

# Beyond Road's End



Regulations and Guidelines  
for Backcountry Travel in  
Yellowstone National Park

Yellowstone National Park's backcountry, a diverse area with hundreds of miles of trails, vast forests, wild rivers, remote mountains, abundant wildlife, and a variety of geysers and hot springs, can provide a unique and enjoyable experience. The National Park Service wants your backcountry trip to be as rewarding and as safe as possible. The information in this booklet was compiled by backcountry rangers and covers situations you are most likely to encounter while traveling in Yellowstone's backcountry. Please read this booklet carefully. Learning and abiding by regulations will help ensure that you and your companions will have a safe and enjoyable trip.

## Contents

Introduction	1
Park Regulations	2
Backcountry Permits	3
Fishing and Boating Permits	4
Using Stock	4
Trailheads	4
Wildlife	5
Bear Country	6
For Your Safety	12
Leave No Trace	17
Noxious Weeds	20

## Protecting Yellowstone's Backcountry

Yellowstone National Park was created by Congress in 1872 to protect the area's unique natural resources and provide for their enjoyment in such a manner as to keep them unimpaired for future generations. We invite you to partner with the National Park Service in achieving this mission.

In early days, when few visitors came to the park, the park resources remained relatively undisturbed. More than a century of increasing visitor use has made it necessary to establish regulations to minimize

impacts. Environmental damage may last years, several decades, or even longer. Our efforts to maintain the pristine condition of Yellowstone's backcountry today are well worth the long-term benefits they provide.

The regulations explained in this booklet help protect Yellowstone's visitors, plants, animals, and physical features. Park Rangers patrol the backcountry maintaining trails, assisting travelers, and ensuring that regulations are followed.



## Park Regulations

Yellowstone National Park is administered by federal law, described in detail in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36. These regulations are on file at all ranger stations and in the Park Superintendent's office.

- All wild animals are potentially dangerous – do not approach or feed wildlife.
- Food, garbage, and all items used for storing, preparing or eating food must be properly hung whenever they are not being carried or used – day and night.



- Swimming, soaking, and bathing in water entirely of thermal origin is prohibited. Altering or putting objects in thermal features is also prohibited.
- All plants, animals, animal parts, mineral features, archeological sites, and cultural artifacts in the park are protected. Removing, disturbing and/or damaging them is prohibited.
- A permit is required for all overnight trips in the backcountry.
- Pets, weapons other than legally permitted firearms, traps, motorized and wheeled devices, except some wheelchairs, are prohibited in the backcountry. Bicycles are allowed only on paved roads and on specially designated routes.
- Fires are allowed only in established fire rings and must be attended at all times. Only dead and down wood may be used as firewood.
- Solid human waste must be buried at least 100 feet from a water source, campsite, or trail. All trash must be packed out.
- Contaminating park waters with any materials including soap, waste, food, etc. that may pollute or alter a water source is prohibited.
- Tossing or rolling rocks or other objects down hillsides or into caves or canyons is prohibited.
- Nuts, berries, and mushrooms may be picked only for personal consumption at the gatherer's own risk.
- Permits are required for fishing, boating, and using float tubes.
- The use of electronic equipment to track wildlife is prohibited.
- Animal calls, audio attractants or other means of attracting or disturbing wildlife are prohibited.

## Backcountry Permits

If you plan to stay overnight in Yellowstone's backcountry, a backcountry permit is required. Permits are available at most ranger stations and/or visitor centers. Permits are available in person up to two days prior to the first day of your backcountry trip. Backcountry permits are valid only for the dates and places listed on your permit and are not required for day hikes in most areas. However, day-hikers must observe all backcountry regulations, and are encouraged to check trail conditions and safety concerns at the ranger station closest to the trailhead.

### *Designated Campsites*

In an effort to protect people, bears, and park resources, camping is only allowed in designated campsites. All designated sites are equipped with a

bear proof box or food-storage pole to store or hang food and other bear-attractants out of the reach of bears. Each backcountry campsite has varying restrictions on group size, stock use, boating access, campfires, and length of stay.

During the winter season, camping in designated campsites is generally not required. Additional information about winter camping is available from visitor centers, ranger stations, or the Central Backcountry Office.

### *Advance Reservations for Campsites*

Unlike permits, which may only be obtained in person and not more than 48 hours before the first camping date, requests for backcountry campsite reservations may be made by mail, fax, or in person. Reservations cannot be made by telephone. Reservations are booked on a first-come, first-served basis. A confirmation notice (not a permit) will be emailed or mailed to the camper when the reservation is

made. Campers may then exchange their reservation for their backcountry permit up to two days before the first day of their trip.

A reservation has a nonrefundable fee, which is the same regardless of the number of nights or people on a single trip. Payment can be made by cash, personal or traveler's check, money order, or credit card. Campers holding a reservation must confirm their reservation or convert it to a permit by 10 a.m. on the first day of the trip or the reservation will be cancelled. Reservations may be confirmed by phone.

### *Advance Reservations are Optional*

Only a portion of the backcountry campsites will be reserved in advance. If you prefer, you may wait until you arrive in the park to reserve your backcountry campsite(s). The fee mentioned above applies only to reservations made more than 48 hours before the start of your trip.

## Fishing and Boating Permits

Fishing, boating and use of a float tube require permits. Fishing permits may be obtained at ranger stations, visitor centers, and general stores in the park. Check the park newspaper for a list of

ranger stations issuing boat and float tube permits.

### *Using Stock*

Due to wet trails and a slow growing season, overnight horse trips are not permitted until July 1. Day horse trips do not require a permit and are allowed in some areas prior to July 1. We encourage you to read “Horse

Packing in Yellowstone” (available at any ranger station or visitor center) and contact the Central Backcountry Office if you plan to use stock in the park.

### *Trails and Trailheads*

If a registration box is present at your trailhead, please record your itinerary. However, not all trailheads have registration boxes. Maintained and mapped trails are designated by orange markers on trees and posts, with distance and directional signs at most trail junctions. Some trails may be hard to follow because they are

infrequently used, missing markers, or because the trail goes through recently burned areas or large meadows. During early summer and after strong winds, fallen trees can make hiking more difficult. If you are hiking on windy days, be alert for falling trees.



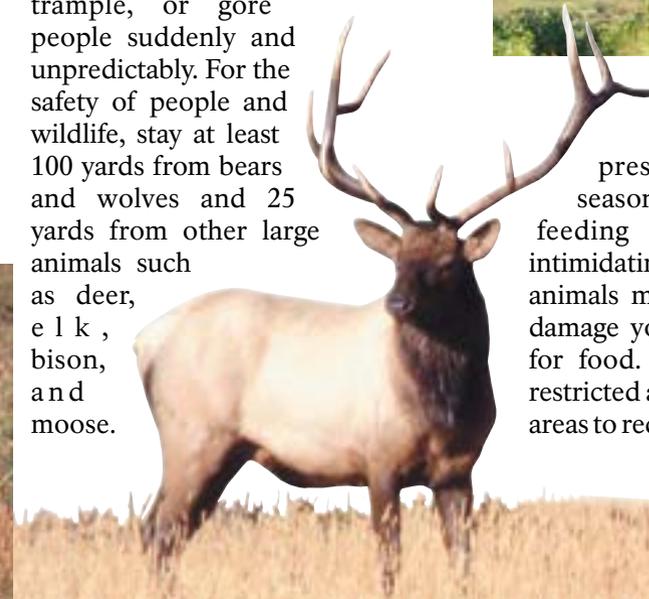
## Respect Wildlife

- **Do not approach wildlife – all wild animals are potentially dangerous**
- **Never feed or harass wildlife – it’s unsafe and illegal**
- **Avoid females with young – all species are dangerous**

Observing wildlife can be a great thrill for backcountry travelers. However, if people feed, approach, or disturb wild animals, they put themselves and the

animals in danger. Feeding wildlife may damage their health and alter their natural behavior exposing them to predators and other dangers.

Almost all conflicts between wildlife and people are avoidable. Animals that appear calm can bite, kick, trample, or gore people suddenly and unpredictably. For the safety of people and wildlife, stay at least 100 yards from bears and wolves and 25 yards from other large animals such as deer, elk, bison, and moose.



This is especially important if young are present, during breeding seasons, and near nesting and feeding areas. Although less intimidating, rodents and other small animals may carry diseases and can damage your tent or pack searching for food. Backcountry use may be restricted at certain times or in certain areas to reduce disturbance to wildlife.

# Yellowstone Is Bear Country

Yellowstone is home to black and grizzly bears. As visitor numbers increase and good bear habitat decreases, bears and people use the same areas. Travel through bear country with respect, courtesy, and caution.

Bears are not mean or vicious. Their behavior is influenced by many factors, including your reaction to them. Some bears are more aggressive than others particularly those conditioned to human food.

## Most Common Causes of Attacks

- Approaching or surprising a bear, especially at close range
- Startling a female with cubs
- Getting close to a carcass or other food source
- Hiking off trail or at night
- Not making sufficient noise

## Reduce the Risk of Close Encounters

**Be alert:** Watch for tracks, droppings, diggings, and other bear signs. Use binoculars to scan the areas around you periodically. If you see a cub, retreat immediately – you can be certain the mother is nearby.

## Make noise and stay on the trail:

Talk or sing loudly, clap your hands, shake rocks in a can, or make other loud noises frequently, especially when traveling upwind, near streams, or in thick brush. Bells are less effective than other noise methods. Whistling is not recommended – it may sound like an animal and draw the bear to you. To reduce the risk of surprising a bear, stay on the designat-



ed trails. There is no guarantee of your safety.

**Don't hike alone or at night:** Plan your trip so you hike in a group and during the day. Grizzly bears are active primarily at dawn, dusk and at night. Groups of three or more hikers have rarely been injured by bears in Yellowstone.

## Watch for carcasses and stay away from them:

Report all dead animals found near a trail or campsite at a ranger station. If you smell rotten meat, leave the area immediately. Never approach or camp near a carcass. A bear may be out of sight, guarding its food. Carcasses can often be detected by the presence of ravens or coyotes.

## Avoid carrying odorous items:

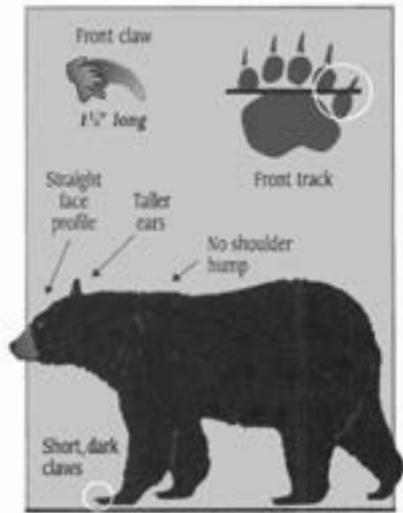
Leave food like bacon, tuna, ham, and scented personal products, at home. Bears have a phenomenal sense of smell and can detect odors miles away. We recommend using dry, sealed foods; they are lighter and less aromatic.

# Do you know your bears?

## Grizzly Bear



## Black Bear



Look for a combination of characteristics. Color and size are sometimes misleading. Identifying bear tracks: A line drawn under the big toe across the top of the pad runs through the top half of the little toe on black bear tracks & through or below the bottom half of little toes on grizzly tracks.

## What to do if:

### *You see a bear in the distance*

- If the bear doesn't see you, keep out of its sight and detour as far as possible behind and downwind of the bear.
- If the bear sees you, retreat slowly and leave the area. If possible, slowly walk upwind to let your scent reach the bear. Regardless of the distance, never approach a bear.

### *You see a bear at close range*

- Do not run, shout, or make sudden movements. You cannot outrun a bear! Bears run up to 40 mph – faster than Olympic sprinters.
- Remain still, avoid eye contact, talk quietly and calmly to the bear.
- Do not panic – your safety may depend on remaining calm. Avoid direct eye contact with the bear. If the bear clacks its teeth together,

or “woofs,” it is warning you to back off. A bear may threaten by huffing, panting, growling, staring at you, or slapping its feet on the ground.

- Climbing a tree to avoid an attack might be an option, but is often impractical. All adult black, and many grizzly bears climb trees. Running to a tree may provoke an unaggressive bear to chase you. Think about your options. If you decide to climb a tree, choose one nearby that will get your feet at least 30 feet above the ground.

### *A bear charges you*

- Stand still; do not run. Charging bears often veer away or stop abruptly at the last second (bluff charge). If you have bear pepper spray, point it at the bear and discharge it if the bear charges to within 20 – 30 feet.
- Play dead if the bear physically contacts you. If a bear makes phys-

ical contact, drop to the ground. Keep your pack on to help protect your body, clasp your hands over the back of your neck, and lie face down with your legs flat. Be still and stay silent to convince the bear you are not a threat.

*After the bear leaves*, wait several minutes before moving. Listen and look around cautiously before you get up to make certain the bear is no longer nearby.



**Be Bear Aware.**  
Help keep bears wild.  
Use good bear  
avoidance behavior.

### *Bear Pepper Sprays*

If precautionary measures fail and you are charged by a bear, your reaction (as outlined in this book) can be used to defuse the situation in most cases. Bear spray is a good last line of defense that has been effective in many instances. It is especially appropriate if you are attacked in your tent at night.



Whether while hiking or in your tent, it must be kept where it can be instantly available. Bear spray is adversely affected by wind, cold temperatures, and age, so keep these things in mind. If you use bear pepper spray, **leave the area immediately.**

Bear spray is designed to stop

an attacking bear. **DO NOT** apply bear pepper spray to people, tents, packs, or surrounding vegetation. Remember, carrying pepper spray is not a substitute for vigilance and good safety precautions.

### *Night Attacks While in a Tent*

Although night attacks are extremely rare, there are documented cases in North America of black and grizzly bears preying on campers in a tent or sleeping bag. A bear attacking at night



is not being protective – it is treating humans as food. Do not fight back aggressively. Use anything available to defend yourself. People have fought off

bears by yelling, punching, kicking, or otherwise defending themselves. Plan with others in your group what you'll do if a bear attacks at night. If you are carrying pepper spray, keep it instantly accessible.

### *Bears and Menstruating Women*

There is no evidence that grizzly or black bears are attracted to menstrual odor more than any other odor, and no statistical evidence that bear attacks have been related to menstruation. A basic precaution for a woman camping in the backcountry during her menstrual period is to wear tampons instead of external napkins. Used tampons should be double bagged in plastic, stored as trash, and carried out. Never bury or try to burn used tampons.

For more information, ask for the “Bears and Menstruating Women” handout at backcountry permit-issuing stations.

## Food and Bears

Proper food and garbage storage is important to the safety and well-being of both bears and humans. Leaving food where bears can get it is not only illegal, but extremely dangerous for both bears and people. Bears are always searching for food and have an acute sense of smell. If you leave food out unattended, you are inviting a bear to your camp.

A bear that eats human food or garbage - even once - may become conditioned or reliant on this easy source of food. These bears often become increasingly aggressive and may damage property, threaten, injure, even kill people in their attempts to obtain food. If a bear becomes conditioned to human food and garbage, it will likely have to be destroyed to protect human safety.

### *Food Storage Regulations*

Food, garbage, and all items used for storing, preparing, or eating food must be properly stored or hung whenever they are not being used or directly attended, both day and night. Hung items must be a minimum of 10 feet above ground and 4 feet from the tree trunks. Poles for hanging your food are provided at most designated campsites. At a few sites where poles aren't feasible, storage boxes have been installed for securing food and other odorous items.

Certain portable bear resistant food canisters are allowed and when used may be stored on the ground by the food pole or cooking area. Cooling beverages in a creek or lake is only permitted if you are in close attendance.

### *To avoid attracting a bear to your camp we recommend that you:*

- Store food in airtight containers or double ziplock bags

- Line your pack and panniers with plastic bags
- Keep all food, drink, medications, and all odorous items out of sleeping bags, tents, and their stuff sacks
- Where possible, keep your sleeping area at least 100 yards from your cooking, eating, and food storage areas
- Store all odorous items (i.e. empty food containers, water bottles which contained flavored drinks, lip balm, sunscreen, lotion, makeup, toothpaste, and medications) the same way you store food and garbage.

Hikers on day-hikes must also obey food storage requirements. Be aware that bears can be encountered anywhere in Yellowstone.

Campers with stock must hang, as described above, livestock feed and panniers that contain(ed) human and stock food .

## Campsite Safety Rules and Recommendations

A food storage pole is provided at most campsites, so that food and other attractants can be suspended. You need to provide your own rope (35 feet recommended).

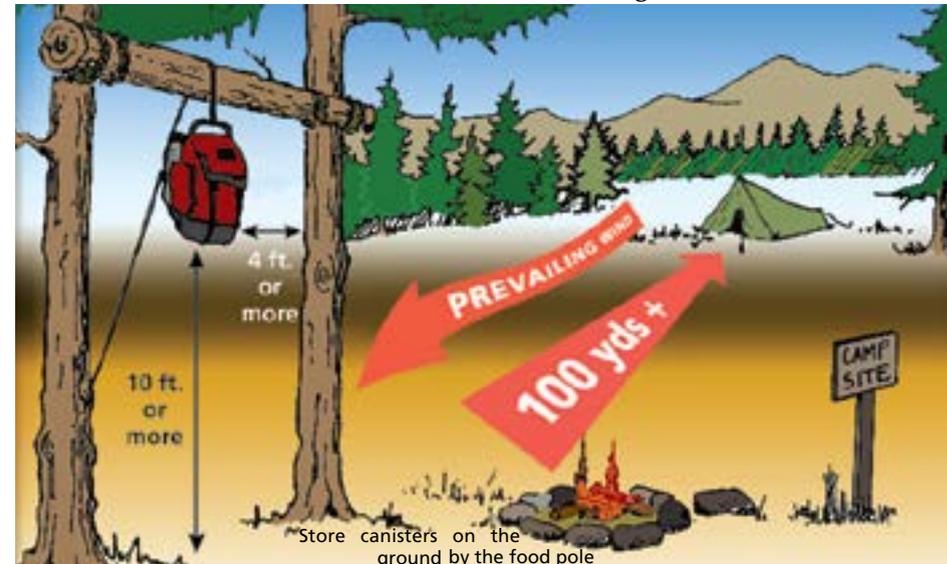
- Suspend items 10 feet above ground and 4 feet out from uprights

Certain portable bear resistant food containers may be used for food storage in lieu of hanging. A list of approved containers is available from park backcountry offices.

- Bear resistant food containers must be left on the ground underneath the food pole or in the cooking area
- If using a container, make sure all of your food and odorous items will fit before starting your trip

Store your food immediately upon entering camp and keep all food and trash secured anytime they're not in use

- In addition to food and garbage, store all odorous items including toothpaste, deodorant and lotion
- Keep a clean camp; pack out all trash
- Strain food particles from dishwasher and pack out with trash. Scatter dishwater at least 100 yards from tent site
- Never eat or store food in your tent
- Sleep in a tent, not under the stars
- Avoid placing your tent near dead standing trees



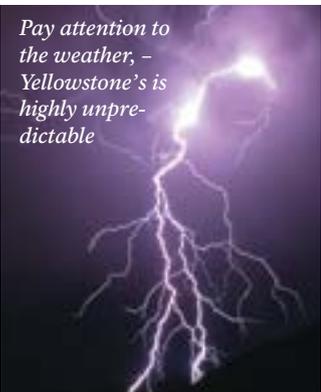
## Other Concerns For Your Safety

### Weather

Warm, sunny days can abruptly turn into fierce stormy days. Strong, gusty afternoon winds are common in Yellowstone. Sudden wind, rain, and lightning storms may follow. If you are boating or hiking in an exposed area when a lightning storm approaches, take shelter: move away from water, ridges, shores, and open places, and into a sheltered area if possible. During strong winds, beware of falling trees.

Backpackers in Yellowstone may be surprised to experience winter-like weather during midsummer. Rain, wind, sleet, and snow can be deadly if

proper precautions are not taken. Always bring rain gear and wool or synthetic clothing for warmth. Summer nighttime lows are often in the 30s or 40s (°F). Depending on elevation, temperatures may even drop into the 20s with a light frost.



Pay attention to the weather, – Yellowstone's is highly unpredictable

Summertime highs are usually in the 70s and 80s (°F). June can be cool and rainy. July and August tend to be drier and afternoon thunderstorms are common. Check current weather reports before beginning your trip.

The ice cover on Yellowstone Lake typically breaks up in late-May. The ice on Lewis and Shoshone Lakes usually melts by the first or second week of June. These lakes, even in summer, are typically 40 to 50 (°F).

### Hypothermia (Exposure)

Hypothermia is the cooling of a person's core temperature, followed by rapid, progressive mental and physical collapse. Hypothermia causes deaths every year, most of which could be prevented by taking proper precautions. Heat loss is greatly increased when a person is wet, especially in breezy conditions. Some clothing materials, including cotton and down, lose most or all of their insulating value when wet. Wool and synthetic fibers dry out quickly and are better insulators when wet.

### Avoid Hypothermia

- Stay dry – put on rain gear before you get wet
- Put warm clothes on before you start shivering
- If you get wet, stay out of the wind
- Use a hat and gloves to conserve vital body heat

### Warning Signs of Hypothermia

- Persistent shivering
- Immobile, fumbling hands
- Slow, slurred speech
- Stumbling or lurching
- Memory lapses, incoherence, drowsiness, exhaustion

Uncontrollable shivering is the first sign of hypothermia. Do not ignore it in yourself or others. Alter your plans, find shelter, and make camp while you still have energy.

### Treatment for Hypothermia

- Get out of the wind and the rain
- Remove all wet clothing
- Bundle the person in warm clothing or a sleeping bag

If only moderate heat loss has occurred, warm drinks, dry clothes, and a sleeping bag can help restore body heat. A warming fire (if it can be built quickly) and warm drinks can help. Never give alcohol – it dilates blood vessels adding to loss of body heat.

If a person's core temperature drops significantly he or she may lose consciousness. If this occurs, take off the patient's clothing and put them in a sleeping bag with another unclothed person or warm water bottles being careful not to place these against the patient's skin. Warm the victim gradually – do not force hot liquids or apply strong heat to the skin. Do not try to rewarm extreme cases in the field – cardiac failure may result. Seek professional medical assistance immediately.

### Water Treatment

Clear cold backcountry water may look, smell, and taste clean, however, this does not indicate that the water is safe for humans. It may contain Giardia, a microscopic protozoan carried in the feces of



human, domestic animals, and wildlife, or other contaminants. Giardiasis causes diarrhea, loss of appetite, and abdominal cramping. These symptoms appear from a few days to a few weeks after ingestion. We recommend treating your drinking water by one of the following methods:

- Heat the water to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute.
- Use a filter that has an absolute pore size of at least 1 micron or one that has been NSF rated for “cyst removal.”
- If you cannot heat the water to a rolling boil or use a recommended filter, then chemically treat the water by chlorination or iodination. Using chemicals may be less effective than boiling or filtering because of the variables associated with water temperature, pH, and cloudiness.

If you suspect you've been infected, consult a doctor.

# Thermal Features and Geysers

Hot springs and pools in the park's thermal basins contain algae, bacteria, and fungi found nowhere else in the world. These delicate organisms can be damaged, or even destroyed, by wading or throwing things into the pools. For your safety and to protect Yellowstone's biodiversity:

- Off-trail travel in thermal areas is prohibited
- Be extremely cautious around thermal areas – thin, fragile crusts covering boiling water are easily broken. People have died by falling into thermal features.
- During spring and early summer, be alert for bears in geyser basins
- Don't travel through thermal areas after dark – differentiating between solid ground and hot pools is difficult
- Park regulations require that all stock be kept out of thermal areas
- Refrain from altering or putting



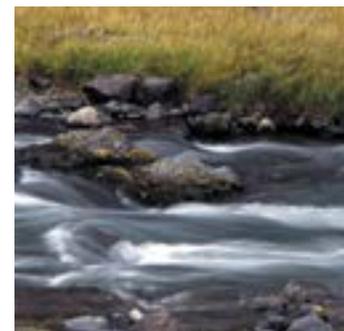
objects in thermal features

- Swimming, soaking, and bathing are only allowed in areas where hot springs flow into an existing body of water such as a river or lake. Bathing in water that is solely of thermal origin is prohibited
- No food or beverages may be consumed in thermal areas

Many animals winter around thermal areas and may die there. These winter-killed animals provide an important food source for bears and other scavengers. Be especially careful in the spring. Check for possible closures at a ranger station before exploring thermal areas. Where swimming is allowed, swim at your own risk. Most hot springs in Yellowstone are extremely acidic or alkaline, and are home to many types of warm water parasites, bacteria and fungi. Exposure to these microorganisms may be hazardous to your health.

# River Crossings

Few of Yellowstone's rivers and streams have bridges and many are not crossable until July or later. Taking stream crossings into consideration is a significant part of planing an itinerary. Using a topographic map, check your itinerary for stream



Names can be deceptive; often waterways named as creeks are more difficult to cross than those called rivers. Yellowstone's high-elevation streams are often cold, fast-flowing, and dangerous, especially when more than thigh-deep. Summer thunderstorms may cause water levels to rise quickly. Trying to ford deep, swift water has resulted in



injury, loss of gear, and death. Always check at a ranger station to find out current conditions for a crossing before beginning your trip.

## *Before crossing:*

- Seal important items, such as cameras, in plastic bags and put all personal gear inside your pack
- Wear water shoes or sandals that can be securely fastened. Forging barefooted is discouraged. Use a long, sturdy stick for balance.
- Search up and downstream to find the safest place to ford – you don't have to cross at the trail-river junction
- Unfasten the waist and chest straps of your pack – you must be able to get out of your pack quickly if you fall
- Don't look at the water when crossing; look ahead to the opposite bank
- If you are part of a group, hold hands or interlock arms while crossing.

# Ticks and Mosquitoes

Mosquitoes are found throughout Yellowstone from June through mid-August. They concentrate in wet areas



such as marshes, bogs, and lakes. Although mosquitoes are pests to most people, they are an important food source for birds, fish, and bats (a

bat may eat 2,000 or more mosquitoes per night!). Mosquito season in Yellowstone extends from May through August. In general, mosquito populations are most intense in June. Although it varies a great deal from one location to another depending on

snow melt, rainfall, elevation and nearby sources of water. Repellants, patience, forbearance, and wearing protective clothing are your best options for avoiding mosquito bites.

Ticks are small insects that feed on the blood of mammals. They are commonly found in grassy, bushy, low-elevation areas from mid-March to mid-July. Ticks

may carry Rocky Mountain spotted fever or Lyme disease. However, reports of the transmission of these diseases in the Yellowstone area are rare.

## To Avoid Tick Bites

- Wear insect repellent
- Tuck pant legs into boots and shirts into pants
- Check for ticks on your clothing, hair, and body periodically and at the end of the day

If you are bitten by a tick, remove the tick by grasping it close to the skin with tweezers and pulling gently. Seek medical attention if part of the tick remains in the skin.



# Leave No Trace

Minimum-impact hiking and camping techniques help keep Yellowstone's backcountry pristine. Developed by the National Outdoor Leadership School and based on scientific studies of recreational impacts, Leave No Trace outdoor skills and ethics help minimize damage to the backcountry. The following guiding principles serve to minimize impacts by backcountry visitors.



## Plan Ahead and Prepare

Avoid unnecessary impact by carefully preparing for your trip. Thoughtful preparation includes knowing the terrain, repackaging food supplies to minimize waste, having proper equipment, knowing your group's ability, and obtaining knowledge about the area you plan to visit.

## Camp and Travel on Durable Surfaces

When on the trail, walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet and muddy. Stay on the trail even when tempted to shortcut with back packs. Yellowstone's designated campsite system is intended to concentrate impact in a limited number of areas. Some of the more heavily used campsites have pit toilets to contain impacts associated with those activities.

## Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack it in, pack it out. Pack out all trash and leftover food. Never bury it or dump it in pit toilets. Where fires are permitted, you may burn paper or trash. Do not burn glass, plastic, styrofoam or aluminum foil. Before leaving, sift through the ashes and remove all unburned material.

- To wash yourself, your dishes or clothes, carry wash water 100 feet from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Strain out any food particles and scatter the water. Residue from scattered water will break down more quickly and be less of an attractant to animals and flies.
- Bury solid human waste in cat holes dug 6" - 8" deep and at least 100 feet from water, camp and trails. Carefully remove the sod and duff and cover and disguise the hole when finished. If fires are allowed, you may burn the toilet paper in the designated fire ring. If fires are not allowed, pack it out along with other hygiene products. Some of the more heavily used campsites have pit toilets to curtail impact associated with those activities. Always use these toilets when available.

### Minimize Impacts from Campfires

Wood campfires cause serious backcountry damage, even in areas where fires are kept in fire rings. Campfires cause an accumulation of ash, charcoal, and partially burned garbage. Living trees and dead standing trees, home to many small animals and birds, are stripped and hacked. Campers searching for wood create

#### When building fires, remember:

- Before leaving, fires must be completely extinguished
- Burn dead and down wood only
- Do not remove branches or bark from any standing tree, dead or alive
- Use portable stoves whenever possible

unwanted trails around campsites. You can prevent these impacts by using portable stoves or by using fires responsibly.



Where it is legal to build a fire, keep it small. In popular backcountry areas, natural processes do not supply deadwood fast enough to feed the high demand for campfires. Revegetation of fire ring areas is a slow process; it may take many decades. If you must have a fire, use only small sticks and branches – that you can break by hand. These burn more completely and provide a bed of clean hot coals for cooking. And, when you are ready to leave, you will not have partially-burned or smoldering logs to extinguish.

### Respect Wildlife

Observing wildlife can be a great thrill for



backcountry travelers. However, if people feed, approach, or disturb wild animals, they put themselves and the animals in danger.

- Do not approach wildlife – all wild animals are potentially dangerous. If your presence causes the animal to move away, you are too close.
- Never feed or harass wildlife – it's illegal and dangerous. Animals

who associate people with food can become dangerous and might eventually have to be removed.

- Avoid females with young and be respectful of their heightened protective instincts.

### Be Considerate of Other Visitors

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience, especially if it is apparent they are seeking solitude.
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- When encountering stock, step to the downhill side of the trail and well out of the way.
- Let nature's sound prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises especially around lakes where sound travels far.

### Leave What You Find

Federal law prohibits:

- Collecting antlers
- Removing any plant, animal, or mineral substance
- Disturbing or removing archeological or historical items

Antlers shed by large animals are a joy for backcountry hikers to discover, as

well as an important source of calcium and other minerals for small animals. Give hikers who come after you the chance to experience the pleasure of discovery by leaving antlers and bones where you find them. Remember, it is illegal to remove animal parts or other natural features such as rocks, plants, seeds, feathers, and bones from national parks, including Yellowstone.

Evidence of prehistoric occupation in Yellowstone dates back 10,000 years. Prehistoric and historic sites are found throughout the park. These cultural resources are protected by law – it is illegal

to disturb or collect anything from such sites. If you discover an artifact or historic site, please leave it as you find it and report it to a ranger.

Edible plants, mushrooms, and berries may be picked for your daily consumption. Since poisonous species are present, make certain you know which species are edible. *If you're not sure, don't eat it!*



# Noxious Weeds

Noxious weeds pose a serious threat to wildlife and the preservation of biodiversity. Left uncontrolled, they crowd out native plants important to wildlife and soil stabilization. Particularly serious noxious weeds include:

- Spotted and Russian knapweed
- Leafy spurge
- Musk thistle
- Dalmatian toadflax
- Hound's tongue
- St. John's Wort
- Ox-Eye Daisy

These plants, especially knapweed, are fast-growing and highly competitive. The plants were inadvertently carried into the backcountry by humans, horses, wildlife, wind, and water. They grow well in disturbed areas such as along trails and around campsites. Since there are many types of seed dispersers, these plants can appear almost anywhere.

*Dalmatian Toadflax*



In an effort to halt their spread, especially in the backcountry, the National Park Service is mapping the distribution of exotic plants in the park. In many areas, an active eradication program is in progress. Pictures of the "Ten Most Wanted" exotic plants are posted in many ranger stations and visitor centers. Most are easily recognizable. You can help control these species. If you find weeds in the backcountry please report their locations at a ranger station.

## *You Can Help Us Control the Spread of Weeds*

- Before entering the park, check all vehicles, clothing, and gear for weed parts and seeds, and remove them
- Transport only certified weed-free hay through the park – this is a regulation.
- Minimize soil disturbance that can provide a bed for weed seeds
- Don't injure, damage, or remove native vegetation
- Don't pick or transplant flowers or plant parts
- Report locations of noxious weeds to park officials
- Use only processed stock feed; hay is prohibited in the backcountry

## *Be on the lookout for these common weeds*



*Musk Thistle*



*Leafy Spurge*



*Spotted Knapweed*



*St. Johnswort*



*Ox-Eye Daisy*

*Musk Thistle, Spotted Knapweed, & St. Johnswort by John M. Randall / The Nature Conservancy  
Leafy Spurge by Barry A. Rice / The Nature Conservancy  
Ox-Eye Daisy courtesy of U. S. Forest Service*

# Yellowstone Forever

Yellowstone Forever—formerly the Yellowstone Association and Yellowstone Park Foundation—is the official nonprofit partner of Yellowstone National Park.

We partner with Yellowstone National Park to create opportunities for all people to experience, enhance, and preserve Yellowstone forever.

Our educational programming, products, and services help people enjoy, understand, and appreciate the wildlife, geology, and cultural history of the park. The opportunities Yellowstone Forever provides for volunteerism and community relations develop and engage new stewards for the park. Through thoughtful cultivation and

stewardship of people who love the park, Yellowstone Forever is building a broad network of philanthropic supporters dedicated to preserving the park.



Yellowstone Forever's mission of engagement and support through education and fundraising for the park will ensure Yellowstone

remains for generations to come.



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## *Recommended Reading:*

*Backcountry Trip Planner*  
by National Park Service

*Backcountry Bear Basics*  
by Dave Smith

*Bear Aware*  
by Bill Schneider

*Bear Attacks: Their Causes  
and Avoidance* by Stephen  
Herrero

*Soft Paths* by National  
Outdoor Leadership School

For information on backcountry campsites and trails visit a backcountry office or contact the park's Central Backcountry Office at (307) 344-2160 or [Yell\\_Backcountry\\_Office@nps.gov](mailto:Yell_Backcountry_Office@nps.gov). Trail guides, topographic maps, and books about Yellowstone are available at visitor center bookstores and from the Yellowstone Forever at [www.yellowstone.org](http://www.yellowstone.org).