

# Old Faithful Day Hikes

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Yellowstone National Park



## Welcome to the Old Faithful Area

Numerous trails suitable for short or extended hikes into Yellowstone's backcountry begin in the Old Faithful area. This guide introduces you to several trails selected by park rangers. Always carry rain gear, extra food and water, and other emergency equipment when venturing into the backcountry. Be sure to obtain current trail condition and bear activity information at the Old Faithful Visitor Education Center.

## Cautions

**Hydrothermal areas:** The thin ground in these areas breaks easily, and often overlies scalding water. Stay on the trail.

**All Wildlife:** You must stay at least 100 yards (91 m) away from bears and wolves; and at least 25 yards (23 m) away from all other animals—including birds.

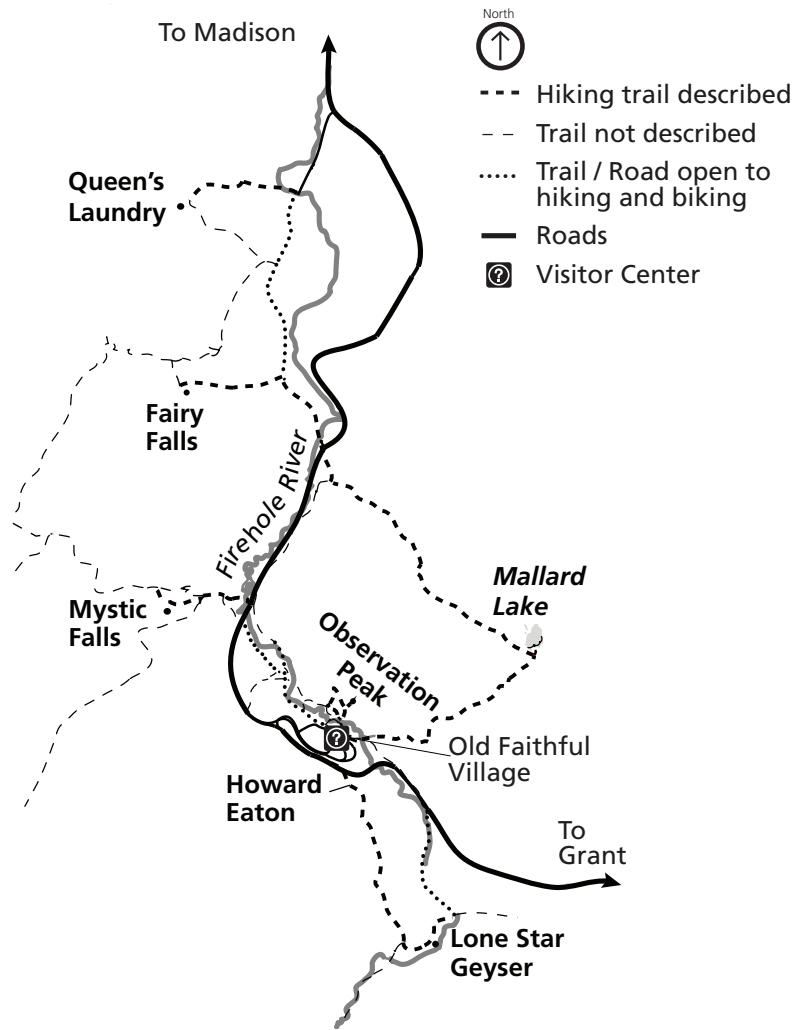


**Bears:** Although your chance of an encounter is low, your safety is not guaranteed. Minimize your risks by making loud noises, shouting, or singing. Hike in groups and use caution where vision is obstructed. Carry bear spray

and know how to use it. Do not hike after dark. Avoid carcasses; bears often defend this food source.

**Fishing:** Anglers must have a Yellowstone National Park fishing permit in their possession. Consult the park newspaper for purchase locations.

**Backcountry Camping:** Permits are required for backcountry camping.



## Observation Point

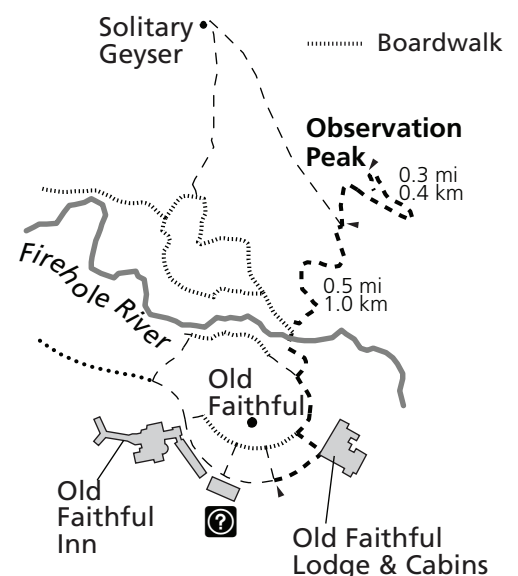
**Distance, round trip:** 1.6 mi (2.8 km) or 2.2 mi (3.7 km)

**Difficulty:** strenuous; elevation gain 160 feet (48.8 m)

**Trailhead:** Behind the Old Faithful Lodge and Cabins

Walk counterclockwise around the Old Faithful boardwalk; turn right at the sign to Geyser Hill. Trailhead is on the right after the Firehole River bridge, approximately 0.3 miles (0.5 km) from the visitor center.

Switchbacks lead up the hill 0.5 miles (0.8 km) to a commanding view of the Upper Geyser Basin. Return the same way or continue west to Solitary Geyser, which erupts frequently, then to the Geyser Hill boardwalk. The longer route is 2.2 miles (3.7 km).



## Howard Eaton Trail

Distance, round trip: 5.8 miles (9.4 km)

Difficulty: moderate

**Trailhead:** Park near the Old Faithful Ranger Station, then follow the paved path across the Grand Loop Road. Turn left at the first intersection, turn left again, and follow orange trailmarkers to the beginning of the trail.

The trail climbs a burned hill, continues through spruce-fir forest, then down to Lone Star Geyser. Return the same way.



## Lone Star



Distance, round trip: 4.8 miles (6.8 km)

Difficulty: easy

**Trailhead:** 3.5 miles (5.6 km) south of Old Faithful Overpass, just beyond parking for Kepler Cascades.

This pleasant, partially paved trail follows an old service road beside the Firehole River to the geyser. Cyclists must dismount at the end of the asphalt and walk the last few hundred feet. Lone Star erupts up to 45 feet (13.7 m) from a 12-foot (3.6 m) cone approximately every three hours.

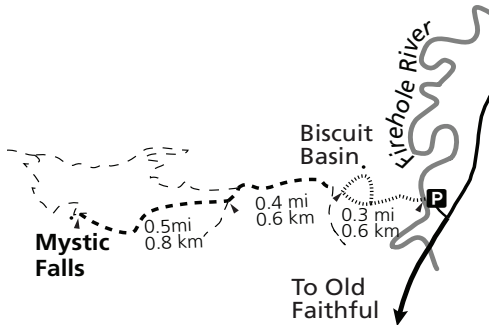
## Mystic Falls

Distance, round trip: 2.4 miles (4.0 km)

Difficulty: moderately strenuous

**Trailhead:** At the back of the Biscuit Basin boardwalk, 2 miles (3.2 km) north of Old Faithful Junction. You can also begin 0.25 miles/0.4 km south of Biscuit Basin; park in pullouts on either side of the road.

**Bear Management Area:** Trail closed until the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend.



This trail follows a lovely creek through mixed conifer forest to the 70-foot falls, over which the Little Firehole River drops from the Madison Plateau. Turn around here or climb the switchbacks to an overlook of the Upper Geyser Basin, then loop back to the main trail, 1.5 additional miles (2.4 km).

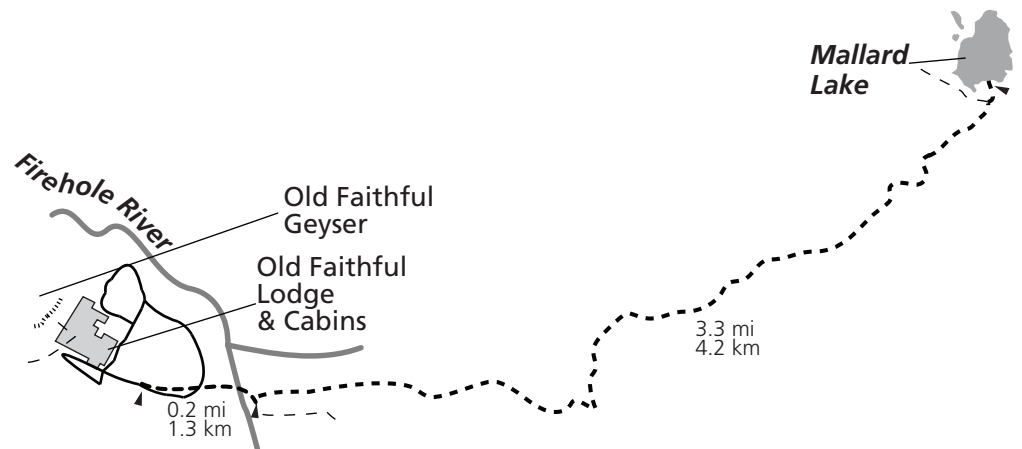
## Mallard Lake

Distance, round trip: 6.8 miles (11 km)

Difficulty: moderately strenuous

**Trailhead:** Southeast side of the Old Faithful Lodge cabins, near the Firehole River. Take the first right turn as you come into the Old Faithful Lodge area and continue down the road past some cabins to the trailhead.

The trail crosses the Firehole River, passes Pipeline Hot Springs, and climbs rolling hills of partially-burned lodge-pole pine and open, rocky areas to the lake. Return the same way, or if you have arranged a car shuttle, continue via the Mallard Creek trail, for a total of 7.7 miles/12.2 km).



## Fairy Falls

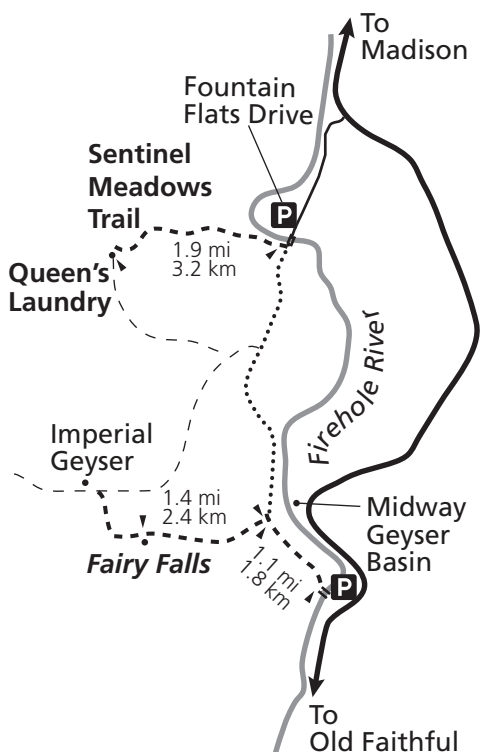
Distance, round trip: 5 miles (8.4 km)

Difficulty: easy

**Trailheads:** Short route—park 1 mile (1.5 km) south of Midway Geyser Basin, cross the steel bridge and walk 1.1 mile (1.8 km) to the trailhead.

Long route—park at the end of Fountain Flat Dr. and walk 3 miles (4.8 km) to the trailhead.

The trail travels through young forest 1.4 miles (2.4 km) to the 200-foot (61 m) falls. Continue 0.65 miles (1.1 km) past the falls through a wet area to Imperial Geyser, which has frequent minor eruptions.



## Sentinel Meadows & Queen's Laundry

Distance, round trip: 3.8 miles (6.4 km) if you go to Queen's Laundry

Difficulty: Moderate

**Trailhead:** 10 miles (16 km) north of Old Faithful, turn left on Fountain Flat Drive. Park at the end of the road, cross the footbridge over the Firehole River to the trailhead.

The trail follows the Firehole River a short distance, then veers toward the meadows. Look for the large sinter mounds of hot springs and the remains of the old, incomplete bathhouse at Queen's Laundry, 1.9 miles (3.2 km) from the trailhead.

This trail is often very wet in spring and buggy in summer.

Begun in 1881, construction was abandoned as park administrations and priorities changed. Minerals from the hot springs preserved the structure, which was the first building constructed by the government for public use in any national park. Queen's Laundry is a National Historic Site.

**Bear Management Area:** Trails closed until the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend

## For more information

[www.nps.gov/yell](http://www.nps.gov/yell)

Visitor centers have a free day hike handout for each major area of the park. A "Day Hike Sampler," with a hike or two per area, is also available along with several guides for trails throughout the park.