

Yellowstone in Autumn - Hiking & Natural History Part 2, 9/25/12 - 10/2/12 Trip Description & Tentative Itinerary

ADK Outings Committee Trip Leader Mary Krueger created and first led this trip first in September of 2011. Her 2012 trip filled up immediately with a lengthy waiting list. Because I have led "second sections" of Mary's Glacier National Park trips, I was asked if I would like to lead this Yellowstone trip. Mary is an outstanding trip leader and makes very thorough plans. We are going to follow her plans and will actually start our trip to Yellowstone 3 days after Mary's trip starts and so they will overlap for several days. The descriptions below are Mary's.

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Trip Price: \$1400

Trip Description and Itinerary

Yellowstone, our first National Park, hardly needs any introduction. Famous for its wildlife, geysers and thermal features, and beautiful scenery, it was designated as a National Park in 1872. The 2.2 million acre park has also been designated as a biosphere reserve and World Heritage site. Most of the park lies in the state of Wyoming, but parts of it are also in Montana and Idaho. There are more geysers in Yellowstone than anywhere else on earth. Wildlife sightings of bison, elk, grizzly and black bears, and even wolves are likely on a visit to the park. At this time of year, the elk will be in rut, with their bugling calls filling the air, and the trees should be in Fall color. There is so much to see in Yellowstone that it would be impossible to see it all in a week long trip. I have planned our itinerary to include the major areas for which the park is famous as well as some areas that most visitors don't get to. I have been to Yellowstone seven times, and have hiked many of the trails on our itinerary. I always look forward to going back to the park!

Our outfitter and guide will be the Yellowstone Association Institute (YAI), a non-profit organization dedicated to "preservation through education" about Yellowstone NP. www.yellowstoneassociation.org . We will hike each day with a guide/naturalist from the Association/Institute who will present, as we hike, an interpretive program, on various features of the area in which we are hiking. These are mostly moderately paced, interpretive hikes with stops for observation and instruction along the way. You need to carry only a day pack on the hikes. The park is less crowded in September, and the trails have fewer hikers on them. This is a good trip either for people who are visiting Yellowstone for the first time, or for people who have been to the park but would like to return and see it and learn about it in more depth. This is an active hiking trip (see itinerary and hike descriptions), but if your preference is for fast-paced, non-stop hiking this is probably not the trip for you. This trip is meant to be a learning experience taking place on scenic trails in an area that is unique in the world. One does not want to rush through this!

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Accommodations

We will be staying at YAI's Yellowstone Overlook Field Campus in a group cabin. (check it out at www.yellowstoneassociation.org and navigate to "staying at Yellowstone Overlook Field Campus"). The campus is located just outside the north entrance to YNP, and about 1.5 miles from the town of Gardiner, MT. We will all be in one large cabin with 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, fully equipped kitchen, and living room. Linens are provided. Campus hosts have a phone for emergency use, and most cell phones work at the Overlook. YAI will pick us up in one of their vans each morning to travel to trailheads.

Meals

We will prepare our breakfasts and pack our trail lunches in the cabin kitchen each day, and will also prepare three of our dinners there. The rest of our dinners will be at hotels/ restaurants in or near the Park on the way back from the days' hikes, or in the town of Gardiner. For meals that we prepare in the cabin, we will share preparation and clean-up duties. We will make a stop at a grocery store on the way from the airport to the cabin so that the leader can purchase groceries for our cabin- prepared meals (cost of groceries is included in trip price). People can also purchase, at their own expense, any extra snacks or food items they may want, and also beer and/or wine, if desired. You will need to plan to have two dinners out at a hotel or restaurant at your own expense. One night, we will order pizza from a pizza place in the town of Gardiner (included in trip price). Dinner on our last night will be our Farewell Dinner at a restaurant in the town of Gardiner, or at Mammoth Hotel in the Park, and is included in the price of the trip. Note: it may be likely that the 2 ADK hiking groups can socialize at meal time and perhaps even dine together.

Hikes

Hiking will be mostly easy to moderate, with possibly one or two more strenuous hikes. Distances will be between 4-8 miles a day at elevations of 7,000- 10,000- feet, and with elevation changes ranging from 40 ft. to 1400 feet or more. On some days we may take several short hikes in different areas rather than one long hike. Hikes will be guided, over marked and maintained trails, and may involve exposure to unprotected heights, wildlife, sun, wind, geothermal features, rain (or snow!), cold or hot temperatures, insects, and crossing of cold water streams and possibly, snowfields. Sturdy, waterproof hiking boots with good tread are essential.

This trip is intended for persons who are in good physical condition and are willing and able to hike distances of 4-8 miles per day at elevations above 7,000 feet.

You will need to carry only a daypack on the hikes. Transportation to and from trailheads will be provided by YAI. There can be trail closures (and road closures) due to bear activity or forest fires, in which case alternative hiking trails or travel routes will be determined by YAI guides.

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Included in trip price:

- 7 nights lodging in cabin at Yellowstone Overlook Field Campus
- All ground transportation from Bozeman Gallatin Field airport (BZN) to Field Campus, and back to airport on last day by Karst Stage van and to and from trailheads each day, in YAI van.
- All fees and permits
- 7 breakfasts, 6 trail (sack) lunches, and 5 dinners (including Farewell Dinner on last night, and pizza one night).
- Guide/driver gratuity

NOT included in trip price:

- Airfare to and from Bozeman, MT (BZN). Plan on airfare of \$500 - \$850 Round trip.
- 2 dinners
- Alcoholic beverages
- All items of a personal nature

Trip size is 10 participants, plus the ADK leader. A **deposit of \$500.00** is required to register by **November 15, 2011**, with all but \$85 refundable until June 30, 2012. After June 30, 2012, no refunds will be made unless the leader can fill the vacancy from the waiting list, in which case, all but \$85 will be refunded. If the leader rejects the applicant, or if ADK cancels the trip, all monies paid to ADK will be refunded. **The final payment of \$900.00 is due by June 30, 2012.**

PLEASE NOTE: The original trip filled up very fast - this is a second section and is likely to also fill up quickly - so register early to reserve your spot.

The climate in Yellowstone in September should be lovely autumn weather, but, since Yellowstone is at a high elevation, it can be cold and there can be snowfall at almost any time of year. (And Yellowstone is beautiful in the snow!). Bring a jacket or fleece (or both!), a hat and gloves, as well as rain gear/waterproof jacket and pants. You will be sent a packing list closer to the time of the trip.

This trip starts on Tuesday September 25, 2012, at the Bozeman, MT Gallatin Field airport, and ends on Tuesday, October 2, 2012, at the Bozeman Gallatin Field airport. This airport is served by several major airlines and some smaller ones. You should select a flight which will get you there by 4 pm on the day of arrival, and on the return, we leave the Field Campus at 9 am, and it's about an hour and a half drive to Bozeman, so a flight around noon or later, is recommended. There is no cab/taxi service from Field Campus to Bozeman. Your only means of return to Bozeman airport will be on our Karst Stage van leaving at 9 am. On past Montana trips, people often will stay a night in Bozeman either before or after the trip. There are plenty of hotels and restaurants in Bozeman. You will be notified later of the exact time of our rendezvous at the airport for the start of the trip.

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Trip Itinerary

May vary or change due to weather conditions, trail or road closures, or guide determination, etc. The descriptions below were copied exactly from Mary's original schedule - it may be possible that some of these trips will be altered so that we might sometimes hike jointly with Mary's group.

Day 1, Tuesday, September 25

Arrival at Bozeman, MT Gallatin Field airport by 4 pm.

Transport to Yellowstone Overlook Field Campus by Karst Stage van

Social hour/Leader's welcome

Welcome dinner in cabin

Day 2, Wednesday September 26

Upper Geyser Basin and Old Faithful, short hike up to Observation Point (0.5 mi each way). It's a long drive from Field Campus to Old Faithful, but it's what most people come to Yellowstone to see. There are many other geysers in the Upper Geyser Basin and one could spend an entire day hiking around the Basin. There are only about 40 feet of elevation change in the Basin (except for going up to Observation Point). This will probably be our first day's outing, hiking and learning about the geology of the geysers. An easier hike on the first day will give people some time to acclimate to the altitude in Yellowstone. If time and geyser eruption schedule permit, we may hike the mostly level 2.5 mile each way bike trail along the Firehole River to Lone Star Geyser. It's a beautiful walk and the geyser is more fascinating than Old Faithful. It only erupts every 3 hours or so, so our timing would have to be good.

Day 3, Thursday, September 27

Yellowstone Volcano Geology Tour and hike up Mount Washburn (6 miles round trip, 1400 ft. elevation change). There is a fire tower at the top and a spectacular view of the entire area, including the Grand Tetons. (if weather is bad, we will change this hike to a different day).

Day 4, Friday, September 28

Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. We will hike the Yellowstone River Picnic Area trail along the rim for a spectacular view of the river and the canyon (4 miles round trip). We will visit the Canyon Visitor Center to view the 3 dimensional map of the Yellowstone Caldera. We will hike the Canyon Rim Trails to popular viewpoints for the Upper and Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River. (short distances)

Day 5, Saturday, September 29

Yellowstone Lake. Hike the short distance to Storm Point on Yellowstone Lake, then hike along the shoreline while learning about the lake and looking for animal tracks in the sand (Sept. 2010 we saw wolf and bear tracks there) (2 miles round trip). We will drive back to Mammoth Hot Springs and hike the terrace trails while learning about the formation of the terraces and how they are changing over time. This part of the park is

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very different from the rest..The elk will be in rut at this time of year, and they are everywhere in Mammoth. We will learn about the elk rut.

Day 6, Sunday, September 30

Hike Bunsen Peak (4 miles round trip, 1300 ft. elevation change) in the Mammoth area. Views of Electric Peak and other of the highest peaks in Yellowstone, and the Yellowstone River Valley 3,000 feet below. This peak has been burned over several times and we will learn about fire ecology in Yellowstone and the fires of 1988. An option, in the same area, if some people want a strenuous hike, is Sepulcher Mountain (12 miles round trip, 2300 feet elevation change). This trail is not very well marked and is most interesting done as a loop, so we would need to be able to "spot" a vehicle since the end point is several miles from the start. This option would be up to the guide.

Day 7, Monday, October 1

Hike off-trail to the confluence of the Yellowstone and Lamar Rivers, through rich wildlife habitat. (4 miles round trip, 200 ft. elevation change). (Or we may hike the Slough Creek trail in the same area).

Day 8, Tuesday, October 2

Breakfast in cabin

Return to Bozeman airport by Karst Stage, leaving at 9 AM.