



P.O. Box 117 Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190 \* 406-848-2400 \* [www.YellowstoneAssociation.org](http://www.YellowstoneAssociation.org)

Welcome to *Essential Yellowstone*. The following information will help you prepare for your upcoming program. Please read it carefully and do not hesitate to contact us at [registrar@yellowstoneassociation.org](mailto:registrar@yellowstoneassociation.org) or 406-848-2400 with any questions.

### **The Program**

The focus of this four-day program will be to explore the heart of Yellowstone and experience its quintessential sights and sounds. The group will travel by 14-passenger minibus to locations throughout the park in search of the best Yellowstone has to offer. This will include wildlife watching in Hayden Valley, walking along the rim of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, and touring the fascinating Yellowstone Volcano. Along the way, your naturalist guide will share in-depth information on Yellowstone's history, management, geology, flora, and fauna. We'll also see and discuss effects of climate change, as well as the park's efforts towards sustainability.

Each evening, you will return to excellent meals and comfortable accommodations. You will have the opportunity to relax on the shore of Yellowstone Lake, the largest above 7000 feet in North America. This historic lodge is not only beautiful and luxurious, but is also frequented by bears which can be viewed from the safety of the facilities. All field activities will be conducted as a group, however, it is fine if you choose not to participate in a day's activities—just let your instructor know your decision in advance.

### **How Fit Do You Need to Be?**

This program is rated for hikes up to 3 miles per day with elevation gains of up to 600 feet. Some off-trail hiking is possible. This is the maximum distance; hikes are often shorter due to changing conditions and group ability. Due to hiking at an elevation of 6000 to 9000 feet, it would be wise to commence a program of moderate aerobic exercise prior to the trip if you have not already done so. Participants residing at lower elevations may want to arrive a day early to adjust to the altitude. If you have any questions or concerns regarding physical or medical conditions, please contact us.

### **What to Bring**

The weather in Yellowstone can be unpredictable in the spring and fall; exploring the park safely and comfortably requires planning and preparation. Please study the clothing and equipment list carefully.

### **What's Included**

*Essential Yellowstone* includes instruction by an Institute instructor, in-park transportation, five nights lodging, breakfasts, lunches, and dinner on the last evening, as well as a gratuity for all prepaid meals. Any other gratuities, including gratuities for your instructor, are discretionary. Dining options at Lake include the Lake Hotel Dining Room (reservations required), as well as the cafeteria at Lake Lodge. If you did not make dinner reservations during registration and would like to, please contact Xanterra at 866-439-7375. Reservations have been made for you for the final, group dinner at Lake Hotel Dining Room.

We look forward to sharing Yellowstone with you!

## ITINERARY

The itinerary is designed to take advantage of the best opportunities in the park, but may be adjusted to adapt to weather conditions and animal movements.

### **Day 1      Welcome and Orientation**

Dinner on own

7 p.m. Meet in Lake Hotel lobby by the fireplace for a walk to the meeting room. Introduction to Yellowstone, program preview, clothing and equipment review, and question and answer session.  
Overnight at Lake Hotel

### **Day 2      The Yellowstone Volcano**

Breakfast on your own (with coupon)

8 a.m. Meet instructor with day's gear (pack, water, and appropriate clothing)  
In-depth exploration of geothermal areas (may include walks on boardwalks—up to 3 miles)  
Picnic lunch in the field

5 p.m. Return to Lake Hotel for free time and dinner on own  
Overnight at Lake Hotel

### **Day 3      Wildlife Ecology**

6 a.m. Meet instructor with day's gear (pack, water, and appropriate clothing)  
Hot coffee and box breakfast will be available in the bus  
Sunrise wildlife watching (road based)—search for animals that are most active in the morning  
Picnic lunch in the field

3 p.m. Wildlife ecology hike—(up to 3 miles round-trip)  
Return to Lake Hotel for free time and dinner on own  
Overnight at Lake Hotel

### **Day 4      Historic Yellowstone**

Breakfast on your own (with coupon)

8 a.m. Meet instructor with day's gear (pack, water, and appropriate clothing)  
Picnic lunch in the field  
Walking in the footsteps of those who came before

5 p.m. Return to Lake Hotel for free time and dinner on own  
Overnight at Lake Hotel

### **Day 5      Wildlife and Waterfalls**

6 a.m. Meet instructor with day's gear (pack, water, and appropriate clothing)  
Hot coffee and box breakfast will be available in the bus  
Sightseeing at major overlooks of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone  
Picnic lunch in the field  
Afternoon hike in the area (up to 3 miles round-trip)

3 p.m. Return to Lake Hotel

5:45 p.m. Farewell dinner at Lake Hotel Dining Room (with coupon)  
Overnight at Lake Hotel

## CODE OF ETHICS

The Yellowstone Association Institute is committed to demonstrating a high standard of appropriate and ethical behavior in Yellowstone. As a participant in an Institute program, we ask you to adhere to the following Code of Ethics. In addition to the ethics highlighted below, the Institute abides by all National Park Service (NPS) rules and regulations. We also practice Leave No Trace guidelines for traveling responsibly in the wilderness.

**Observing Wildlife:** We will do our best to have as little impact on wildlife as possible. Animals will be observed from a distance, using high powered spotting scopes to help keep our presence from affecting their behavior. Participants should not expect to get close-up photographs of wildlife. We will adhere to NPS regulations by keeping a minimum distance of 25 yards from bison, elk, bighorn sheep, deer, moose, coyotes, nesting birds, and 100 yards from bears and wolves. We will not entice wildlife with food, animal calls, or any actions that change their behavior.

**Leave What You Find:** It is illegal to remove natural or cultural artifacts (plants, animals, bones, rocks, etc.) from the park. Institute instructors have permission from the NPS to manipulate plants, rocks, bones, etc. for educational purposes, and will return them to their natural positions and locations.

**General Etiquette:** Institute groups will be considerate of other visitors and respect the quality of their experience. Voices and vehicle sounds carry great distances and affect both wildlife and people. Remaining silent or very quiet while watching wildlife lets the sounds of Yellowstone (including wolf howls) prevail.

**Roads and Vehicles:** Expect wildlife on the road, and drive at or below the posted park speed limits. When stopping to observe wildlife or other park features, the Institute will move vehicles entirely off the road. If there is no safe pullout available, we will drive to the next safe place and walk back to observe the wildlife. We will not stop in the middle of the road, and should a traffic jam develop as a result of our activities, we will cease the activity.

**Properly Dispose of Waste:** We will pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter. Your instructor will discuss techniques for properly disposing of human waste in the field.

**Traveling Lightly:** When hiking or walking in Yellowstone, we will use existing trails and boardwalks, and follow appropriate techniques when walking off-trail. Walking around muddy or wet places in the trail increases erosion and negatively affects the resource; proper equipment is essential to hiking ethically. Participants should come adequately prepared with the equipment listed for their course and should expect to walk through mud, snow, or puddles in the trail.

**Practice Sustainable Methods:** We will reduce waste by minimizing paper and other disposable products used during programs. Recycling will be practiced in vehicles and at YA facilities. Effects of climate change, especially those evident in Yellowstone, will be highlighted by instructors, as well as the efforts of Yellowstone National Park and its partners to mitigate these effects.

**Thank you for helping us set a good example in Yellowstone!**

## CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST

Weather in Yellowstone is unpredictable in the spring and fall; you will need to prepare for greater temperature and weather extremes. The elevation in the park interior is 6000 to 7000 feet. Conditions could range from a warm, summer-like experience to snow. Nights will likely be cold. When dressed properly, even the most challenging conditions can be encountered successfully. If you are adequately equipped with the right gear and clothing, you will have a more comfortable and enjoyable experience. We understand that outdoor clothing can be expensive, if you have any questions about the sufficiency of your current gear, please do not hesitate to contact the Institute at 406-848-2400.

### Clothing

The layered use of garments for protection against the wind, sun, and temperature extremes should guide your clothing choices. Loose fitting layers of synthetic or non-cotton material allow you to maintain a comfortable and dry body as outside temperatures change and as your own body's temperature and moisture output changes with different levels of exertion.

**Insulating Underwear:** Capilene, silk, polypropylene, or similar. Should have ability to wick moisture away from the body. A light or medium weight is adequate.

**Lightweight Insulating Layer:** A light 200-weight synthetic fleece shirt or wool garment is a good choice.

**Mid-Weight Sweater or Jacket:** Can be wool, down, or 300-weight fleece for less active times.

**Wind/Rain Jacket and Pants:** A layer that breaks the wind yet breathes is important. Gore-Tex shells do both, but are expensive. Coated nylon blocks wind and rain and is economical, but doesn't release sweat. If your rain jacket does not breathe, you might consider a separate wind jacket. A jacket with a hood is a plus. Wind pants should be wind/water resistant and loose fitting.

**Shirts:** Cotton t-shirts are OK, but synthetic shirts are ideal, because they wick moisture away from the body.

**Pants:** Synthetic hiking pants, lightweight pile/fleece pants or tights, or similar pants. Jeans are not recommended.

**Hat:** Bring two, a brimmed hat to protect you from the sun and an insulating hat for cool weather.

**Gloves:** Lightweight silk/capilene/wool/[polypro gloves liners for early summer](#).

**Socks:** Wool or synthetic. Cotton socks do not wick moisture and are not recommended

**Hiking Boots or Shoes:** If you do not already have a favorite pair (which is probably adequate), get a pair of boots that provide stability, traction, and comfort. Unless you've consistently hiked in athletic shoes, go with something that provides ankle support. Also, boots offer protection from frequently wet or muddy seasonal conditions.

**Off-duty Shoes:** Sandals, athletic shoes, or other leisure footwear.

### Equipment

Your instructor will be carrying a first aid kit, bear spray, and emergency communication device.

**Daypack:** In addition to extra clothes, you'll be carrying water, lunch, and maybe a camera, binoculars, field guides, and other items during excursions away from the vehicle. Make sure your daypack is large enough to accommodate these items.

**Water Bottle (reusable):** Staying hydrated is very important. One quart/liter is the minimum recommended.

Camelback or similar hydration systems work, as well. We will provide one complementary YAI bottle at orientation, but we encourage you to bring one reusable bottle of your own, as well. To reduce our impact, we do NOT provide disposable water bottles.

### Sunglasses

### Sunscreen/Lip Protector

**Camera, Binoculars:** If you have them, bring them. If you have a digital camera, you may be able to take close photos of surprising quality through the Institute spotting scopes.

**Personal First Aid Kit:** Please bring any personal medications you require.

**Alarm Clock:** Make sure you're ready for early mornings! Not all hotel rooms/cabins have alarm clocks.

**OPTIONAL READING LIST**

No prior reading is required, but you might want something to occupy your flight or car ride. Whether your passion is history, geology, wildlife, or ecology, there's something for everyone. Most publications are available from the Yellowstone Association's online store at [www.YellowstoneAssociation.org](http://www.YellowstoneAssociation.org) or by calling 406-848-2400. Yellowstone Association members receive a 15 percent discount and all proceeds go directly back into the park for education and research.

- Craighead, F.C. Jr. 1994. *For Everything There is a Season: The Sequence of Natural Events in the Grand Teton-Yellowstone Area*. Falcon Publishing, Inc. Helena, MT. 206 pp.
- Haines, A.L. 1977. *The Yellowstone Story: A History of Our First National Park*. Colorado Associated University Press, Vol. 1 - 385 pp. Vol 2 - 543 pp.
- Phillips, M.K. and Smith, D.W. 1996. *The Wolves of Yellowstone*. Voyageur Press, Stillwater, MN 128 pp.
- Schullery, P. 1999. *Searching for Yellowstone: Ecology and Wonder in the Last Wilderness*. First Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin Co., New York, NY. 338 pp.
- Whittlesey, L.H. 1995. *Lost in the Yellowstone: Truman Everts' "Thirty-Seven Days of Peril"*. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, UT.

## TRAVEL INFORMATION



Plan on extra driving time in the park. The speed limit is 45 mph or lower. There may also be construction delays. Visit [www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/hours.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/hours.htm), call the NPS at 307-344-2107, or check in at a visitor center for up-to-date travel information.

### USE OF IMAGES/AUDIO

During your course a staff member may document the course through photos, video, or audio. The Institute uses audio and visual media in a variety of ways to further our educational mission and encourage others to participate in our courses. For example, videos might be used to train new instructors, or posted online to give folks at home a chance to learn about Yellowstone and experience what our courses are like from a distance. Similarly, we might use photographs of the class in our publications, such as the Institute catalog. If you would prefer not to be photographed or recorded, please let your instructor know.