

Yellowstone

America's first National Park, and to this day perhaps the single most iconic location in all of North America, Yellowstone is an absolute must-see for anyone who's a fan of natural wonders. This legendary park has features (like Old Faithful) that are arguably more famous than The Beatles, and a few hidden gems that most people don't bother to visit. You'll notice that Old Faithful is not on this list, because I don't have much advice for photography there. Eruptions are frequent (approximately every 94 minutes), and composition options are limited due to the extreme crowds and rigorously-enforced boardwalk rules. I would highly suggest a trip to watch an eruption, but the photography will be quite straightforward. However, the park is rife with photographic opportunities:

1. Yellowstone Falls and Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone



24mm | f/4.5 | ISO 100 | 1/1600 second shutter speed

While the main draw for Yellowstone is the geothermal features, there are lots of traditional landscape opportunities as well! The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and Yellowstone Falls are absolutely breathtaking and feature numerous hiking trails and overlooks on both sides of the canyon.



24mm | f/4.5 | ISO 100 | 1/1600 second shutter speed



55mm | f/8 | ISO 100 | 2.5 second shutter speed

Unlike most landscape photography, this location is actually better in the middle of the day, as the deep canyon will be in shade for most of the morning and evening hours.

Pro tip: Consider using a tripod + neutral density filter and doing a long exposure to help smooth out the water and get better reflections!

2. Grand Prismatic Spring



70mm | f/2.8 | ISO 100 | 1/2500 second shutter speed

This is another fantastic location to visit if you don't want to wake up super early for sunrise, as the deep and varied colors of this enormous spring actually look much nicer with the sun overhead.

The boardwalk around the spring is a great way to experience one of the largest geothermal features in the park, but photography from that level is difficult. Instead, I'd recommend the short and relatively easy hike to the overlook on the hill to the south.

Pro tip: A polarizer filter will help reduce reflections from the surface of the water and make the colors pop!

3. Lamar Valley/Hayden Valley



63mm | f/5.0 | ISO 200 | 1/1600 second

The Lamar Valley is easily my single favorite location in all of Yellowstone National Park. This massive valley stretches as far as the eye can see which can be overwhelming from a photography perspective, but this verdant valley basically guarantees numerous wildlife sightings. Everything from bison (by the thousands), bighorn sheep, elk, deer, and a large resident wolf pack.

Because the valley is so large, I'd recommend trying to focus on some of the finer details, like the image below:



400mm | f/5.0 | ISO 200 | 1/1600 second

The beautiful thing about valleys is that you can get deep, dramatic shadows at the beginning and end of the day. This is a very long drive from Jackson Hole, but I'd highly recommend being here for either sunrise or sunset.

4. Gardiner, Montana



24mm | f/2.8 | ISO 400 | 1/500 second

Gardiner, Montana is an absolute must-visit location for any Yellowstone enthusiast. This historic town is home to the first national park entrance in the United States, and to this day is the only year-round entrance to Yellowstone. Gardiner is full of adorable restaurants and coffee shops, but I always like to visit the monument commemorating the first national park entrance: the Roosevelt Arch.



Roosevelt Arch - 20mm | f/2.8 | ISO 1000 | 1/640 second



Slide Lake - 24mm | f/2.8 | ISO 400 | 1/500 second

