohibited in hydrothermal areas.
- Swimming or bathing is prohibited in hydrothermal pools or streams where water flows entirely from a hydrothermal spring or pool.
- Where swimming is allowed, swim at your own risk. Hydrothermal waters may contain organisms known to cause infections and/or amoebic meningitis, which can be quickly fatal. Obtain more information at any ranger station or visitor center.

Where are your children?

Your hand and voice may be too far away if your child leaves your side. Keep your children next to you and make sure they understand the hazards of Yellowstone—especially hydrothermal areas and wildlife.

Watch Out! Wild animals all around

Yellowstone is not a zoo and the animals are not tame, even though they may seem calm. Do not approach any wildlife. View them from the safety of your vehicle. **If an animal reacts to your presence, you are too close.**

Keep your distance and stay safe, and you will be rewarded by seeing more natural behavior and activity.

Each year park visitors are injured by wildlife when they approach animals too closely. ***You must stay at least 100 yards (91 m) away from bears and at least 25 yards (23 m) away from all other animals—including bison, elk, bighorn sheep, deer, moose, wolves, coyotes.***

BISON are unpredictable and dangerous, and every year visitors are injured. Bison weigh up to 2,000 pounds (900 kg) and sprint 30 miles per hour (48 kph)—three times faster than you can run.

BEARS may be seen from March through November. Be alert for tracks and sign. Never approach animal carcasses. Report all bear sightings to a ranger.

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Bull elk sparring. Keep your distance! *NPS photo/Schmidt*

COYOTES quickly learn habits like roadside begging. This may lead to aggressive behavior toward humans and can increase the risk of the coyote being poached or hit by a vehicle.

RAVENS have learned to unzip and unsnap packs. Do not allow them access to your food.

Do not feed any wildlife. It's harmful to the animals and it's illegal.

2 Highlights

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NPS photo/Keller

Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River

History

People have been visiting and living in the Yellowstone area for thousands of years. In the mid 1800s, explorers and artists brought Yellowstone's wonders to the attention of the federal government. The park was established in 1872. Visit Mammoth Hot Springs to walk the self-guiding trail around Fort Yellowstone, which chronicles the U.S. Army's role in protecting the park. Other historic sites include the Norris Geyser Basin Museum, Obsidian Cliff, and the Old Faithful Inn and Historic District.

Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

This spectacular canyon, including the Upper and Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River, can be seen from the overlooks and trails of the Canyon Village area, and from the Tower Fall and Calcite Springs overlooks south of Tower Junction.

Geysers & Hot Springs

Geysers, hot springs, mudpots, and fumaroles are evidence of ongoing volcanic activity. To see them, visit Mammoth Hot Springs, Norris Geyser Basin, Fountain Paint Pot, Midway Geyser Basin, the Old Faithful area, West Thumb Geyser Basin, and Mud Volcano.

Lake Area

Yellowstone Lake is North America's largest high-altitude lake. The area is prime habitat for a variety of birds and mammals. You can also enjoy boating, fishing, hiking, and viewing hydrothermal features.

Wildlife

You can see a variety and abundance of wildlife unparalleled in the lower 48 states. The variety of species includes all the large mammals present when Yellowstone became a park: grizzly and black bears, wolves, mountain lions, elk, bison, pronghorn, moose, and bighorn sheep. You'll also see a large variety of birds, including bald eagles. Check at a visitor center or in the park newspaper for the best wildlife viewing locations.

Wildflowers

Magenta and blue—the colors used in this planner—hint at the vibrant wildflowers that brighten Yellowstone in summer.

Read more about these and other highlights on the park's official website: www.nps.gov/yell

Visitor Centers & Museums

Open All Year

Albright Visitor Center, Mammoth

Information, bookstore, and exhibits on wildlife and history. Films on the national park idea and artist Thomas Moran.

Open April–November & Winter

Old Faithful Visitor Center

Mid April–early November

Information, bookstore, and geyser eruption predictions. New film about hydrothermal features.

Old Faithful Visitor Center is also open late December through early March. Access only via oversnow vehicle.

West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce, Public Lands Desk

Late April–early November

Information and publications.

The public lands desk is also open mid December through early March.

Open late May–late September

Fishing Bridge Visitor Center

Information, bookstore, and exhibits on the park's birds and other wildlife.

Grant Visitor Center

Information, bookstore, exhibit and video on the role of fire in Yellowstone.

West Thumb Information Station

Information and bookstore.

Museum of the National Park Ranger, Norris

Exhibits at this historic soldier station (photo at right) trace the development of the park ranger profession.

Open late May–early October

Canyon Visitor Center

Information, bison exhibit, and bookstore.

Madison Information Station

Information and bookstore.

Norris Geyser Basin Museum

Information, bookstore, and exhibits on the hydrothermal features of Yellowstone.

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NPS photo/Peaco

3 What to Do

For current schedules of activities, consult the park website (www.nps.gov/yell) or the park newspaper when you arrive.

Programs & Tours

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NPS photo/Peaco

Interpretive Park Ranger Programs

Rangers lead activities and programs—from short walks to evening campfire programs—during the summer and winter seasons. They also rove through major park feature areas to answer your questions and help you understand the many wonders of Yellowstone.

Junior Rangers

Yellowstone's Junior Ranger Program, for young people ages 5-12, promotes involvement in and understanding of Yellowstone; ask at visitor centers for more information.

Classes

The Yellowstone Association Institute is a non-profit field school operated in partnership with the National Park Service. The Institute offers more than 125 short courses on the natural and cultural history of the park. Call 307-344-2294 or visit www.YellowstoneAssociation.org

Other Activities

Motorcoach tours, boat rentals and tours, fishing trips, cookouts, horseback and stagecoach rides, and special excursions are offered by Xanterra Parks and Resorts. Call 307-344-7311 or visit www.TravelYellowstone.com

On Your Own

Bicycling is permitted on public roads, parking areas, and designated routes. Bikes are prohibited on backcountry trails and boardwalks.

Boating is allowed on most of Yellowstone Lake and on Lewis Lake. Only non-motorized boating is allowed on most other lakes and one river: the Lewis River between Lewis and Shoshone Lakes. All boating requires a permit.

Climbing isn't recommended due to loose, crumbly rock; it's illegal in the Grand Canyon. Contact the backcountry office for information.

Fishing is allowed in certain areas and with permits. See "Permits" for more information.

Hiking takes you away from the roads and crowds. Seek advice on trail conditions from visitor centers or ranger stations.

Picnic areas usually have pit toilets, but no drinking water. Fires are legal only in areas with fire grates: Bridge Bay, Nez Perce, Snake River, Grant Village, Yellowstone River, Cascade, Norris Meadows, Spring Creek, and the east parking lot of Old Faithful.

Self-Guiding Trails explore Mammoth Hot Springs, Fort Yellowstone, Norris Geyser Basin, Fountain Paint Pot, Upper Geyser Basin, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, West Thumb Geyser Basin, and Mud Volcano.

Stock use depends on trail conditions. Contact the backcountry office for information.

Swimming, bathing, and wading are discouraged due to extremely cold water. They are illegal in hydrothermal features or streams flowing from hydrothermal features.

Driving the Park

Road construction occurs each year; check at a visitor center upon arrival.

The Grand Loop Drive to major features on this narrow, winding road. Allow plenty of time for driving from place to place. **NOTE** ***Part of the upper loop—Dunraven Pass—may be closed for construction.***

Summer Park roads are generally open for travel, barring accidents, rock/mud slides, or road construction.

Autumn ***Storms may cause temporary restrictions (chain or snow tire requirements) or closures of roads.*** Park roads close on the first Monday of November, except the road from Gardiner to Cooke City, MT, which is open all year.

Winter All roads and entrances, with one exception, are closed to motor vehicle travel and are groomed for over-snow vehicles. The exception is the North Entrance road from Gardiner to Cooke City, MT, which is open only to wheeled vehicles. Plowing stops at Cooke City, so you must return to the North Entrance to leave the park.

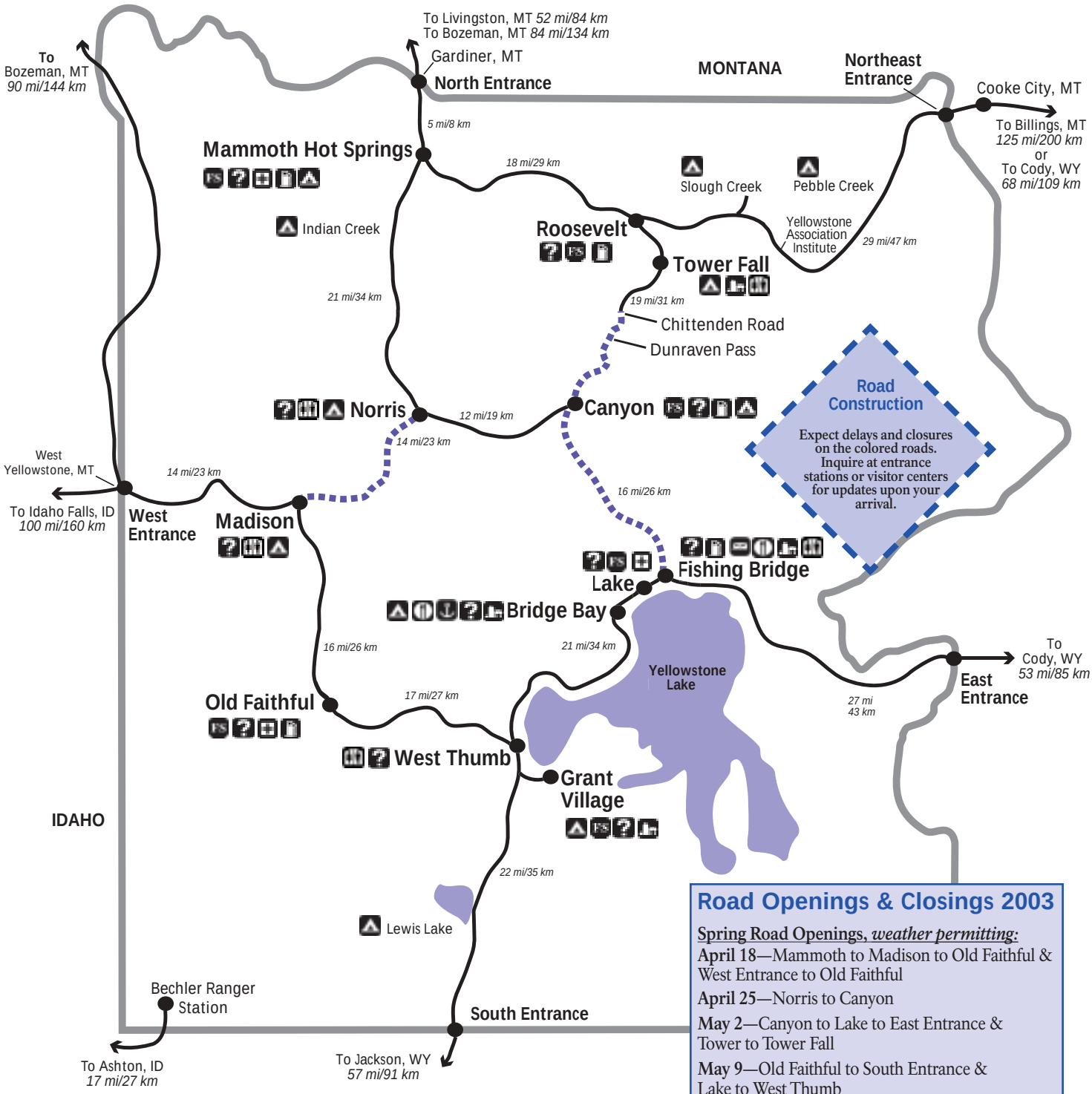
Spring Park roads open by sections beginning the third Friday in April. ***Storms may cause restrictions or closures on some roads.***

Yellowstone's monthly temperature and precipitation

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Average maximum temperature (°F)	27	33	41	49	58	68	75	76	67	53	35	27
Average minimum temperature (°F)	0	4	12	21	29	36	39	37	29	22	10	1
Average precipitation (inches)	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.9	2.3	2.1	1.9	1.1	1.1	1.4	1.9	1.7

4 MAP

ROAD CONSTRUCTION locations and schedules can change. Check at a visitor center upon arrival.



FS Full service (lodging, food service, store, restroom)

? Visitor Center, ranger station, or information station

Clinic or hospital

Gasoline/fuel

Marina

General store

Food service

Restrooms

Campground

Campground: Hard-sided units only

Road Openings & Closings 2003

Spring Road Openings, *weather permitting:*

April 18—Mammoth to Madison to Old Faithful & West Entrance to Old Faithful

April 25—Norris to Canyon

May 2—Canyon to Lake to East Entrance & Tower to Tower Fall

May 9—Old Faithful to South Entrance & Lake to West Thumb

May 23—Beartooth Pass

Fall Road Closures

October 15—Beartooth Pass

November 3—All park roads close for the season at 8 AM except the North Entrance to Cooke City road, which is open all year.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION occurs every year. Locations and schedules on this map are tentative and can change. For updates, check at a visitor center upon arrival.

5 Services

	ATM	Auto/RV Repair	Backcountry Office	Boat Cruises	Bus Tours	Fishing Permits	Fuel	General Store/Groceries	Horseback Riding	Hotel/Lodge Gift Shop	Light Meals/Snacks	Lodging	Marina	Photo Developing	Public Laundry	Public Showers	Ranger Station	Restaurant/Cafeteria	Visitor Center	
Bridge Bay			●	●	●	●		●			●		●				●			Early June–Sept.
Canyon	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	Late May–Sept.
Fishing Bridge	●	●			●	●	●	●			●			●	●	●			●	Late May–Sept.
Grant Village	●	●	●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	Late May–Sept.
Lake Yellowstone	●		●		●	●		●		●	●	●			●		●	●		May–October
Mammoth Hot Springs	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●					●	●	●	May–October
Old Faithful	●	●	●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	May–October
Roosevelt			●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●					●	●		June–early Sept.
Tower Fall	●					●		●			●									May–September

Dates and hours of operation vary and are subject to change.
For more information, see "Useful Phone Numbers and Websites" below.

Other Services

Medical Services

In the summer season, outpatient medical services are offered at Lake, Mammoth, and Old Faithful. Ambulances, 24–hour emergency service, laboratory, pharmacy, and radiology services are available. Mammoth Clinic open year-round.

Worship Services

Worship services take place in the park and in communities adjacent to the park, and include most major denominations and interdenominational services during the summer months. Check at visitor centers for more information.

Accessibility

Visitors Guide to Accessible Features in Yellowstone National Park, available free at entrance stations and visitor centers in the park, describes facilities judged to be negotiable for wheelchair users. Additional facilities are being made accessible as quickly as possible within funding limitations. For more information, write to:

Park Accessibility Coordinator
P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190
TDD only: 307-344-2017

Emergency: 911

Nearby Parks, Forests, & Chambers of Commerce

National Parks

Grand Teton NP
307-739-3300

Glacier NP
406-888-7800

National Forests

Shoshone
307-527-6241

Gallatin
406-587-6701

Bridger–Teton
307-739-5500

Caribou–Targhee
208-624-3151

Montana Chambers of Commerce

Big Sky	406-995-3000
Billings	406-245-4111
Bozeman	406-586-5421
Gardiner	406-848-7971
Livingston	406-222-0850
West Yellowstone	406-646-7701
Lodging only	406-646-9488
Cooke City–Silver Gate	406-838-2495
Red Lodge	406-446-1718

Wyoming Chambers of Commerce

Cody	307-587-2297
Jackson	307-733-3316
Dubois	307-455-2556
E. Yellowstone/Wapiti Valley	307-587-9595

Idaho Chambers of Commerce

Idaho Falls	208-523-1010
Eastern Idaho Visitor Info	800-634-3246

Useful Phone Numbers & Websites

- Yellowstone National Park: 307-344-7381; TDD 307-344-2386; www.nps.gov/yell
- Lodging & activities: 307-344-7311; TDD 307-344-5395; www.TravelYellowstone.com
- Yellowstone Association Institute (classes): 307-344-2294; www.YellowstoneAssociation.org

6 You should know about . . .

Regulations

Bicycling is permitted only on established public roads, parking areas, and designated routes. It is not permitted on boardwalks and backcountry trails.

Boaters must have a Coast Guard approved "wearable" personal flotation device for each person boating.

Calling to attract wildlife—bugling to elk, howling to wolves, etc.—is illegal.

Disturbing park features—possessing, collecting, removing, defacing, or destroying any natural or archeological objects or plants, animals, or minerals—is prohibited.

Driving while intoxicated or under the influence is illegal.

Feeding wildlife is against the law.

Fires are permitted only in designated campgrounds, in picnic areas with fire grates, and in some backcountry campsites. Any dead-and-down material may be used as firewood, but chainsaws are prohibited. Thoroughly extinguish all fires.

Fishing tackle must be non-toxic. Leaded split-shot sinkers, soft lead-weighted ribbon for nymph fishing, and other toxic tackle are not allowed.

Food must be attended at all times while not in storage. ***Never*** leave food outside your vehicle or around your campsite—***not even inside a cooler***—when you are away or asleep.

Littering is illegal, unsightly, and destroys hydrothermal features and injures wildlife.

Motorcycles, motor scooters, and motor bikes are not allowed off-road or on trails. Operators must carry a valid state driver's license and vehicles must display valid state license plates.

Pets must be leashed. They are prohibited on any trails, in the backcountry, and in hydrothermal basins. Pets are not allowed more than 100 feet from a road or parking area. Leaving a pet unattended and/or tied to an object is prohibited.

Seat belts must be worn by all occupants when the vehicle is in motion.

Service animals are allowed on trails and boardwalks in major areas; they require permits in the backcountry (see below).

Slow-moving vehicles must pull over to let others pass. Never stop or pause in the middle of the road—use pullouts.

Speed limit is 45 mph (73 kph) ***or less***.

Spotlighting—viewing animals with artificial light—is illegal.

Weapons and firearms, including state-permitted concealed weapons, are not allowed in Yellowstone. ***Unloaded*** firearms may be transported in a vehicle when the weapon is cased, broken down or rendered inoperable, and kept out of sight. Ammunition must be placed in a separate compartment of the vehicle.

Permits

Anglers ages 12-15 need a non-fee permit; 16 and older must purchase a permit. Anglers 11 years and younger may fish without a permit but must be supervised by an adult who has a park fishing permit. No state fishing license required. Obtain permits and regulations from ranger stations, visitor centers, and general stores.

Fishing season generally begins on the Saturday of the last weekend in May and continues through the first Sunday of November. Fishing season opens later around Yellowstone Lake and between the lake and the Grand Canyon. Check park fishing regulations or the park website for additional information: www.nps.gov/yell/planvisit/todo/fishing

Motorized boats require permits: purchase at South Entrance, Lewis Lake Campground, Grant Village backcountry office, Bridge Bay Marina, and Lake Ranger Station.

Non-motorized boats & float tubes require permits: purchase at Old Faithful, Mammoth, and Canyon backcountry offices, Bechler Ranger Station, West and Northeast entrances, and the West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce, Public Lands Desk.

Overnight backcountry camping requires a permit, free 48 hours or less in advance or for a fee by mail beginning April 1. For more information, request a backcountry trip planner from the Backcountry Office, Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190.

Service animals are allowed in the backcountry, but must have permits. Contact the Backcountry Office (address above) for more information.

Entrance Fees

Private, noncommercial automobile	$20 (7 days, both Yellowstone and Grand Teton)
Individual snowmobile, motorcycle	$15 (7 days, both parks)
Single entry (foot, bike, ski, etc.)	$10 (7 days, both parks)
Annual Pass, both parks	$40 (valid one year from date of purchase)
National Parks Pass	$50 (valid one year from date of purchase for entrance fees at National Park Service areas)
Golden Eagle Pass	$65 (valid one year from date of purchase at most federal fee collection areas)
Golden Age Pass	$10 (lifetime pass for citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. 62 years of age and older)
Golden Access Pass	Free (available to those citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. who have been determined to be blind or permanently disabled)

The National Parks Pass ($50, shown on the back cover) admits you to all National Park Service areas for one year. Buy it here, and **70% of the fee supports projects here;** the rest supports projects in other national parks. Purchase your pass at park entrance stations, or call 888-GO-Parks (888-467-2757), or visit www.nationalparks.org. Upgrade to a Golden Eagle Pass for $15 more and gain admission to all national parks, national wildlife refuges, and other federal fee areas.

7 Camping

	Dates	Fees	Sites	Elev (ft)	Features
Bridge Bay*	5/23–9/14	$16	430	7,800	A, F, DS, G
Canyon*	6/6–9/7	$16	272	7,900	A, F, S/L, G
Fishing Bridge RV*	5/16–9/28	$29	340	7,800	F, S/L, DS, G
Grant Village*	6/21–9/28	$16	425	7,800	A, F, S/L, DS, G
Madison*	5/2–10/27	$16	280	6,800	A, F, DS, G
Indian Creek	6/6–9/15	$10	75	7,300	V
Lewis Lake	6/20–11/2	$10	85	7,800	V
Mammoth	All year	$12	85	6,200	A, F, G
Norris	5/16–9/29	$12	116	7,500	F, G
Pebble Creek	5/30–9/29	$10	32	6,900	V
Slough Creek	5/23–10/31	$10	29	6,250	V
Tower Fall	5/16–9/29	$10	32	6,600	V

*** Reserve these sites by calling Xanterra Parks and Resorts: 307-344-7311 or TDD 307-344-5395.**

Holders of Golden Age and Golden Access passes receive approximately 50% discount on camping fees, except at Fishing Bridge RV Park.

A Accessible sites available
F Flush toilets
V Vault toilets
S/L Showers/laundry nearby
DS Dump station
G Generators OK 8 AM–8 PM

How Long Can You Camp?

14 days between June 15 and September 15; 30 days the rest of the year. No limit at Fishing Bridge.

Group Camping

Available at Madison, Grant, and Bridge Bay campgrounds for large organized groups with a designated leader such as youth groups or educational groups. $45–$75 per night, depending on group size. Reservations are required. Contact Xanterra Parks and Resorts: P.O. Box 165, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190; 307-344-7311.

Attention RV Drivers

Few campsites exist in the park to accommodate RVs longer than 30 feet. Reservations recommended for these large sites at Fishing Bridge RV Park, and in campgrounds outside the park (map on center pages).

Weather

Spring

Cold and snow linger into June, although temperatures gradually climb. Early in spring, daytime temperatures average in the 40s and 50s; by late May and June, they may reach the 60s and 70s. Nighttime lows fall below freezing.

Summer

Daytime temperatures are usually in the 70s, occasionally the 80s in the lower elevations. Nights are cool—temperatures may drop into the 40s and 30s, sometimes even the 20s. June can be cool and rainy; July and August tend to be somewhat drier, although afternoon thundershowers are common.

Autumn

Weather can be pleasant, although temperatures average 10–20 degrees lower than summer readings. Nighttime lows can fall into the teens and lower. Snowstorms increase in frequency and intensity as the weeks go by.

Winter

Temperatures often hover near zero throughout the day, occasionally reaching highs in the 20s. Subzero nighttime lows are common. Annual snowfall averages nearly 150 inches in most of the park. At higher elevations, 200–400 inches of snow have been recorded.

Trip Checklist

- ☐ Plan itinerary around road construction.
- ☐ Make lodging reservations early.
- ☐ Reserve campsites or plan to secure campsite early in the day.
- ☐ Review park safety, regulations, and permit information before you arrive.
- ☐ Pack clothes you can layer; be prepared for rain or snow, cool conditions, heat.
- ☐ Prepare day packs with snacks, water bottles, maps, sunscreen, compass.
- ☐ Call for up-to-date road and weather information close to the time of your visit.

You might also want:
binoculars • camera & film • notebook • field guides

You can find in the park:
Everything listed above, plus basic camping gear, other books, groceries, souvenir clothing.