

**IBEX-US Yellowstone: The Wild Side** (<http://www.nps.gov/yell/index.htm>)

**Dates:** June 15 to 19:

**Private:** Number of participants: 6

**Cost per person, double occupancy:** \$Call Slavik Dushenkov @917-748-6071

**Leader:** Dr. Nathan Varley

*Yellowstone is the World's First National Park and a favorite to millions of visitors each year. A five-day trip combines the very best of Yellowstone experiences including 2 days of wildlife watching with including grizzly bears and wolves, 1 day for geysers and mud pots by Old Faithful, and 1 day for the Grand Canyon and Lake Yellowstone. The final night features a private banquet dinner at Chico Hot Springs.*



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**SUMMARY – OVERVIEW PAGE**



Yellowstone is the world's first national park and a favorite to millions of visitors each year. Located in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, it is home to a large variety of wildlife including grizzly bears, wolves, bison, and elk. Preserved within Yellowstone National Park are Old Faithful and a collection of the world's most extraordinary geysers and hot springs, and the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. It hosts a variety of ecosystems, the most dominant one being the subalpine.

The Park spans an area of 3,468 square miles (8,980 km<sup>2</sup>), comprising lakes, canyons, rivers and mountain ranges. Yellowstone Lake is one of the largest high-altitude lakes in North America and is centered over the Yellowstone Caldera, the

largest supervolcano on the continent. Half of the world's geothermal features are in Yellowstone, fueled by Caldera's ongoing activity. The park is the centerpiece of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the largest remaining, nearly intact ecosystem in the Earth's northern temperate zone. Hundreds of species of mammals, birds, fish and reptiles have been documented, including several that are either endangered or threatened. The vast forests and grasslands also include unique species of plants. Grizzly Bears, wolves, and free-ranging herds of bison and elk live in the park. A five-day trip combines the very best of Yellowstone experiences including 2 days of wildlife watching with including grizzly bears and wolves, 1 day for geysers and mud pots by Old Faithful, and 1 day for the Grand Canyon and Lake Yellowstone. The final night features a private banquet dinner at Chico Hot Springs



### **Wildlife:**



We will search the park's northern range for bison, bears, elk, bighorn sheep, wolves, badgers, bald eagles, and more. Search areas include the Blacktail Plateau, the Slough Creek valley, and the famous wildlife haven, Lamar Valley, for resident wildlife. This will be done on two days of the tour.

### **Views:**

We will make stops in the picturesque Paradise Valley, just north of the park where park wildlife issues take on a new and controversial appearance. At the north entrance

to Yellowstone, we will stop at the famous Roosevelt Arch for a formal arrival to the park. Views of the Yellowstone River and its rolling green hills and snow-clad mountains astound from the rooms. Travel over the Continental Divide where we will see lingering snowbanks from the long mountain winters. We will descend to Lake Yellowstone, one of the largest high elevation lakes on the continent with its vast vistas. See the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone for spectacular views and 300 foot waterfalls.

### **Geysers:**

Visit the geyser basins of the Firehole River. The area is filled with dramatic hot springs like Grand Prismatic Spring and mud pots like few other places on the planet. We will see Old Faithful and a hot spring from which the famous thermophile bacteria *Thermus aquaticus* was isolated. Dinner and lodging will be in the Old Faithful area.

### **Dining:**

The meals are also crafted to contribute to your overall Yellowstone experience. Breakfasts each morning will be served in the field to maximize time searching and observing wildlife. Lunches will vary, ranging from picnic-style to lunching at the home of our good friends, who are wildlife photographers. Gourmet dinners served night, and on the last night, enjoy the rustic comfort of Montana's countryside with dinner in Chico's wine cellar.

### **Tour Leader:**

Dr. Nathan Varley: A native of the Yellowstone area, Nathan has dedicated his career to studying and teaching about the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. As a naturalist guide, his experience in outdoor education includes

wildlife behavior, conservation planning, and wilderness travel. He makes his home in Gardiner, Montana, with his wife Linda with whom he co-owns The Wild Side, LLC, a tour company specializing in Yellowstone's diverse wildlife community. [www.wolftracker.com/Varley](http://www.wolftracker.com/Varley)

## ITINERARY:



**Day 1:** Rendezvous with Nathan & Linda of the THE WILD SIDE at the Bozeman, Montana, USA, airport (BZN) between NOON and 1 PM. We can make arrangements to pick up participants at local hotels if flights come in the day before. (This can be adjusted based on if guests all have the same flight). After a lunch in the Bozeman area we will load our touring vehicle and leave the city behind en route for the wilds of Yellowstone. We will make stops in the picturesque Paradise Valley, just north of the park where park wildlife issues take on a new and controversial appearance. At the north entrance to Yellowstone, we will stop at the famous Roosevelt Arch for a formal arrival to the park. Check in follows at the Absaroka Lodge in Gardiner, Montana, at the north entrance. From the rooms, the views of the Yellowstone River and its rolling green hills and snow-clad mountains astound. An orientation to the area and the days ahead will accompany a special catered dinner by Zac's Montana Kitchen at the Track Education Center in Gardiner.

**Day 2:** Start early for better chances of viewing wildlife. We will search the park's northern range for bison, bears, elk, bighorn sheep, wolves, badgers, bald eagles, and more. Search areas include the Blacktail Plateau, the Slough Creek valley, and the famous wildlife haven, Lamar Valley, for resident wildlife. Picnic breakfasts each morning will be served in the field to maximize time searching and observing. Lunch will be served at the home and gallery of our good friends, Dan and Cindy Hartman, who are exceptional naturalists and wildlife

photographers that share their many insights to wildlife in the area. A gourmet dinner prepared by Chef Zac Kellerman accompanied by a presentation by the hosts (or special guest) follows in Gardiner.



**Day 3:** Another early start for a trip across the Northern Range to Lamar Valley, one of the best areas in the park for wolves, bears, and vast herds of bison and elk, will start day 3. The sheer abundance gives this area its well-earned nickname, “The Serengeti of North America.” After a brief return to Gardiner for lunch, the trip continues to the geyser basins of the Firehole River. The area is filled with dramatic hot springs like Grand Prismatic Spring and mud pots like few other places on the planet. Viewing Old Faithful and an *Thermus aquaticus* is a species Dinner and lodging will be in the Old Faithful area. **OPTIONAL SWITCH TO WEST YELLOWSTONE** for less expensive lodging.

**Day 4:** From Old Faithful the group will travel over the Continental Divide where we will see lingering snowbanks from the long mountain winters. We will descend to Lake Yellowstone, one of the largest high elevation lakes on the continent with its vast vistas. Lunch will be served in the field in route to the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone for spectacular views of the rugged and colorful canyon with its enormous 300' waterfalls. The day’s route ends at Chico Hot Springs where the rustic comfort of Montana’s countryside wins the heart of any traveler. Dinner will be served exclusively for our group in Chico’s wine cellar.

**Day 5:** After breakfast at Chico, our priority will be to transport guests back to the Bozeman airport for flights departing at 11 AM or later.

## What To Know Before You Go

**Participants:** Appropriate for families with children 14 or older, with a minimum fitness level of being able to walk up to 1 mile over uneven terrain. Hiking is actually optional but the fitness requirement we have is a good standard measure of fitness and mobility for guests of the program.

Yellowstone is a high elevation environment and no place for people with poor health.

### Included In Price:

- (1) Lodging for four nights in a private room.
- (2) 12 meals from day 1 lunch through day 5 breakfast.
- (3) Touring transportation in a comfortable and spacious minibus.
- (4) Shuttle service to and from Bozeman, MT, airport on first and last day.
- (5) Daily programming – guiding and interpretation in the park, all park entrance fees, and spotting scope service included.

### Weather:

June weather usually entails very cold mornings with temperatures hovering around freezing, with a damp, chilly breeze. Several hours later, by late morning the temperatures have increased to 50-70 F, and usually a hot, sunny day. By late afternoon, early evening, we typically see scattered showers and thundershowers. Rain gear is a must. Occasionally, but rarely we will have a bit of snow, hail, or lightening in June. The days are long, from 5 AM to 10 PM, in terms of daylight.

### What To Bring

We recommend you bring plenty of warm clothes that you can layer together to adjust to ever-changing and sometimes extreme weather. Temperatures in Yellowstone can range from the high 80's to 10 or more degrees below freezing, even in June.

### Clothes & Miscellaneous Items/Equipment

- jacket. This is your armor against the elements, it should be water repellent and provide wind protection.
- good shoes. Hiking boots will be good, because toes can easily get cold while standing and watching wolves! They will also be good if we take short hikes (at your leisure). Make sure they are comfortable, and large enough for a pair of warm socks.
- long underwear top and bottom. This will be your first layer, and while it may get hot later you will appreciate this extra layer early in the morning.
- outer pants. Bring a good pair of wind/rain shells in case of inclement weather.
- sweater, fleece, or down vest. Great for layering under your jacket, ideally bring more than one for layering. You can adjust as the day gets warmer.
- warm hat, sun hat. It should cover your ears and be wool or synthetic. Your socks and gloves won't work if your head is cold! Consider a brimmed hat as well for bright, sunny days. It's easy to get a sunburn, or have cold ears early in the morning.
- 1 or 2 pairs of gloves. Not a bad idea for handling cold binoculars or tripods. An additional thin liner glove is useful for operating cameras.

