

Big Sky Country- Montana and Wyoming

Oh my goodness....Yellowstone National Park really surprised me. It's huge being over 3,000 square miles but the main attractions are mostly on several main routes and within 150 miles. So many of our parks are unique and have a special value all their own but Yellowstone is AWESOME. This park is all about the animals, the views and the concentration of geysers and hot springs showing the mighty power of nature. There are over 10,000 hydrothermal features underground creating pressurized boiling water that bubbles, brews and often erupts across many basins. It's huge Around every turn is a wonderful surprise. The wildlife is abundant and often seen up close. The rivers, the mountains and the views are majestic. Now for the bad news....it's a challenge. Between the hoards of people, the cars stopping for views and the bison sharing the roads, it's a process to get from one point to another. It's unbelievably crowded- no way around it unless you go before the main tourist season and are lucky with the weather. We were!!! And everything was purrr-fect.



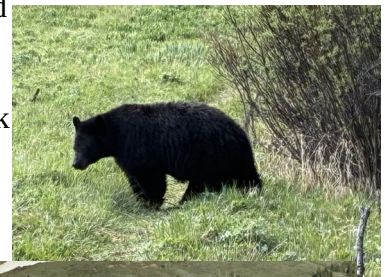
We started by the north entrance and following the Upper Loop. Going along to a higher altitude, we stopped at several scenic views and climbed to towering falls. Luckily there wasn't much traffic but the bison quickly told us who owned the roads but yes indeed, they were boss. This was their home. Moving along we had a glimpse of the thermal activity to come. Actually the puffs of steam are everywhere. The "fumaroles" are the hottest areas caused when the water reaches the surface and pushes high pressure gases up through vents on the ground. These vents are in every shape and size often creating enough super heated water that the "hot springs" become geysers. Geysers come in



every size and color and are constantly changing and unpredictable. Many have erupted through the years and still many are very active. Old Faithful is just one of the more dependable geysers.



We were lucky to see two black bears up close and lots of bison with their babies. Some were by the rivers and frolicking nearby. Some were taking turns actually swimming across. We did see an elk with a baby but too far away for a good photo.



Day two we started in the north again and drove south picking up the earlier by passed, Norris Geyser Basin. It was a good thing we waited until the third day because the basin is roughly 800 acres and is Yellowstone's oldest, hottest and most acidic thermal area. It is surrounded by several platforms for walking and viewing almost 200 hundred geysers



and hot springs. We did most of the trails starting with the upper loop called the Porcelain Basin. Many of the geysers there have had volcanic action, some within this year already. The hot springs are all different in size and color. Some have great plumes of rising steam and roaring noises. Some have bubbles



or plop sounds. All have different levels of spewing and spitting boiling water due to the unique hydrothermal activity and geothermal pressure. That area alone could someone all day long.



On day three and another 100 miles or more, we actually left the park and continued south down to see the Grand Tetons which are closer to Jackson Hole, Wyoming. We drove along to the Moose Entrance, found a nice cafe and had a beer while surrounded by a different landscape and more natural beauty. Well there is no other way to describe the unique power and majesty of this National Park. Wonderful experience!