

Yellowstone in the Winter



A Winter Guide to Yellowstone

Something special happens to Yellowstone in the winter. The snowy forests take on a mystical silence, clouds of steam billow up gently around deserted hot springs, and an air of solitude permeates the pristine, snow-covered wonderland. Yellowstone, with its geothermal features, lakes, waterfalls and wildlife, is stunningly beautiful and peaceful when blanketed with crisp, white snow. To truly experience the serenity of the season, spend some time exploring Yellowstone's magnificent backcountry.

Getting There

The Yellowstone Regional Airport, two miles outside of Cody, is about 50 miles from the park's East Entrance. It offers service from Salt Lake City and Denver. Jackson Hole Airport, on the edge of Grand Teton National Park, is about 50 miles south of the park and offers service from Salt Lake City, Dallas/Fort Worth, Chicago, Atlanta and Denver. The Gallatin Field Airport in Bozeman, Montana, is about 90 miles from the park's north entrance, which is the only entrance open to car traffic in the winter. Car rentals and shuttle service to nearby towns and hotels are available at all of the airports.

Traveling in the Park

Cars are not allowed in the park after November 3, except on a limited stretch of road to Mammoth Hot Springs through the North Entrance. Roads begin to open again late April, weather permitting. Until then, visitors can enter the park through other entrances via scheduled snowcoaches or on foot, snowshoes or skis. There are several authorized snowmobile and snowcoach guides near Yellowstone.

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Activities

Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing:

Both activities are great ways to experience Yellowstone's backcountry in the winter. There are miles of trails winding through the vast wilderness, and all are open for exploration on foot. There are several outfitters nearby who rent gear, and several companies specialize in guided trips if you'd rather not venture out alone.

Snowmobiling

An extension of the Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail, the trails of Yellowstone may be explored only with an authorized commercial guide or with a Non-Commercially Guided Snowmobile Access Program permit. Several hundred snowmobiles are allowed each day, but since it's such a popular spot, it's advisable to make advance reservations.

Lodging

Two lodges in Yellowstone are open during the winter season. The cozy Old Faithful Snow Lodge & Cabins is open from December 16, 2016 to February 27, 2017. The hotel offers equipment rentals, guides and tours. It fills up fast, so make reservations as early as possible. There are plenty of places to stay in the towns surrounding the park too, from ranches and cabins to vacation rentals and B&Bs.

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