



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

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

### **The Program**

The focus of this four-day program is to explore the heart of Yellowstone on a journey through the park's winter wilderness. Beginning at Mammoth Hot Springs, you'll travel by snowcoach to a warm and cozy base deep in the center of the park at the Old Faithful Snow Lodge. From there you will travel by snowcoach to Yellowstone's remote and spectacular winter gems like the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and Yellowstone Lake. Search for wildlife, checkout thermal features, take in the grand views, and find a true sense of place in this winter wonderland known as Yellowstone. This program is primarily snowcoach based, with short easy walks on foot or snowshoe to viewpoints and thermal areas.

Your naturalist guide will inform you of the departure time for the next day's activities. The schedule for the week incorporates group activities and reserves free time for individual exploring, relaxing, and skating. 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 on snow-packed trails or easy snowshoe trips, up to 3 miles per day with climbs up to 250 feet. The full day we spend at Old Faithful will include a longer snowshoe walk, while the two travel days will be predominately a driving tour, with shorter walks throughout the day. Snowshoeing is an aerobic activity—more so at 6000 to 8000 feet. If you have not already done so, it would be wise to commence a program of moderate aerobic exercise prior to the trip. Participants residing at lower elevations may want to arrive a day early to adjust to the altitude. For your safety and the safety of other participants, please take the time to answer the Confidential Health Information Questionnaire completely and accurately. If you have any questions or concerns regarding physical or medical conditions, please contact us.

### **What to Bring**

Winter in Yellowstone can be cold and unpredictable; exploring the park safely and comfortably requires planning and preparation. Please study the attached clothing and equipment list carefully.

### **What's Included**

The Old Faithful Winter Expedition program includes an educational program by an Institute naturalist guide, in-park transportation, 4 nights of lodging, a welcome gift per adult, snowshoe rentals, all breakfasts and lunches, one dinner, hot beverages and snacks on the road; as well as a gratuity for all prepaid meals, baggage handling, and snowcoach driver. Any other gratuities, including gratuities for naturalist guide and ski guide are discretionary. You will receive a Snowcard that entitles you to a 10 percent discount for dinners. Dinner reservations are required at both the Mammoth and Old Faithful hotels. We recommend that you make dinner reservations before your arrival to Yellowstone by calling 866-439-7375. The attached itinerary gives arrival times at our daily destinations.

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, animal movements, holidays, and road construction.

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

- Dinner on own (advanced reservations required), Snowcard discount
- 7 p.m. Orientation in Mammoth board room (room 207) on the second floor of the Mammoth hotel. Introduction to Yellowstone, program preview, clothing and equipment review, and question and answer session.
- 8:30 p.m. Optional evening program or free time on your own, overnight in Mammoth Hot Springs

### Day 2 **Geyser Basins and Wild Rivers**

- Breakfast on your own (with coupon)
- 7 a.m. Leave luggage to Old Faithful outside of your room
- Check out required from Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel**
- 7:45 a.m. Meet in lobby with gear for the day (pack, water, and appropriate clothing), ready to load
- 8 a.m. Depart for Old Faithful area via snowcoach with interpretive stops along the way  
Norris Geyser Basin, Madison Warming Hut (hot beverages), Fountain Paint Pots, Midway Geyser Basin, time permitting
- Bag lunch on the road
- 4 p.m. Check in at Old Faithful Snow Lodge  
Pick up snowshoes, gaiters, and poles  
Dinner on your own (advanced reservations required), Snowcard
- 7:30 p.m. Optional evening program or time on your own, overnight at Old Faithful Snow Lodge

### Day 3 **Snowshoe/Walk through the Upper Geyser Basin**

- Breakfast on your own (with coupon)
- If you have not already done so, pick up snowshoes, gaiters, and poles (after 7:45 a.m. at the Bear Den Ski Shop)
- 8:45 a.m. Meet in lobby with day's gear (snowshoeing gear, pack, water, and appropriate clothing)  
Depart for interpretive Upper Geyser Basin snowshoe walk  
Snowshoe Upper Geyser Basin, possible destinations include, Geyser Hill, Morning Glory, Biscuit Basin, Black Sand Basin
- Bag lunch on the trail
- 3-4 p.m. Return to Old Faithful  
Return snowshoeing gear (before 5 p.m. at the Bear Den Ski Shop)
- 6:30 p.m. Group dinner (reservations made) (with coupon), overnight at Old Faithful Snow Lodge

### Day 4 **Yellowstone Lake and the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone**

- Breakfast on your own (with coupon)
- Leave luggage to Mammoth inside of your room
- Check out required from Old Faithful Snow Lodge**
- 7:30 a.m. Meet at snowcoach with day's gear (pack, water, and appropriate clothing)  
Depart for interpretive Lower Loop tour  
West Thumb Geyser Basin, Fishing Bridge, Hayden Valley. Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, Upper and Lower Falls
- Bag Lunch on the road
- 5:30 p.m. Return to Mammoth  
Dinner on your own (advanced reservations required), Snowcard, overnight in Mammoth

## 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 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. The Institute will adhere to National Park Service 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 National Park Service 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.

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

## WINTER CLOTHING/EQUIPMENT LIST

Weather in Yellowstone is unpredictable; you will need to prepare for greater temperature and weather extremes. The elevation in the park interior is 5000 to 7000 feet. If you are poorly prepared in winter conditions, “uncomfortable” can quickly become life threatening. Conditions could range from 20-30° F below zero to the 30’s above with calm or windy conditions. Heavy snows can occur daily. If you are adequately equipped with the right gear and clothing, you will have a more comfortable and enjoyable experience. If you have any questions about appropriate clothing or gear, please do not hesitate to contact the Institute at 406-848-2400.

### Clothing

The layered use of synthetics and wool with protection from the wind is the goal of your clothing choices. Loose fitting layers allow you to maintain a comfortable and dry body by having flexibility in insulation as outside temperatures change and as your own body’s temperature and moisture output changes with different levels of exertion. It is strongly recommended that you not wear cotton clothing outdoors in the winter, especially next to your skin.

**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.

**Heavyweight Insulating Layer:** Fabric can be wool, down, heavy-weight fleece, or other synthetic fabric. A heavy winter coat with a water resistant shell will suffice for less active activities.

**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:** Synthetic shirts are ideal, because they wick moisture away from the body.

**Pants:** Wool or fleece pants or tights are recommended. The fleece variety in a 200-weight are excellent. Wool army surplus pants are okay, too. The tight-fitting ski pants used for track or skate skiing are typically inadequate.

**Hat:** Insulated hat that covers your ears.

**Gloves:** Lightweight glove liners, and a pair of heavy wool or fleece gloves or mittens. A water and windproof outer layer is recommended.

**Neck Warmer/Gaiter:** Synthetic or wool is best.

**Socks:** A lightweight liner with heavyweight synthetic or wool socks are best, however, if you have a system that works for you, bring that.

**Gaiters:** Knee-high length is recommended to keep the snow out of your boots and to keep your pants dry.

**Insulated Boots:** Boots should have a water repellent layer outside, thick insulation inside, and be large enough to fit over thick socks. Tight boots are the surest way to get painfully cold feet. General hiking boots will not provide adequate insulation.

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

### Equipment

Your instructor will be carrying a first aid kit, bear spray (if needed), 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 thermos 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/Goggles:** Glare can be debilitating and damaging.

**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.

**Pocket Hand/Foot Warmers:** These can help with comfort, but do not rely on them for safety.

**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.

- Henry, J. 1998. *Yellowstone Winter Guide*. Roberts Rinehart Publishers, Boulder, CO. 104 pp.
- Schullery, P. 1995. *Yellowstone's Ski Pioneers: Peril and Heroism on the Winter Trail*. High Plains Publishing Co., Worland, WY. 163 pp.
- Schullery, P. 1999. *Searching for Yellowstone: Ecology and Wonder in the Last Wilderness*. Houghton Mifflin Co., NY, NY. 338 pp.
- Scofield, S.C. 1979. *The Inn at Old Faithful*. Crowsnest Associates. 24 pp.
- Smith, R.B. and Siegel, L.J. 2000. *Windows into the Earth: The Geologic Story of Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks*. Oxford University Press. 242 pp.
- Smith, D. and Ferguson, G. *Decade of the Wolf 2005*, Lyons Press, NY 212 pp.

TRAVEL INFORMATION



In winter, the only park entrance open to wheeled-vehicles is the North Entrance at Gardiner, Montana. All other park entrances are accessible only by snowcoach or snowmobile. 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.