Yellowstone Snowshoe Adventure

January 23, 2021 - January 31, 2021  (Trip# 2107)

Snowshoeing in Yellowstone National Park
Summary: Yellowstone National Park is one of the nation's most scenic parks. It is a remarkable region with geysers, steaming rivers, waterfalls, canyons, and abundant wildlife including elk, bison, swans, eagles, and wolves. On this nine-day adventure, we will get to experience Yellowstone as few people do by having a unique backcountry experience snowshoeing amidst this frozen wonderland. Only a fraction of Yellowstone’s visitors come in the winter, despite the fact that it might be the most magical season in the park. Geysers turn trees into ice sculptures, and wildlife, using the warm thermal areas as winter refuges, is easier to spot against the white backdrop. During the days we will walk through a land of wild beauty, and then spend some nights in cozy, historic lodges, one of which is only accessible in winter via a snow coach (a converted van on snow tracks). Most of our hikes will be in the 5-10 mile range, with minimal elevation gains.

After arriving at the airport in Bozeman Montana, we will meet for dinner then spend a night at a comfortable hotel nearby. The next morning we will drive to Yellowstone National Park for a short snowshoe in the Mammoth Hot Springs area where a series of terraces built from thousands of years of calcium deposits provide an otherworldly site. If time permits, we may visit a natural hot springs outside the park where hardy participants can have an optional hot soak amidst the snow. We will spend the next two nights at a hotel in Gardiner Montana and enjoy two guided day trips. On the first one we will spend the day with a naturalist to look for and learn about wolves. The next day we will enjoy a long snowshoe to visit the scenic Lamar Valley or Tower Falls area. Following our snowshoe we will relocate to the Mammoth Springs Hotel for one night. The next morning we will take a snow coach to the Old Faithful area where we will stay in cabins at the beautiful and unique Old Faithful Lodge for three nights. During the days we will snowshoe amidst geysers, thermal pools, wildlife, and other natural beauty, and in the evenings you can relax by a fire with a hot chocolate. Before we leave the Old Faithful area, we will take an all-day private snowcoach to hike around the spectacular Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. If time permits, one evening at the Old Faithful Lodge we will join a park ranger to enjoy a 45 minute illustrated program that highlights a fascinating aspect of Yellowstone’s natural, cultural or scenic wonders. Leaving the park via snowcoach we will then drive back to Bozeman to finish the trip with a farewell dinner before departing for home the next morning.

Daily Itinerary

Below is the daily itinerary we plan to follow. Note that the hikes may be changed or days swapped to take advantage of the best weather or conditions.

Day 1 - Saturday January 23, 2021
Fly to Bozeman, Montana where we will meet for dinner then have reservations at a comfortable motel near the airport.
Day 2 - Sunday January 24, 2021
We will meet in the motel for breakfast and have a pre-trip orientation before starting our adventure with a two hour drive to Mammoth Springs inside Yellowstone National Park. The last five miles involves a scenic winding road. After arriving, we will do an easy 1.6-mile snowshoe loop at the Terraces. Here we will walk around hot springs and a series of terraces built from thousands of years of calcium deposits. If the light is good, the Terraces can be beautiful shades of yellow. If time permits, it may be possible for some to go to the Boiling River, a natural hot springs just inside the park where hardy participants can have an optional hot soak amidst the snow. We will spend the night at a comfortable hotel in Gardiner, Montana.

Day 3 - Monday January 25, 2021
We will have a very early breakfast in our rooms so we can start before sunrise to spend the day with a naturalist to look for and learn about wolves and other wildlife. An early departure maximizes the chance of seeing prime wildlife. Much of the day will be road based, with wildlife observations enhanced by quality binoculars and high powered spotting scopes provided by our outfitter. The guide’s experience and expertise will illuminate Yellowstone’s matchless qualities. Following this adventure, we will return to our hotel in Gardiner, Montana.
Day 4 - Tuesday January 26, 2021
After another very early breakfast in our rooms, we will have a private snowshoe tour to the very scenic Lamar Valley or Tower Falls area. Today’s hike will be our longest, and most difficult, with about 10 miles of walking and up to 500 feet of ascent. We will spend the night in Yellowstone National Park at the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, a large, completely redone, classic national park hotel.

Day 5 - Wednesday January 27, 2021
After an early breakfast at the Hotel, we take a 12 person snow coach to the Old Faithful Lodge where we will stay for three nights in comfortable heated cabins. From Mammoth, it takes about four hours on the tracked vehicle to get to the Old Faithful area. Along the way, the driver generally makes a couple of scheduled stops at thermal areas or landmarks near the road, and whenever interesting wildlife is sighted. It should be a very scenic ride.
After lunch we may do one or two of the following short hikes. The Observation Point Loop Snowshoe Trail is a 2 mile snowshoe only trail that treats visitors to unobstructed views of the Upper Geyser Basin and the Firehole River. The Biscuit Basin Trail is a flat 5 mile out and back walk that passes a succession of geysers and other thermal features en route to Biscuit Basin. The Black Sand Basin is another easy snowshoe with a 4 mile round trip to a very pretty geyser basin. We will settle into the Lodge then have dinner. If time permits, at 7 PM we will join a park ranger to enjoy a 45 minute illustrated program that highlights a fascinating aspect of Yellowstone’s natural, cultural or scenic wonders.

Day 6 – Thursday January 28, 2021

Today we will do a long, but fairly easy, snowshoe from our lodge to Lone Star Geyser which is a reliable geyser that is a bit off the beaten track even in summer. This walk is 9 miles round trip with a 240 ft elevation gain. After returning, we will have free time to explore the Visitor Center and the Old Faithful area or just relax before settling into the Lodge and having dinner. Since tonight there is a full moon, if the weather is good, perhaps we will have the chance for an optional moonlight walk near the lodge.
Day 7 - Friday January 29, 2021

Today we take an all day private snow coach tour to snowshoe around the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. This narrated sightseeing tour departs the Snow Lodge at 8:15 and follows the road north from Old Faithful through the Upper and Lower Geyser Basins to Madison Junction, where there is a brief stop. The tour continues north along the Gibbon River through excellent elk and bison habitat, following the road east from Norris to Canyon where we will spend up to two wonderful hours at the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and snowshoe up to three miles. We may see Yellowstone Falls, water cascading behind an open window of ice, and the Canyon walls bathed in hues of yellow. Past participants of AMC ski trips to Yellowstone have said this is the most incredible day of their trip. We return to the lodge at 6 PM for our final night inside the park.

Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone
Day 8 - Saturday January 30, 2021
After an early breakfast at the lodge we take the 7:45 snow coach back to Mammoth Hot Springs. We will then drive back to Bozeman for a farewell dinner, staying at a comfortable hotel near the airport.

Day 9 - Sunday January 31, 2021
After breakfast at the hotel, we say our goodbyes and head home (or perhaps extend the trip and stay longer on our own).

Possible Itinerary Changes
While the itinerary in this prospectus is what the leaders have planned at the time of writing, various factors may require changes for reasons of safety, transportation or lodging availability, and unforeseeable circumstances (such as weather considerations, natural disasters in areas to be visited, or governmental or ranger recommendations). The leaders reserve the right to make such changes as necessary, both before and during the trip.

Participant Profile
You should enjoy traveling and be comfortable traveling in areas which are unfamiliar to you. You should recognize that you may find yourself in closer quarters or be less comfortable than you are used to at home. You should make it a priority to help others on the trip and contribute to their having a great time. If you do that, we guarantee that you will have a great time.

This trip is rated 4-5 - moderate/vigorous and is geared towards the outdoors adventurer and moderately experienced hiker. You must be comfortable hiking in snow, breaking trail and able to snowshoe up to 10 miles per day with elevation gains up to 500 feet over 4-6 hours, while carrying enough equipment to keep you safe in the event of bad weather or injury. We will snowshoe at a moderate pace, which will permit time for photos and rest breaks. Hikes are at altitudes between 6500 and 7500 feet so you might feel more winded than you are used to when hiking similar distances. Your pack weight will be heavier than a three season day hike due to the extra clothing and gear required for winter hiking.

Experience & Risks
There are always risks associated with outdoor activities, particularly in the winter. Temperatures in the park in the winter range from zero to 20 degrees F throughout the day. Nighttime temperatures are often sub zero. These temperatures require careful planning and
preparation for the hikes including attention to layers, face protection, food, safety gear, etc. A detailed discussion on winter clothing, gear and meals will be held with each participant prior to the trip.

Furthermore, Yellowstone presents unique risks due to the fact that we may be sharing the trails with abundant wildlife. We will never feed any wildlife for any reason and we will follow the park’s safety recommendations with regard to animals. There are also hazardous natural features like hot springs and pools that require exercising additional caution to avoid burns.

When you participate in this activity, you should be prepared both physically and mentally, and equipped with the appropriate gear. You should always be aware of the risks involved and conduct yourself accordingly. We are not responsible for your safety—you are.

Nonetheless, it may happen on any trip that a trip member is or becomes unable to participate in one or more of the planned activities. Leaders in their sole judgment have the right and obligation to refuse participation in any activity to any group member for reasons of group or individual safety. Illness, injury or lack of proper gear or fitness for a particular activity are examples of some conditions that might result in a participant’s being unable to perform one or more activity. Leaders may try to find a substitute activity for the trip member, but this may not always be possible.

Prior to your being accepted as a participant in this trip, you will be asked to discuss your capabilities and experience with us. We may also request references to confirm your fitness level and suitability for participating in trip activities. Please do not be offended by our questions.

Safety

As participant safety is a high priority for all AMC-sponsored events, procedures and policies have been developed to attempt to limit participant risk. Participants are expected to work with volunteer leaders to reduce risks and make the experience successful for all. Participants should be aware that there are risks associated with outdoor adventure activities, including but not limited to adverse weather and environmental conditions, remote locations of our trips and camps, and transportation in vehicles, on foot, by boat, or on a bike. When you apply for acceptance onto a trip, please carefully read and sign the Adventure Travel Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks and Release and Indemnity Agreement and call if you have any questions.
Trip Price

The trip cost is $3200 per person for shared occupancy for AMC members. Non-members can join for $50, and get the same price.

The price for this excursion is based on quotes or estimates obtained at the time the trip was planned. The final price of the trip will be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases we incur will be shared by trip participants. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is more likely than a price increase. All Adventure Travel trips are run on a non-profit basis and refunds, if any, are issued after the trip’s financial accounting is complete.

In accordance with AMC policy, you are subsidizing the leaders' costs. Beyond this, the leaders are not allowed to realize any profit from this excursion. The trip price includes an AMC overhead fee to cover the administrative expenses of offering Adventure Travel excursions. The trip fee also includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does not include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If these possibilities concern you, individual travel insurance is recommended. More information about included emergency medical and evacuation insurance, as well as about optional and recommended travel insurance, will be provided to participants in their formal acceptance letters, which will be sent out when the trip has the required number of accepted applicants.

Deposit of $1200 is due with the application. The balance of $2000 is due by October 1, 2020.

Includes:
- Eight nights lodging
- 8 Dinners – Dinner every night
- 6 breakfasts – 2 continental at the hotel in Bozeman, and 4 at lodges in the park.
- Car rental and gas
- Park Entrance fees
- Emergency medical & evacuation insurance coverage

Does not include:
- Airfare. The trip leaders will advise you and will facilitate group travel, but the purchase of tickets is the responsibility of the participant. At this time, we estimate that the cost for a round trip ticket between the US East Coast and Bozeman will be in the range of $600 to $800.
- 2 breakfasts
• Lunches, beverages, trail snacks, personal items, optional activities, & incidental
  expenses.

Photography

For those interested, this excursion can involve more than a splendid hiking trip. Dan is a
talented, semi-professional photographer whose photographs have been exhibited and
published in many places. Among other honors, he won the AMC photo contest three times.
There is absolutely no requirement that you be interested in photography, or even bring a
camera, and this is not a class or workshop. First, and foremost, it is a hiking trip in a beautiful
region. However, if you are a seasoned photographer or a budding novice, or just curious, Dan
will share his perspective on any of your photographic interests. Our hikes will also be paced to
allow for photo stops.

Accommodations / Meals / Transportation

We will spend the first night in a motel in Bozeman Montana, near the airport. The next two
nights will be at a hotel in Gardiner Montana, followed by a night at the Mammoth Hot Springs
Hotel. The following three nights will be at the Old Faithful Lodge in very comfortable cabins,
and the last night will be back in Bozeman near the airport. Accommodations will be two to a
room.

Dinners will be at local restaurants in Bozeman and Gardiner and at the Hotel and Lodge when
in the park. Lunches should be “trail lunches”, and are the participant’s responsibility. All food
that is carried with you on hikes should be soft foods that will not freeze quickly. Box lunches
can be ordered the night before when we are in the park Hotel and Lodge, and there are stores
in Garder and Mammoth to get food for daypack type lunches and snacks. Breakfasts will
either be at the park accommodations, or at motels with continental breakfasts. Two mornings
when we need to get out before breakfast is served you will be responsible for your own
breakfast. We suggest simple and quick meals (bagels, yogurt, etc.) eaten in your room. The
rooms have microwaves, minifridges, and coffeemakers.
The food at the Old Faithful Lodge is good to excellent. There are many choices, including vegetarian options. We will eat as a group at pre-arranged times.

Some participants will be asked to share in the driving, which requires a check of your driving record. We will be renting all wheel drive SUVs. Please inform the leaders if you are willing to do this.

Registration

We will have a group size of 12 people, including the 2 leaders. This trip is likely to fill quickly. If you are interested, you should apply as soon as possible. When registration is complete, we will send all participants the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all those going on the trip. A waiting list will be established if the trip is full.

To apply, you must download, complete, and submit the application documents which consist of:

- Application
- Confidential medical form
- Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risk and Release form
- Supplemental Medical Questionnaire (optional)

The documents can be found here: Yellowstone Participant Documents

You will not be accepted and your check will not be deposited until the leaders have determined by telephone conversation with you that you and the trip are a good match. Deposit checks from
waitlisted applicants will not be cashed until a spot is available, the applicant is accepted onto the trip, & they confirmed their continued interest.

**Participant Cancellation Policy**

Our cancellation policy is based on several considerations. Cancellation will not be allowed to raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. Minimum penalty schedule: $200. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf, and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of your registration and cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant. There is a possibility that participants will not receive any refund. Should the leaders be able to replace you, you may be charged a reduced penalty. This will generally not be determined until after the trip. Participants are encouraged to purchase trip cancellation insurance. If the trip is cancelled by the AMC, participants receive a full refund for any deposits and payments.

Participants are responsible for their own airline tickets & other external expenses. Most airlines will not give refunds for cancellations; sometimes they issue coupons for a future trip with an administrative charge and an expiration date. Trip cancellation insurance is advised—policy information will be supplied to all participants.

**AMC Mission**

AMC Adventure Travel trips are run in a manner supportive of and consistent with the conservation, recreational and educational principles and mission of the Club. Trip leaders encourage participant conduct consistent with Leave No Trace environmental and conservation principles and local regulations.
Leaders

Dan Stone

Dan is a three-season leader with the Hiking/Backpacking Committee of the AMC Boston Chapter. He has led an Adventure Travel trip to Yosemite and co-led trips to the Colorado Rockies and the Alsace in France. He has completed the 48 NH 4,000 footers in winter and hiked the entire Appalachian Trail mostly as a series of day hikes. He has traveled extensively, having visited 49 states and over 60 countries. Dan led a series of AMC hiking weekends that incorporated photography. He enjoys sharing his photos and knowledge of photography with others. This will be the eighth Adventure Travel trip he will have led or co-led. Contact Dan at 617-750-0511 or danstone987@gmail.com.

Larry Yetter

Larry is an active four-season leader with NH Excursions (Hiking) committee. He leads hikes in New England throughout all four seasons and is the Director of the AMC NH Winter Hiking Series. He has completed the NH Grid which comprises hiking each of the 48 NH 4,000 ft peaks in each calendar month of the year. He has lived in four countries outside the US and visited over 40 others while traveling to all seven continents. He has co-led Adventure travel trips to Switzerland and Southwest US. This will be Larry’s eighth Adventure Travel trip. He looks forward to exploring this unique area and sharing his love of winter hiking with the participants on this trip. Contact Larry at 603 554 8284 or yetter95@gmail.com.
Required Gear

Here is a list of suggestions for what to bring to have a good time on the trip. Most of the items are things you would bring for a winter day hike in the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

Daypack and pack cover or liner bag
Personal first aid kit
Hard shell / jacket
Wind/rain pants (full side zip preferred)
2 one-liter water bottles and an insulation system
Wool hat and spare hat
Wool gloves / Mittens and liner gloves
Balaclava / face protection
Extra wool or fleece layer for warmth
Waterproof winter hiking boots
Wool socks
Down jacket
Liner socks
Hiking pants
Synthetic shirts
Synthetic long underwear (tops and bottoms)
Sunglasses
Goggles
Sunscreen
Lip balm protection
Leisure clothes for restaurants and lodge (moderate amount)
Personal toiletries
Head lamp with extra batteries
Snowshoes
Microspikes or Hillsounds
Hiking Poles with snow baskets
Winter Gaiters
Personal medications

Optional Recommendations
Insulated lunch bag to place inside pack to carry lunch and snacks on hike
Chemical hand/toe warmers
Tevas, crocs, sandals and/or sneakers for leisure time around the lodge
Camera
Binoculars
Ear Plugs
Small knife (put in checked luggage, not carry-on)
Compass
Extra shoelaces
Zipper-closure plastic bags for packing lunches and snacks
Reading material for breaks
Bathing Suit
Luggage lock

Be sure to have a little extra room in your pack as we may ask some people to help share some group gear (sleeping bag, foam pad, tarp, stove, etc.). **Space will be at a premium on the snow coach and all participants are asked to manage luggage to include day pack, one small to medium roller bag and snowshoes.**