

Yellowstone in The Fall

With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



Sept. 25 – Oct. 2, 2021

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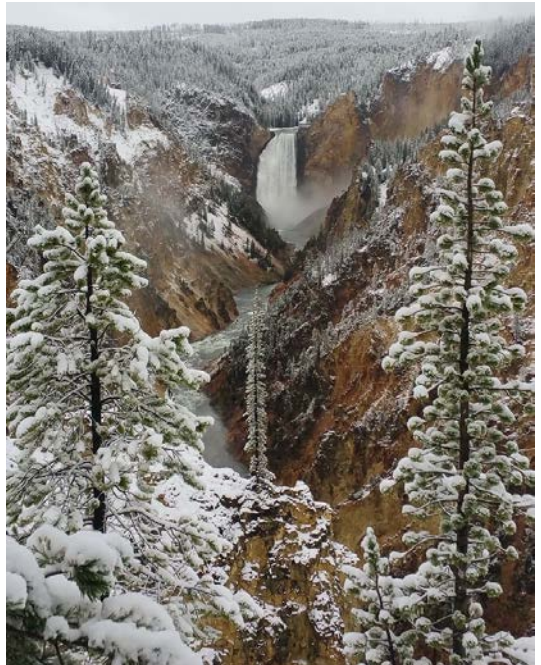
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Discover the crisp air, scarce crowds, and incredible wildlife of Yellowstone National Park in the fall. Magnificent bull Elk fill the air with frosty breath and clarion mating calls while cottonwoods shimmer in hues of gold. An early snowfall may decorate the landscape, bringing a sense of urgency to animals preparing for winter. Few places in the world match Yellowstone for viewing the dynamics of large mammals and the drama played out between predator and prey. What's new for this year's trip? We're sending along a photo expert in addition to our Naturalist Journeys guide to help those who are interested with their photography.

We begin on the West side of the park, at wildlife refuges and Harriman State Park, vital wetland areas for the Yellowstone Ecosystem replete with waterfowl and significant species such as Trumpeter Swan and Sandhill Crane. After two nights at a beautiful lodge on the Henry's Fork River, we pass through West Yellowstone and follow the Madison River to witness steamy, iconic geyser basins and plentiful wildlife. With lodgings at Gardiner on the park's North Entrance we visit Swan Flats and Mammoth Hot Springs and venture to Hayden Valley, where we see wildlife and the dramatic Upper and Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River. From the Northeast Entrance, with lodging at Cooke City, spot mammals in their prime: Bison, Elk, Pronghorn, Bighorn, Mountain Goat, Otter, Beaver, and more. Raptors on the wing, possible wolf sightings, fall color, and perhaps the first snowfall—this trip is a naturalist's or photographer's dream!

Absorb the rich legacy that is Yellowstone, the world's first and still most famous national park, and a World Heritage Site—there is simply no other place like it on the planet. This is a relaxed-pace tour with time to savor this treasured landscape and its signature species, and with time to enjoy photography if you wish, watch animal behavior, and meet local experts working with wolves and other species.

Early on they called it Wonderland ... and we think you will too.

Tour Highlights

- See Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and Harriman State Park—en route to Yellowstone
- Visit iconic Yellowstone destinations, including Old Faithful and Mammoth Hot Springs, without the summer crowds
- Watch for Bald Eagle, Osprey, and Elk along the rushing Madison River
- Search for Bison, two species of deer, Elk, Moose, Pronghorn, Bighorn, and Mountain Goat
- Witness the dramatic Upper and Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River
- Spot Trumpeter Swan, Pine Grosbeak, Harlequin Duck, American Dipper, numerous raptors including Golden Eagle, and Gray-crowned and Black Rosy Finches
- Watch for Mountain Bluebird, Dusky Grouse, and Red-naped Sapsucker under colorful Quaking Aspens
- Savor a relaxed-pace tour immersed in the wild wonder of Yellowstone
- Gain skills in wildlife watching and this year, photography with an expert!

Tour Summary

7-Night / 8-Day Yellowstone Birding & Wildlife Tour
w/ Hugh Simmons

\$2990 from Bozeman

Airport is Bozeman Yellowstone International (BZN)



Itinerary

Sat., Sept. 25 Arrival in Bozeman, Montana | On to Yellowstone National Park | Angler's Lodge

Bozeman is a great small city with a western flair and some of you may want to arrive early to enjoy it. We plan to leave from the airport at 2:00 PM today to head south to West Yellowstone, following the Gallatin River, film site for the Robert Redford directed film "A River Runs Through It."

From here we cross the Continental Divide to the Snake River drainages, looking out for Moose and raptors such as Ferruginous Hawk, and then turn south to Island Park and our lovely lodgings on the river.

Accommodations at lovely Angler's Lodge on the Henry's Fork of the Snake River, west of Yellowstone (B,L,D)

Sun., Sept. 26 Exploring the Yellowstone Ecosystem's Western Side

We love exploring the quieter side of the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. At Angler's Lodge we are close to Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Hegben, and Earthquake Lakes, and to Harriman State Park, a conservation area left as part of the legacy of the Harriman family of railroad fame. We plan our day according to weather and road access, with plans to spend time looking for Moose, Northern Flicker, Williamson's Sapsucker, and both Hairy and American Three-toed Woodpeckers. Big valley meadows here are frequented by Elk, the river bottoms by Moose; in view of the Centennial Mountains we hope to find Prairie Falcon, Golden Eagle, and a host of waterfowl species. In groves of conifers we look for seed-eating specialties like Pine Grosbeak, Cassin's Finch, and Pine Siskin.

Common Loon and Red-necked Grebe use the lakes here, and the area has always been a stronghold for the Yellowstone population of Trumpeter Swan. Harriman State Park has extensive trails and several wildlife viewing areas. Osprey and Bald Eagle are frequent sightings here, too.

We return to our lodgings on the river for a nice dinner and some time to enjoy the views.

Accommodations at Angler's Lodge, on the Henry's Fork of the Snake River (B,L,D)

Mon., Sept. 27 Madison River | Old Faithful

Today is a full but scenic day, a sample of Yellowstone's highlights. From Yellowstone's western side, we retrace our steps back up the Madison River. At this time of year Elk often congregate in the lushness of the river corridor. On sunny days they seem to savor the warmth ... perhaps they know winter is coming. Cow and calf herds lounge, feed, and interact. Big bulls may bugle, round up the females, or do some sparring. We then cross over the divide (a couple of times as like us, it winds through the mountains) stopping at Yellowstone Lake, and at viewpoints of the Hayden Valley, the entire route often very productive for wildlife. We check a few spots that in past years have had Great Gray Owl. Often we find raptors; we may find Harlequin Duck, Bison herds, Grizzly or Black Bears, or even Yellowstone's elusive wolves. Traveling up and over Dunraven Pass and through the Lamar Valley, we



keep alert for wildlife along the way. Tall peaks of the Absaroka Mountain range frame our views at the park's Northeast Entrance.

Settle into our lodgings at Cooke City for the next three nights. Tonight we enjoy dinner at the local tavern.
Accommodations at the Alpine Motel, Cooke City (B,L,D)

Tues., Sept. 28 Lamar Valley | Yellowstone's Northeast Entrance

Today we focus on the scenic Lamar Valley where much of the drama of wolf restoration first played out. Learn more about this highly successful program and with luck, find the wolves! We may find American Badger, Coyote, Red Fox, or other smaller predators as well. At the studio of a famous wildlife photographer and friend, we hope that Pine Grosbeak, Steller's Jay, and Clark's Nutcracker, even Gray Jay may be around.

After our full day yesterday we plan an easy day with some free time in Cooke City in the afternoon (or local birding) and dinner at a cozy log cabin in Silver Gate.

Accommodations at the Alpine Motel, Cooke City (B,L,D)

Wed., Sept. 29 Montana's Fabulous Beartooth Highway

Today we head out to the breathtaking Beartooth Plateau, home to Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Bluebird, Pine Grosbeak, Rosy and Cassin's Finches, and some of the finest scenery on the planet. The Beartooth Highway is rightfully famous as the most beautiful roadway in America. There are wonderful views and lots of places to stop and take photos of the spectacular vistas too. We bring a picnic lunch today and take time to look for Mountain Goat, which linger above tree line, with 360-degree views of mountains and sky.

Tonight's dinner is at a delightful bistro.

Accommodations at the Alpine Motel, Cooke City (B,L,D)

Thurs., Sept. 30

Dunraven Pass | Hayden Valley | Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

Today we leave flexible to follow the wildlife action, for depending on weather in the park, we may want to be at higher or lower elevations. Typically, unless we have news of a recent kill or wolf pack activity that steers us another direction, we spend the morning on Dunraven Pass where Golden Eagle may be on the wing migrating and then we continue on to Hayden Valley. Or there may be action at Slough Creek, bears or wolves, or simply a great walk to look for Williamson's and Red-naped Sapsuckers. Raptors on the wing could include Cooper's, Sharp-shinned, Ferruginous, and Rough-legged Hawks, as well as American Kestrel, Merlin, and Peregrine.

At Canyon we take time to also stop at viewpoints from the famed Upper and Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River. In Hayden Valley we scan open meadows along the river and the edge of forests surrounding them for signs of wildlife. We may watch Bison cross the river or Sandhill Crane cross the sky.



We continue on to Gardiner, at the park's historic North Entrance, and here our rooms overlook the Yellowstone River and the beauty of the mountains. Dinner is at a favorite local restaurant.

Accommodations at Absaroka Lodge, Gardiner (B,L,D)

Fri., Oct. 1 Mammoth Hot Springs | Little America | Tower Falls

We make an early drive (optional) to catch the beautiful light at Swan Lake Flats and experience wildlife there. Returning for brunch, we may pass the herd of Bighorn Sheep so often on the cliffs just past Mammoth.

At lower elevations in the sagebrush we could find Lazuli Bunting, Sage Thrasher, Brewer's Sparrow, Green-tailed Towhee, and possibly some lingering western warblers such as Orange-crowned or MacGillivray's. In Aspen groves we look for woodpeckers, grouse, Mountain Chickadee, and Mountain Bluebird. We check out the Petrified Tree area that Black Bear are known to frequent, look for American Dipper that should be active in the stream, and spend time with Elk and Bighorn Sheep.

Enjoy some free time in the western town of Gardiner, or linger a bit at Mammoth Hot Springs to enjoy a walk on boardwalk trails between thermal features. We review highlights of the trip at a festive farewell dinner tonight.

Accommodations at Absaroka Lodge, Gardiner (B,L,D)

Sat., Oct. 2 Return to Bozeman | Departures

It is time for our flock to disperse. It is about an hour-and-a-half drive from our hotel in Gardiner to Bozeman. Please book flights out after 11:00 AM so we can have breakfast at the hotel, and then drive to the airport. Our route is scenic, passing through Paradise Valley back to Bozeman (B)

Guide Hugh Simmons



Hugh Simmons is a freelance photographer, avid birder and conservationist. Combining forty years of photography experience with a life-long love of nature he strives for images that give the viewer a sense of place. Hugh is a former National Audubon board member and is currently an Audubon chapter president and volunteer field trip leader for both his Audubon Chapter and the Cape May Bird Observatory. His photographic subjects range widely including medical settings, events, people, birds and landscapes.



Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Their website will show a grid of tour cost and your age category for you to make selections. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Travel Information

The airport for this journey is Montana's Bozeman International Airport (BZN). Please plan to arrive in Bozeman on or before September 25, no later than 1:00 PM. We travel to Island Park, past West Yellowstone this day, so we do suggest coming in a night early, as there is no public transport into the park, so a delay could mean a costly transfer to catch up to the group. We plan to return to the airport by 11:00 AM on October 2, for flights out 12:30 PM onward. If you find a flight at noon, we can back this up a bit, but please, no flights out before noon. We can also drop you off at a hotel in town if you plan to stay on after the tour.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the journey is \$2990 DBL / \$3545 SGL per person, based on double occupancy.

This cost includes: accommodations for 7 nights, all meals as specified in the itinerary (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner), park entrance and other activity fees for activities for 8 days as described in the itinerary, professional guide services, pre-departure materials, and miscellaneous program expenses.

Tour cost does not include: round-trip airfare to and from Bozeman, Montana (BZN). The tour cost does not include items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone, drinks from the bar; or gratuities for luggage handling or personal services.

Photo Credits

Great Gray Owl, Gary Stone (GAST); Grazing Bison, Peg Abbott (PA); Yellowstone Falls in the Snow, Greg Smith (GS); Coyote, GS; Bull Elk, Naturalist Journeys Stock (NJS); American Kestrel, GS; Moose, Sandy Sorkin (SS); Golden eagle, GS; Bald Eagle, GS; Group in Yellowstone, Naturalist Journeys Stock (NJS); Trumpeter Swans, GS; Mountain Bluebird, Hugh Simmons (HS); Pat Lueders, NJS; Sunrise Yellowstone, HS

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