

Grand Teton - Yellowstone Adventure July 2009 \$850

This camping and hiking adventure will leave from Morgantown, WV and travel across the country to two of America's most beloved national parks. This is an adventure-packed trip designed to explore the best Yellowstone and Grand Teton has to offer. Get ready to lace up your hiking boots, don a day pack and hit the trails of Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks. Experience firsthand the pristine wilderness and rugged beauty of dramatic mountains, cascading waterfalls, glacial lakes, and geysers. Come explore with us. Let us show you places that you can only get to on foot. While you need to be physically fit and able to hike challenging terrain (6-10 miles/day) no prior camping skills are required.

Tentative Trip Details:

The itinerary for this trip is only a tentative plan and not a contractual obligation. Participants must understand that the nature of this type of travel requires significant flexibility. The schedule and itinerary may change without prior notice due to local circumstances or events, which may include mechanical breakdown, illness, weather, and other unforeseeable factors.

Day 1: Travel & Camp (Kansas City Area)

Day 2 Travel & Camp (Rocky Mountain National Park if we can get entrance waiver) If we can't get an entrance waiver we will probably take a slightly different route

Day 3: Arrive Jackson Hole, WY

Jackson Hole's history begins over ten million years ago as the valley floor was uplifted by a major fault line and deposited to create the massive formations of the Grand Tetons. The valley was home to prehistoric people until the last ice age and inhabited by American Indians until 200 years ago. The Lewis and Clark expedition spawned a massive migration of fur traders, trappers and homesteaders to Jackson's lush valley, and today lives and breathes the air of the Western Frontier. Upon arrival to the Jackson Hole area we will set up camp and depending on time maybe take a short hike, but the evening will be on your own in Jackson Hole before we bed down in our tents for the night.

Camp at Gros Ventre Campground (No showers)

Possible Hike:

Hidden Falls & Inspiration Point

This hike is one of the most popular trails in the national park. Jenny Lake sits at the base of Cascade Canyon. The hike includes a boat crossing towards this canyon. The trail follows cascading waters to a waterfall and Inspiration Point, an overlook of 400 feet above Jenny Lake. During the hike, the Tetons tower overhead. 5.8 total miles. 450 feet of Elevation gain. Out-and-back hike. 1.5 hours.

Day 4: Hike Grand Teton National Park

Possible Hikes: If we don't get the Hidden Falls & Inspiration Point Hike in on Day 3 we will do the Hidden Falls – Inspiration Point – Cascade Canyon Hike. If we did get the hike in on Day 3 we will do the Surprise & Amphitheater Lake Hike.

Hidden Falls - Inspiration Point – Cascade Canyon

This challenging extension of the popular Jenny Lake and Hidden Falls loop is the park's most popular and crowded canyon trail. In summer, it's a bottleneck of sorts, at the confluence of several major climbing and backpacking trails. Thanks to the scenic boat shuttle, it's also one of the most beautiful and direct routes into the wild heart of the Tetons. Snow can linger in the upper reaches of the canyon until early July. Since they are at relatively low elevation, the lower stretches of the canyon are accessible from June through October. Hidden Falls is at its most spectacular early in the season. Afternoon thunder showers, which appear with little warning, are common in the canyon.

9.1 miles. Approximately 1100 feet of Elevation gain. Out-and-back hike. 5-6 hours.

Day 4 Continued

Surprise & Amphitheater Lakes

Surprise and Amphitheater Lakes sit on a bench beneath the high cliffs and snow-covered slopes of Disappointment Peak. Amphitheater Lake, at an elevation of 9,698 feet, sits in a rugged, steep-walled cirque at the eastern base of the towering peak. Surprise Lake (9,550-feet) is a circular tarn in a beautiful subalpine setting. The high mountain lakes are located only a quarter mile apart. The majestic peaks of the Teton Range, including Grand Teton, Mount Owen, and Teepee Pillar, surround the lakes. The hike begins on the valley floor in Lupine Meadows, just south of Jenny Lake, and climbs to the lakes through sage-covered meadows, forested moraines, flower-filled slopes, and alpine tundra. 9.6 total miles. 3000 feet of elevation gain. Out-and-back. 5 hours.

Day 5: Hike Grand Teton National Park

Bradley & Taggart Lakes

Escape the crowds at Jenny Lake with this scenic, leisurely wander through meadows and regenerating forest to a pair of glacial lakes. The untouched forests around Bradley Lake provide a vivid contrast to the Taggart Lake burn area. Both lakes teem with fish, but sorry, there's no swimming allowed. Almost any time between May and October is a good time to visit these low-elevation lakes. As elsewhere, you'll be the most comfortable and spot the most wildlife outside of the midday hours, since shade is in short supply in the burn areas. 5.8 miles. 550 feet of elevation gain. Loop. 3-4 hours.

Day 6: Hike Grand Teton National Park

Leigh Lake - Bear Paw – Trapper Lake

This level hike meanders along the east shore of Leigh Lake to Bearpaw Lake, a tree-lined lake at the base of Mount Moran. The trail offers magnificent views of Mount Moran and the Cathedral Group-the three Teton Peaks of Teewinot, Grand Teton and Mount Owen. There are sandy beaches on the east side of Leigh Lake. This area is popular for canoeing, swimming and hiking. The hike is very pleasant at any time. The snow is usually gone by mid-May, and the trail is passable through October. Swimming is best in July and August. Beware of hypothermia-inducing temperatures in Leigh Lake before the end of June. 8.4 total miles. Minimal elevation gain. 3-4 hours. Out-and-back.

Depart for Yellowstone National Park

America's first national park is also one of its largest, the most extensive in the 48 contiguous states and the only one that extends over three states. Although parts of the park are in Montana and Idaho, most of the park's area and all of its major attractions are in Wyoming. Yellowstone Park is a broad volcanic plateau that generally lies between 7,000 and 8,500 feet above sea level, with peaks that rise 2,000-4,000 feet above the plateau. That dry geologic description hardly begins to do the park justice, but no words really can. Probably the most famous single feature of Yellowstone is Old Faithful. As beautiful as it is, by the time you have finished seeing Yellowstone you will rank it as one of the lesser attractions. Yellowstone is a microcosm of America's natural beauty, its variety is unsurpassed by any other national park. Besides the geysers, geothermal activity has produced gurgling mudpots and colorful algae-containing waters that simply defy description. Then, too, there are elegant mountains, deep canyons, high rushing waterfalls and rivers, forests and lakes. This eTrail explains in detail how to tour the park. In addition to a park map the details include driving tours, outdoor recreation, accommodations, campgrounds, dining, and more.

Huckleberry Hot Springs

Grand Teton National Park's worst-kept secret is actually located just north of the park in the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Memorial Parkway area. Formerly the site of a private campground, all traces of development have been removed and the 100°-105°F springs have reverted back to their natural state. Locals soak here year-round.

Old Faithful and Observation Point

The trail to Observation Point begins at Old Faithful in the Upper Geyser Basin. The trail crosses a bridge over the Firehole River and climbs to a magnificent overlook on a rhyolitic rock outcropping. Perched on the edge of the hill, the vistas extend across the entire Upper Geyser Basin and surrounding mountains, including a bird's-eye view of Old Faithful. The loop trail descends through a lush forest to Solitary Geyser, with a 4-foot eruption every 5 to 7 minutes. To witness the eruption of Old Faithful from the overlook, check at the visitor center for the estimated eruption time and allow 30 minutes to reach Observation Point. 2.4 miles. Loop. 250 feet. 1.5 hours.

Lower Geyser Basin / Fountain Paint Pots – The Lower Geyser Basin is scattered over a fairly large area and features regularly-erupting geysers, hot springs, and a fascinating mud pool which often strikes visitors as something from another world.

Camp at Bridge Bay Campground

Day 7: Hike Yellowstone

Elephant Back Mountain

This rewarding trail climbs gently through old-growth lodgepole pine forest, then loops around steeply to a picnic-worthy overlook with a sweeping panoramic view of Yellowstone Lake and beyond to the Absarokas. Bear activity is a possibility in spring due to the proximity to the lake's spawning streams. After snowmelt in June, any time of day is fine since most of the route is cool and shady. 4 miles. Loop. 800 feet. 1.5 – 2 hours

Yellowstone Lake -- This is the largest high-altitude lake in the lower 48 states, and it is breathtaking in grandeur. As you follow the long shoreline both east and north, you will see snow-capped mountains rising across the lake. On windy days, ocean-like waves break onto the shore. Be sure to visit Lake Village and walk through the Hotel. You might also want to sit on the porch of Lake Lodge and take in the view.

Choice of second hike or spend day around lake

South Rim – Clear Lake Loop. This trail overlooks the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and its two thundering waterfalls -- Upper and Lower Falls. The trail passes Lily Pad Lake en route to the spring-fed Clear Lake, completely surrounded by forest in an active thermal area containing boiling water holes and bubbling mud pots. It is a magnificent hike with a variety of scenes. 3 miles. Loop. Minimal Elevation Gain. 2 hours.

Uncle Tom's Trail (a spur you can decide to take off of the south rim trail or not)

This downhill hike along Uncle Tom's Trail utilizes a steep metal stairway into the 24-mile long Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. These steps take you to an overwhelming view of the canyon at the base of the 38-foot Lower Falls. This trail offers close-up views of the rock spires and hoodoos in the eroded canyon walls. This hike is strenuous and not recommended for anyone without a healthy heart and lungs. 1 mile. Out-and-back. 500 feet. 1 hour.

Day 8: Hike/Drive Yellowstone – Short hikes & Touring

Lower Falls and Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone – Yellowstone's Grand Canyon may not be as big as the Grand Canyon in Arizona, but it is nonetheless breathtaking. The Lower Falls of the Grand Canyon, at 308 feet high, is one of the most photographed features in all of Yellowstone. There are numerous vantage points on both the North and South sides of the Canyon, and we recommend that you take the time to view the Canyon from both sides. Also, be certain to take the 3/8 mile (one way) hike down to the edge of the Lower Falls. The experience at the lip of the falls is breathtaking.

Tower Fall – This is the most popular waterfall in Yellowstone other than the Lower Falls of the Grand Canyon. The waterfall is located behind the General Store. A short walk will take you to an overlook, but we also recommend you take the short-but-steep hike down to the base of the waterfall.

Mammoth Hot Springs – This is Park headquarters and it radiates history, featuring some of the oldest buildings in the Park, including structures from the days when the U.S. Army was managing Yellowstone. Be sure to drop by the Visitor's Center and allow enough time to watch a film, browse the history exhibit, and walk through the upstairs wildlife museum. In addition, Mammoth Hot Springs Terrace is quite magnificent, and the Terrace drive is a must. Finally, be sure to look for the seemingly ever-present elk grazing on the green lawns of Mammoth Village.

Norris Geyser Basin -- One of Yellowstone's most popular geyser basins, Norris is home to Echinus (one of the Park's most popular geysers) and Steamboat (the world's tallest geyser). In addition, there are several miles of boardwalks from which you can explore dozens of multi-colored thermal features. Finally, elk and the occasional bison can sometimes be spotted in the area.

Day 9: Hike Yellowstone

Mt. Washburn

One of the park's most popular and rewarding day hikes starts out up high and continues climbing gradually along old roads and passes wildlife-rich wildflower meadows en route to a spectacular summit with panoramic views from a working fire lookout. The trail is hikable from May through October, with a good chance of encountering passable snow drifts at higher elevations early and late in the season. Frequent afternoon lightning and thundershowers mean it's best to head out as early as possible. Wildflower displays are legendary from around late July to early August, while elk, grizzlies, and bighorn sheep (don't feed them, and keep your distance!) can be spotted throughout the summer. Bear management areas adjacent to Dunraven Pass and the Chittenden Road trail are off-limits for much of the year, so obey posted signs and don't stray from the trail. 6 miles. Out-and-back. 3-4 hours. 1,400 feet.

Return to Camp Prepare for departure.

Day 10: Depart for Home & Camp (Mt. Rushmore & the Badlands if we can get the fee waivers)

Day 11: Travel & Camp – Ann Arbor, MI area?

Day 12: Arrive Home in the evening