

## Yellowstone and other ideas

I have two sample Yellowstone Itineraries that I give our Interns as a starting point for planning their Yellowstone trips for two days. When a person ends up where depends on what time they start out.

Some people just jump in their car and go where the spirit takes them, mainly looking for animals and not getting out of the car much except for Old Faithful. One couple at the other end of the spectrum spent three evenings with their computers open researching every potential stop and putting together their itinerary. In the process they learned a great deal about Yellowstone and I think had a more fulfilling two or three day trip, tho they didn't take in all the stops they planned because they spent more time some place they liked rather than rushing.

Here is the link for a good site to read as a starting point for Yellowstone in one day: <https://travelinspiredliving.com/things-to-do-in-yellowstone-national-park-in-one-day/> If you try to do it from the ranch in one day, you will be driving at least 18 hours and not have much time out of the car.

I recommend staying one night in the Yellowstone area.

I recommend not going in the East Entrance outside Cody, but coming out the East Entrance if you end up there at the end of your trip.

The reason is Yellowstone Lake inside the East Gate is beautiful, but huge - from Cody past Yellowstone Lake is a two hour drive.

By the time you come out at the end of your Yellowstone trip, however, you are fine seeing nothing but a lake, and sometimes you will see animals if you come out in the evening.

Going in, you want magnificent scenery and optimizing the chance of seeing animals - that's why I suggest leaving Cody and going over the Chief Joseph

Highway [https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction\\_Review-g28973-d146780-Reviews-Chief\\_Joseph\\_Scenic\\_Highway-Wyoming.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g28973-d146780-Reviews-Chief_Joseph_Scenic_Highway-Wyoming.html).

I suspect you are early risers. Here are some suggestions to maximize the use of your time, but it will cost a little more.

You might consider going to the rodeo Friday night in Cody with the other Interns and staying overnight at the Big Bear Motel <http://www.codywyomingbigbear.com/> near the rodeo grounds. The Cody Cattle Company <http://www.thecodycattlecompany.com/> is next door and has fantastic live Western show and buffet supper that starts early enough that people can walk across the parking lot in time to make it to the rodeo. If you are vegetarians, the CCC has been promising to do a vegetarian option. As of last summer, it was still just salad and baked potato. The Big Bear has a swimming pool! If you went to Cody after lunch (which the Interns usually do in order to shop), you could check in early enough for the kids to swim, then have supper, the rodeo, go back to your hotel exhausted for a good night's sleep rather than driving an hour back to the ranch, then get up early :) and try to go over the Chief Joseph Highway when the sun is coming up. It will be beautiful and you will have a better chance of seeing animals in the morning. I think the kids would love the whole evening.

If the kids like swimming, you will have several great opportunities: the hot springs in Thermopolis, floating the Big Horn River in an inner tube, and in the Boiling River in Yellowstone <http://www.yellowstonepark.com/swim-yellowstones-boiling-river/>. I am biased because I feel part of the place when I'm hiking or swimming in it rather than just driving by :)

The driving distances in Yellowstone look short on the map, but keep in mind, you are driving 35 MPH and stopping every time you see a crowd to find out what they are looking at. There are some serious animal watchers in the park (retirees who spend weeks at a time camping there each year, professional photographers and so on) with \$10,000 cameras and lenses and they are VERY generous about letting people look through them, talking about the where the wolves are this year versus last year, how many pups, whether they have come out on the warm rock outside their den to play this morning, whether they saw them last night...

Depending on what time you hit the road, places I recommend staying are the Super 8 Motel (406-848-7401) in Gardiner, MT (outside the North Entrance and just a few miles from the swimming spot on the Boiling River), or just over Chief Joseph Highway at the Northeast Entrance, the Super 8 at Cooke City, MT (406-838-2070), the Soda Butte Lodge at Cooke City, MT (406-838-2251), or the Silver Gate General Store (406-838-2371) - I didn't realize they had rooms, but the Interns discovered it, said it was inexpensive and historic.

There are campgrounds outside the park in both these areas, as well, as well as in Gros Ventre, down by Jackson Hole. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/custergallatin/recreation/?cid=stelprdb5138825> These are the places, like Canyon Campground at the North Entrance, where I stay. They take no reservations and are first come, first served. I have never had trouble driving into one of them and finding a tent site. Inside the park, you need a reservation or need to be there waiting for someone to pack up in the morning and pounce on it, then come back to it that night. We could loan you a 4-person tent and a cooler to fill with food for your road trip. On occasion, Interns have ended up driving into Yellowstone Friday night and staying in their car, then grabbing a campsite the next morning along a river or canyon when someone packs up - not the ideal situation.

This site has so many campgrounds listed as to be confusing, but it is a good resource <http://www.greater-yellowstone.com/Yellowstone-Park/campgrounds.html>

Old Faithful is a must see, but there are other geysers, too. <http://yellowstone.net/geysers/geyser-list/> One that is near Old Faithful erupts very rarely, but the rangers are good about letting people know when it is about to go so they can run over and see it. Generally, one has to wait at Old Faithful for the next eruption. I recommend touring the Old Faithful Inn <https://www.yellowstonenationalparklodges.com/lodgings/hotel/old-faithful-inn/>. If you are into having one great meal in Yellowstone, skip the junk food that costs a fortune, live out of a cooler, and savor the buffet at the Old Faithful Inn <https://www.yellowstonenationalparklodges.com/restaurants/old-faithful-inn-dining-room/>, for which you can easily get a reservation at the 4:30 slot and depart in time to make it to your overnight destination before dark, seeing wildlife before sunset on the way.

Lamar Valley is the most likely place to see all kinds of wildlife. The folks in the General Store in Silver Gate will let you know if there are wolves on a buffalo carcass or anything else exciting in Lamar Valley, so stop there when you get over Chief Joseph Highway to get the latest scoop. They even rent high powered lenses!

I have touched on Cody (there are lots of other things to do there, too, including taking the trolley around town to get a fantastic overview of the history (of course, they are also selling the great school

system and tax benefits of moving to Wyoming) <http://codytrolleytours.com/> Outside Cody, on the way back from Yellowstone between the East Gate and Cody is the Buffalo Bill Dam <https://www.nps.gov/articles/wyoming-buffalo-bill-dam.htm> It is remarkable to me the circumstances in which and how the dam and the Old Faithful Inn were built!

In Thermopolis, there are several things to choose among that we can help you schedule during the heat of the day between rides, or in the evening after a day of horsemanship.

See <http://thermopolis.com/attractions/hot-springs-state-park/> Speaking of remarkable construction feats, the Wind River Canyon railroad on the south side of Thermopolis is another one. <https://www.travelwyoming.com/listing/shoshoni/wind-river-canyon-scenic-byway> A drive through the Wind River Canyon at sunrise or sunset takes about 20 minutes each way (you don't have to go all the way to the little town of Shoshoni) and is nice, if there is time.

For example, we may ride to cow camp Wed, camp overnight and cook out, then ride from cow camp Thursday, eat lunch and go to Thermopolis, float the river in inner tubes or go with Wind River Rafting Co, warm up in the hot springs at the Teepee Pool, or the free State Bath House, take a quick drive through the Buffalo park while we get the picnic set up in the park, eat and walk the terraces and the swinging bridge. Then back to the ranch. If you find dinosaurs interesting, our Wyoming Dinosaur Center is said to be one of the best in the world - the dinos came here for the warm waters and there are skeletons found here that are nowhere else in the world.

I did not touch on Jackson Hole or the Tetons at all, which are both fun magnificent, as well. The Gros Ventre area is best for seeing moose. What part of Yellowstone to devote your time to is the first decision because it's impossible even to just skim it all in a couple of days.

I am definitely going to save this for future reference! It's a start. I'm sure you'll have more questions! We're here!

Have an exciting time planning!