Yellowstone National Park

The Ultimate First-Time Visitor Itinerary

BY RANJIT | RANJIT'S NATURE QUEST | ranjitsnq.com



Three easy-flow nature days, using the supplied Yellowstone route maps and their planning estimates.

The three-day journey

Day	Journey	Night
1	Red Lodge → Beartooth Highway → Lamar Valley → Mammoth	Mammoth Hot Springs / Gardiner
2	Mammoth → Norris → Canyon → Hayden → Lake → Grant	Grant Village
3	Grant → West Thumb → Old Faithful → Grand Prismatic → South Entrance → Grand Teton	Jackson Lake Lodge / Colter Bay / Jackson

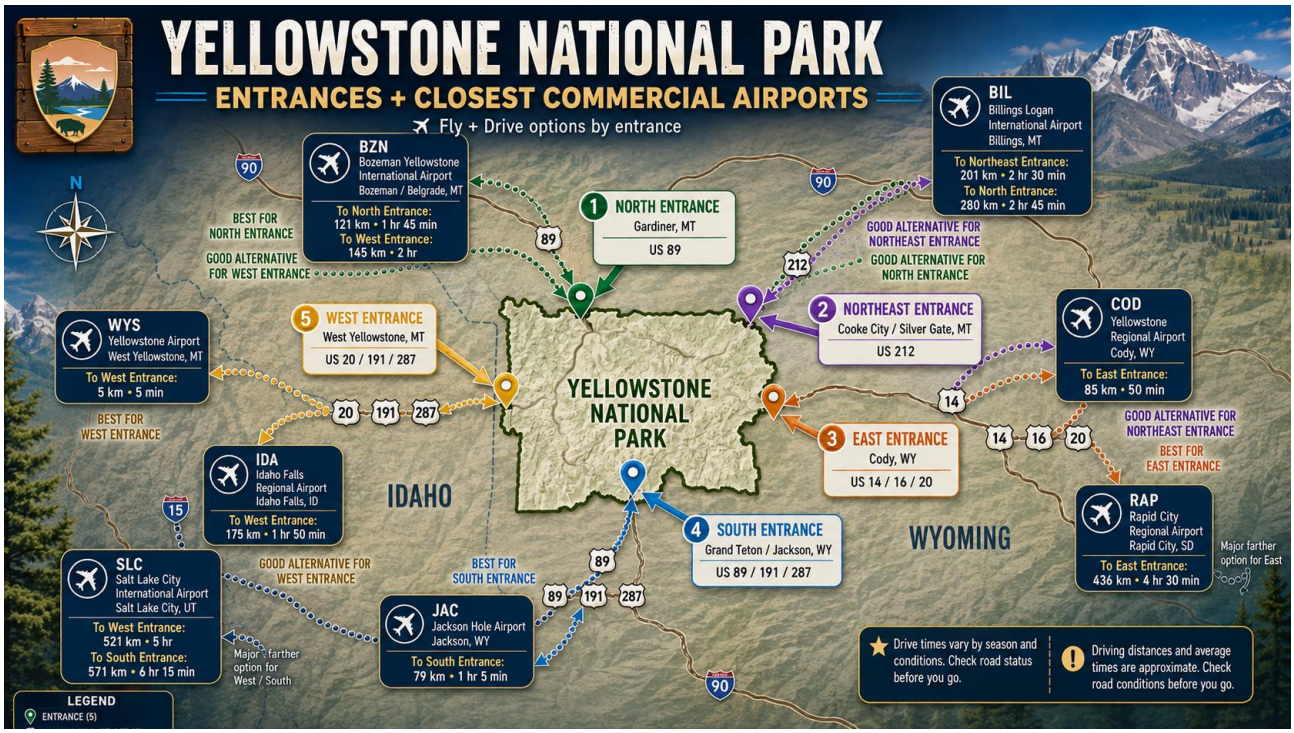
Start here: how to use this itinerary

Times are approximate planning anchors from the supplied graphics—not guaranteed travel times. Road availability, Old Faithful eruption predictions, wildlife jams and weather can change the sequence.

Eat a substantial breakfast; carry sandwiches, snacks and water; leave dinner until after exploring. Stay on marked geothermal boardwalks and check official road and trail status.

Entrance and airport planning maps





Day 1 / Red Lodge → Beartooth Highway → Lamar Valley → Mammoth

Suggested night: Mammoth Hot Springs / Gardiner



Original supplied day-route graphic. Times and driving distances are approximate.

Timing and stop order

Time	Stop / Activity
6:00–8:30 AM	Red Lodge → Beartooth Highway
8:30–8:50 AM	Cooke City / Silver Gate → Northeast Entrance
8:50–10:45 AM	Lamar Valley
10:45–11:15 AM	Tower-Roosevelt
12:15–1:00 PM	Wraith Falls Trail
1:30–3:30 PM	Mammoth Hot Springs

Driving estimate: ~115 miles; ~3 h 45 m–4 h driving

Important note for this day

A mountain-road and wildlife day. Beartooth is seasonal; allow pauses at safe viewpoints. Lamar sightings and traffic are unpredictable. Picnic near Tower-Roosevelt; Wraith Falls is an easy optional walk.

Remember: take it easy, leave room for the unexpected, and stay at safe distances from wildlife.

Day 2 / Mammoth → Norris → Canyon → Hayden → Lake → Grant

Suggested night: Grant Village



Original supplied day-route graphic. Times and driving distances are approximate.

Timing and stop order

Time	Stop / Activity
6:30–7:15 AM	Mammoth → Norris
7:15–9:00 AM	Norris Geyser Basin
9:00–9:30 AM	Norris → Canyon
9:30 AM–12:00 PM	Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone
12:40–1:05 PM	Canyon → Hayden Valley
1:05–2:00 PM	Hayden Valley
2:10–2:50 PM	Mud Volcano
3:15–4:00 PM	Pelican Creek Nature Trail
4:15–4:45 PM	Yellowstone Lake
4:45–5:30 PM	Lake → Grant Village

Driving estimate: ~75–80 miles; ~2 h 45 m driving

Important note for this day

Enjoy morning thermal steam at Norris, Artist Point and selected Canyon overlooks, wildlife from safe Hayden Valley pullouts, then Mud Volcano, Pelican Creek and a peaceful lake stop.

Remember: take it easy, leave room for the unexpected, and stay at safe distances from wildlife.

Day 3 / Grant → West Thumb → Old Faithful → Grand Prismatic → South Entrance → Grand Teton

Suggested night: Jackson Lake Lodge / Colter Bay / Jackson



Original supplied day-route graphic. Times and driving distances are approximate.

Timing and stop order

Time	Stop / Activity
6:30–6:40 AM	Grant → West Thumb
6:40–7:45 AM	West Thumb Geyser Basin
7:45–8:20 AM	West Thumb → Old Faithful
8:20–10:45 AM	Old Faithful / Upper Geyser Basin
11:00–11:45 AM	Grand Prismatic Spring
12:00–1:15 PM	Grand Prismatic Overlook
1:45–2:30 PM	Midway / Old Faithful area → Grant
2:30–3:20 PM	Grant → South Entrance
3:20–4:10 PM	South Entrance → Grand Teton

Driving estimate: ~95–100 miles; ~3 h driving

Important note for this day

Old Faithful eruption times are variable; use current predictions. Visit both Grand Prismatic boardwalk and overlook when open; the overlook involves walking. Leave room for the southbound return from the Midway area.

Remember: take it easy, leave room for the unexpected, and stay at safe distances from wildlife.

Night stay options for all three nights



My scenic entrance and exit



Final planning checklist

- Check official Yellowstone and Beartooth road openings
- Book stays and verify seasonal lodge operation

- Confirm flights, rental pick-up and drop-off terms
- Download offline maps; pack layers, food and water
- Allow time for wildlife traffic and geyser eruption predictions

Take it easy. Travel easy. Disconnect from the world—and reconnect with nature.