

Montana & Wyoming: Yellowstone

Tour-Only Itinerary

It's a primeval land, where colossal hot springs boil, a kaleidoscope of deep-cobalt water edged with brilliant orange blooms of microbes; where quiet single-track trails lead through lodgepole-pine forests to massive waterfalls or steaming fumaroles; where wolf packs still hunt in the eastern valleys, filling the night sky with their howling. Here, in the company of expert naturalists, you'll walk along the rim of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, looking off a 2,000-foot precipice into rhyolite escarpments streaked red and green with oxidation. Stare straight into the towering 300-foot Lower Canyon Falls, standing in a spot immortalized by the painter Thomas Moran. Delight in bison, bighorn sheep, elk, grizzlies, and mule deer along secluded trails through the Hayden Valley. In the heart of the world's first national park, make memories to last a lifetime.



Highlights

In the Upper Geyser Basin, marvel at a landscape unlike any on Earth: the iconic blast of Old Faithful, the eerie, geyserite cone of Castle Geyser, the colors of Morning Glory Hot Spring, and more.

Climb Mount Washburn, where you'll enjoy a picnic lunch in the fire tower at its summit, gazing out at 75-mile views of the entire park.

Savor the natural bounty of local game and produce—fresh huckleberries, bison, elk, and trout.

On all Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Flight + Tour Combos include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Flex-Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 2 to 6 miles of walking per day. The terrain is varied and ranges from well-worn or paved paths to mountain trails with rocks and exposed roots. The ascents and descents are gradual, with a leisurely pace of 2 miles per hour. Western mountain ranch culture is combined with the exciting wildlife viewing and classic geothermal sites of Yellowstone National Park. As one of our Flex-Guided tours, some days offer options for self-exploration, cultural visits, or free time to relax on your own.

DAY 1

Arrival in Bozeman

Upper Geyser Basin, 6 miles, easy

Welcome to Montana! After meeting your guides in Bozeman, a vibrant college town with a lively frontier spirit, you transfer two hours into the heart of Yellowstone National Park.

Here, you explore the world's largest concentration of geysers, hot springs, and fumaroles in Upper Geyser Basin. Starting on a network of boardwalks, you leave the crowds behind as you follow a forested path to Biscuit Basin. Early settlers named the basin after the biscuit-shaped "sinter mounds" formed by deposits of minerals precipitated out of the water. Sinter also forms the scalloped edges around hot pools, ornate cones around geysers, and terraces which form the basin's numerous runoff channels.

Crossing the bridge over the Firehole River, you walk through a regenerating lodgepole pine forest to Mystic Falls, where the river's waters tumble 70 feet down the rhyolite cliffs of the Madison Plateau—the perfect spot for the picnic you'll enjoy. Nearby thermal features produce steam along the flanks of the river's edge. After lunch, your route travels a more remote part of the Upper Geyser Basin, eventually leading you back to the park's largest and best-known geyser, Old Faithful. As its name implies, Old Faithful is famous for the regularity and frequency of its 100- to 185-foot eruptions.

DAY 2

Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

5 miles, easy to moderate

Today you venture farther into the park for a walk through lush forests and blooming meadows that give way to the otherworldly landscapes of thick mudpots and hot springs created by Yellowstone's subterranean geothermal activity. Soon, you arrive at the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. This 1,200-ft deep chasm is layered with the bright red, yellow, and orange colors of volcanic rhyolite, hydrothermally altered and cooled some 600,000 years ago. In fact, the name Yellowstone is thought to have evolved from a French translation of the native Minnetaree "Rock Yellow River" by 18th-century French trappers, *roche jaune*, which was later translated by American trappers into its English name. The canyon is

approximately 24 miles in total length, and you follow a trail along the rim as the Yellowstone River rushes below. You pause at a lunch spot overlooking the spectacular Hayden Valley, famous for its congregations of big game. This valley, actually an old lake bed formed by glaciers in the last Ice Age, is home to swans, great blue herons, Canada geese, elk, deer, bison, and, occasionally, wolves, as well as both grizzly and black bear.

Later, you have time to relax back at the hotel before enjoying another mouthwatering meal at your hotel.

DAY 3

Mammoth Hot Spring Terraces

3 miles, easy

Today you follow the Yellowstone River north through Paradise Valley to Mammoth Terraces. The uniquely colorful and steamy tiers for which this area is named represent an incredible natural process—underground magma heats groundwater that flows through limestone as it rises to the earth's surface. The limestone is then re-deposited as travertine, stacked up as terraces that are brilliantly colored by bacteria thriving in the hot water.

In this unique environment, you follow boardwalks, paved paths, and dirt trails past cascading rivulets of steaming water, strange rock formations, and much more. As you go, you keep a look out for elk, which are attracted to these salty steamy terraces.

Late afternoon you reach your home for the next two nights, an elegant western-style lodge. Nestled along the Gallatin River and surrounded by mountains, the Rainbow Ranch offers both comfort and a true Western feel. After settling into your room, relax in the lodge's hot tub or enjoy a cocktail on the terrace before dinner.

DAY 4

Mt. Washburn

7 miles, moderate; 1,384-ft. elevation gain

An ample breakfast fuels you for the spectacular walk to the summit of Mt. Washburn—presiding at 10,243 feet over the entire Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Part of the Washburn Range, one of two mountain ranges entirely located within the national park, the peak was named in honor of the 19th-century expedition leader Henry Washburn. Both a stagecoach and a wagon road in the past, the wide trail provides clear views of seven different mountain ranges, including the Beartooth, Absaroka, and the snowcapped Spanish Peaks. In July and August, the slopes are awash in blossoming wildflowers and grasses, a colorful palette of lupine, asters, buttercups, alpine harebell, forget-me-nots, and light green, silvery sage. Reaching the rocky summit, your efforts are rewarded with spectacular views extending to the Grand Tetons, 75 miles to the south. Enjoy a welcome picnic lunch in this breathtaking spot. This evening is free to choose from a selection of dining options in Big Sky. Your guides will be available to assist with recommendations and transfers to or from town.

DAY 5

Fairy Falls Trail, Imperial Geyser

6 miles, easy to moderate

This morning you choose from a light breakfast at the ranch, perhaps on the terrace overlooking the river, or a more hearty breakfast at a small café across the street.

After, you set off on a full day in the park to the delightful Fairy Falls. During an easy walk along an old road closed many years ago, you pass Grand Prismatic Spring and stroll on through forests of lodgepole pine, fir, and spruce to the falls, a 200-foot plummet of spray that cascades into a serene pool. After stopping here for a snack—and to perhaps get your feet wet—you continue on through grassy meadows and quiet stands of trees on your way to Imperial Geyser. Dramatically set beneath twin hills, this perpetually spraying geyser continually rockets out of a hot spring like a fountain. It was first discovered in 1925 and has been bursting forth almost constantly since 1966. Here you stop for a picnic lunch and admire nearby mudpots before heading back to the trailhead. This evening join the group for a farewell dinner, feasting on “ranch to table cuisine” with such specialties as cherry wood-grilled bison ribeye and parmesan-crusted local rainbow trout, perhaps followed with house made almond biscotti.

DAY 6

Daly Creek Trail

3 miles, easy to moderate

Today you transfer a short distance to the start of your walk along Daly Creek. Your walk is a perfect introduction to the beauty and wildness of Yellowstone National Park without the crowds. In the more remote northwest corner of the park, you follow a gently rolling trail along Daly Creek, passing expansive meadows blanketed with wildflowers and stands of aspen which turn golden in the fall. You may spot elk, moose, deer, and raptors throughout your hike. The impressive Gallatin Mountain Range makes a dramatic backdrop. After, you drive an hour to Bozeman for a lively lunch at a favorite local watering hole. Your guides offer a drop-off either at the Bozeman Airport or downtown Bozeman.

What's Included

Tour Only

Two expert, local guides (for groups of 8 or more), with you 24/7	✓
All meals included except one dinner. Local wine and/or beer included with dinner.	✓
All accommodations while on tour	✓
Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓
Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International	✓
The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff	✓