



# NATURALIST DAY HIKES | OBSERVATION PEAK

Naturalist Day Hikes are an excellent way to spend an active day exploring Yellowstone away from the crowds! Yellowstone National Park boasts hundreds of miles of well-maintained trails that can take you deep into the landscape and provide an intimate experience by connecting you to this place in a unique way. These hikes are led by Yellowstone Forever Field Educators who provide insight and interpretation to facilitate your hike and help you get the most out of your Yellowstone experience!

Along the trail you may encounter wildlife, wildflowers, tracks, and unique geology. Time will be spent with observations. This is an excellent way to explore the vastness of Yellowstone all while learning!

Yellowstone Forever Field Educators will provide transportation, equipment, and group management, while taking you to incredible hiking areas and the most scenic viewpoints all while enhancing your experience with the stories and science behind it all.

*Yellowstone Forever Field Educators are at a minimum Wilderness First Aid and CPR certified. Field Educators hike with a first-aid kit, radio (communication device), and bear spray on all hikes.*

---

## WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Transportation via a 14-passenger minibus and/or transit van
  - Round trip from Yellowstone Forever Headquarters in Gardiner, MT
  - Or meet group at the Cascade Lake (Dunraven side) trailhead
- Educational programming with a Yellowstone Forever Field Educator
  - 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- High powered binoculars

*Gratuities for the Yellowstone Forever Field Educators are not included in the program costs but are recommended and greatly appreciated.*



PHOTO JACOB FRANK

# PROGRAM ITINERARY

*The itinerary is designed to take advantage of the best opportunities in the park but may be adjusted to adapt to weather conditions, wildlife activity, holidays, and road construction.*



PHOTO A. FALGOUST



PHOTO JACOB FRANK

## DAY 1

### PROGRAM ITINERARY

Observation Peak is a remote high point in the middle of Yellowstone National Park. The trail meanders through meadows before it eventually climbs to a summit providing views of both the northern and southern areas of the Park.

**7:00 a.m. Depart for Cascade Lake Trailhead**  
Est. Drive Time: 75 min.

**Lunch in the field**  
*Pack a lunch - location TBD*

**4:30 p.m. Return to Gardiner**  
**(Yellowstone Forever Headquarters)**

### HIKE STATISTICS

<i>Distance:</i>	<b>9.5 miles</b>
<i>Elevation Gain/Loss:</i>	<b>1750 feet</b>
<i>Estimated Time:</i>	<b>6.5 hours</b>



TRAIL PROFILE

# ACTIVITY LEVEL

## HOW FIT DO YOU NEED TO BE?

- This program is rated **LEVEL 5** on Yellowstone Forever's Activity Level Scale.
- Participants should be prepared for brisk aerobic, destination-oriented hiking up to 12 miles a day. You should be physically conditioned to do these hikes comfortably. Elevation changes up to 2,000 feet on dirt trails or off-trail. Loose rock, uneven footing, steep hillside traverses, and stream crossings are possible. Good coordination is required. Participants residing at lower elevations may want to arrive a day early to adjust to the altitude.
- To learn more about how specific medical conditions can be affected by Yellowstone's environment and our activities, please visit our site page on health information.
- All field activities will be conducted as a group. If members of the group cannot participate in the day's activities, they need to let the educator know in advance.

*To participate in this program, each participant must fill out and sign a health questionnaire and assumption of risk waiver. These forms must be completed and returned at least 30 days prior to the program start date.*



PHOTO DIANE RENKIN

## WHOM TO CONTACT

For any questions, concerns, or additional information, please contact the following:

- Program questions and bookings, contact Yellowstone Forever at [institute@yellowstone.org](mailto:institute@yellowstone.org) or **406-848-2400 extension 3**
- Road updates, park conditions, and general park information, contact Yellowstone National Park Service at <https://www.nps.gov/yell/contacts.htm>

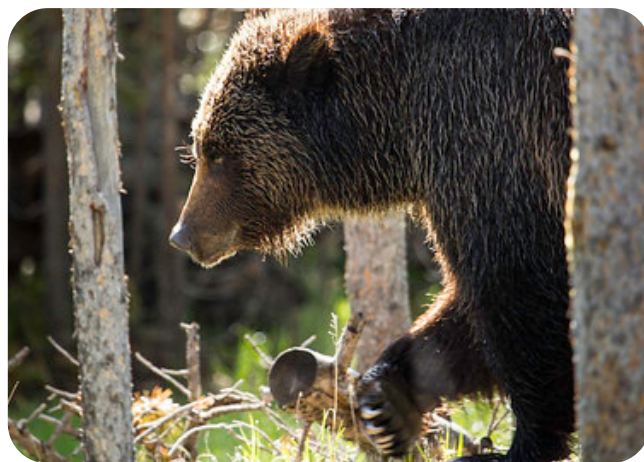


PHOTO NEAL HERBERT



# GENERAL EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING LIST

Much of the program time will be spent outdoors, and participants should be prepared for a variety of mountain weather conditions and temperatures. Appropriate clothing, equipment, and footwear are important. Summer temperatures can range from below freezing in the mornings to 85° Fahrenheit in the afternoons. The layered use of garments for protection against the wind, sun, and temperature extremes should guide clothing choices.

*\*The Field Educator will be carrying a first aid kit, bear spray, and emergency communication device.*



PHOTO ADDY FALGOUTS



PHOTO ERIC JOHNSTON

## EQUIPMENT

- **Daypack**, with enough capacity to carry extra clothes, water, lunch, camera, binoculars, etc.
- **Water bottle**, participants will receive a Nalgene water bottle as a gift during the program orientation. Guests should always keep a minimum of one quart of water on hand to facilitate proper hydration.
- **Sunglasses**
- **Sunscreen/Lip protector**, sun at high altitude can burn unprotected skin quickly
- **Optics**, camera and binoculars

## CLOTHING

- **Insulating underwear**, capilene, polypropylene, wool, or similar wicking fabric
- **Midweight insulating layer**, a light synthetic fleece or wool shirt/pullover
- **Heavyweight insulating layer**, wool, down, or heavyweight fleece jacket
- **Waterproof and windproof outer layer**, lightweight and breathable, jackets and pants
- **Short-sleeve shirt**, cotton is okay in summer, but synthetic, wicking shirts are ideal
- **Pants**, synthetic hiking pants – jeans are not recommended
- **Hat**, both a brimmed sun hat and an insulating hat for cool weather
- **Gloves**, lightweight glove liners and a pair of wool/fleece gloves or mittens
- **Socks**, specifically designed for hiking, that wick moisture
- **Hiking boots that provide stability and traction**, make sure they are broken in, comfortable, and do not cause hot spots or blisters
- **Off-duty shoes**, sandals, athletic shoes, or other leisure footwear

# CODE OF ETHICS

Yellowstone Forever is committed to demonstrating a high standard of appropriate and ethical behavior in Yellowstone. As a participant on a Yellowstone Forever program, participants will adhere to the following Code of Ethics. In addition to the ethics highlighted below, the Yellowstone Forever abides by all National Park Service rules and regulations, in addition to practicing Leave No Trace guidelines for traveling responsibly in the wilderness.

## OBSERVING WILDLIFE

Groups will do their 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 the group presence from affecting their behavior. Participants should not expect to get close-up photographs of wildlife. Yellowstone Forever adheres to National Park Service regulations by keeping a minimum distance of 25 yards from bison, elk, bighorn sheep, deer, moose, coyotes, and nesting birds and 100 yards from bears and wolves. Wildlife will not be enticed 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 Yellowstone. Yellowstone Forever educators 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

Yellowstone Forever 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, Yellowstone Forever field educators will move vehicles entirely off the road. If there is no safe pullout available, educators will drive to the next safe place and walk back to observe the wildlife. Yellowstone Forever will not stop in the middle of the road and should a traffic jam develop because of the group's activities, the activity will cease.



PHOTO JACOB FRANK

## PROPERLY DISPOSE OF WASTE

Participants will pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter. Field Educators will discuss techniques for properly disposing of human waste in the field.

## TRAVELING LIGHTLY

When hiking or walking Yellowstone, groups will use existing trails and boardwalks. Hikers will 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 the program and should expect to walk through mud, snow, or puddles in the trail.

# MAP

Plan on extra driving time in the park, the speed limit is 45 mph or lower and road conditions can vary. There may also be construction delays.

Visit [www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/hours.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/hours.htm), call the recorded NPS Road Report at **307-344-2117**, or contact a visitor center for up-to-date travel information.

