

A full-page background image of a Yellowstone National Park scene. In the center, a bison stands in a turquoise-colored geothermal pool, with steam rising from the water. The foreground shows rocky, mineral-rich ground with yellow and orange hues. The background features a dense forest of evergreen trees under a blue sky with light clouds.

LEVELED BOOK • N

Yellowstone:

A Place of Wild Wonders

MULTI
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Written by Mike Stark

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Focus Question

What is Yellowstone, and why do people visit there?

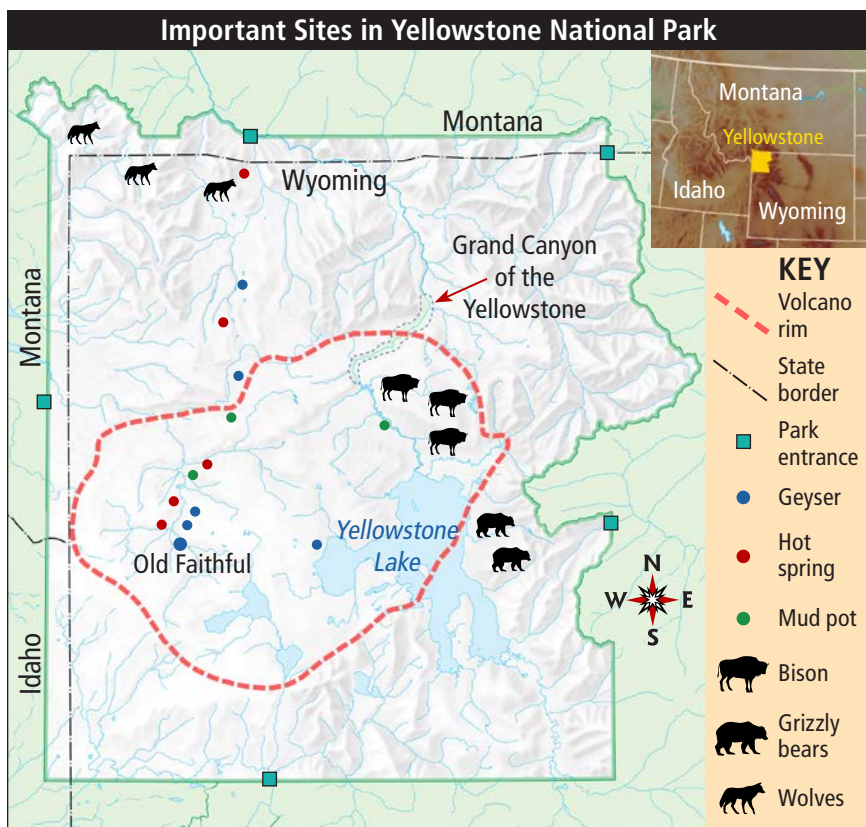


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Steamboat Geyser



bison



hot spring

Introduction

Imagine a place where streams of hot water shoot out of the ground and into the air. Imagine a place with strange green pools and gurgling pots of mud that smell like rotten eggs. Imagine a place where you can see grizzly bears, bison, and wolves in a single day.



The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone is one of the most striking sights in the park.

Such a place is real, and it's called Yellowstone **National Park**. National parks are areas of special, **protected** land. Yellowstone is located where Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho meet. It became the world's first national park in 1872. Every year, millions of people visit to see its wild wonders.

A Hot Spot



Old Faithful is not the largest geyser in Yellowstone, but it is the most regular.

Most everyone who goes to Yellowstone wants to see Old Faithful geyser.

A geyser is a hole in the ground that shoots steam and hot water into the air.

Old Faithful was given its name because visitors can depend on it to spray about every ninety minutes. It shoots water 100 feet (30 m) high!

Yellowstone Supervolcano

Yellowstone is home to an old collapsed volcano, called a *caldera*. Over the past two million years, the volcano has had three big eruptions. The rim of the collapsed volcano is huge, stretching more than 45 miles (72 km) across in some places. Scientists still watch Yellowstone closely. It doesn't look as if it is going to erupt again soon.

Yellowstone is on top of something rare called a **hot spot**. Heat from Earth's core makes rocks under the ground super-hot. Rain **seeps** into the ground with the rocks and heats up. The hot water and steam travel up through cracks in the ground. Finally, water and steam erupt at the surface.

Old Faithful is one of about three hundred geysers in Yellowstone. The hot spot has also created hot pools of gurgling mud and thousands of colorful hot springs.



Yellowstone has the third largest hot spring in the world (left). Mud pots form in spots where the soil is rich with clay and ash from volcanoes (right).



The bison is the biggest land animal in North America. Thousands of bison live in Yellowstone.

Wildlife

When people go to Yellowstone, they also see animals of all shapes and sizes.

The biggest animals in Yellowstone are bison, which can weigh up to 2,000 pounds (907 kg). Bison are giant animals with shaggy, brown fur, a big head, and a hump on their back. In the summer, you might see them rolling in the dust to fight off flies and shed their old fur.

The next-biggest animals are grizzly bears. They can weigh up to 800 pounds (363 kg) and are fast for their size. Grizzly bears sleep in dens underground for many months during the winter. They wake up in the spring, hungry for food.



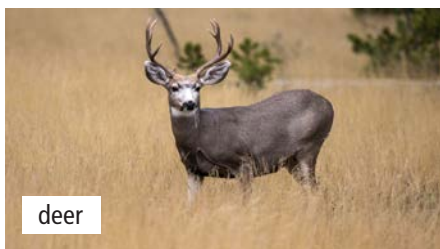
Visitors to Yellowstone used to feed the grizzly bears. Today, this is against the rules because it is dangerous for both people and the bears.



From 1995 to 1997, forty-one wild wolves were brought to Yellowstone from Canada and Montana.

Yellowstone is also home to wolves. People drove wolves out of Yellowstone more than one hundred years ago. Later, workers for the national parks brought them back. Today, about one hundred wolves live in Yellowstone.

The park is also home to more than 350 other kinds of animals. Elk, deer, golden eagles, beavers, and foxes roam freely in the park. Yellowstone is a safe **haven** for these wild animals. Visitors can enjoy watching them but should never get too close.





Old Native American shelters still stand in the park today.

History

Yellowstone is one of the most popular national parks in the United States. Before it became a national park, Native Americans had been visiting the area for thousands of years. Many of them built shelters for a time, hunted for food, and made tools.



Paintings of Yellowstone helped people see why the land should be protected (left). An exploration convinced the United States to make Yellowstone the very first national park (right).

Explorers also traveled through Yellowstone. They took note of its wonders through reports, photographs, and paintings. The United States decided that the land, water, and wildlife of Yellowstone were special. New laws were made to protect Yellowstone so people could not own or sell the land. Instead, Yellowstone was set aside for the enjoyment of all people and to take care of its animals. The idea of the national park was born.

Yellowstone paved the way for more national parks. There are now more than fifty national parks in the United States and many more around the world. Some, such as Grand Canyon National Park, protect natural wonders. Others, such as battlefields, protect places that are important to history.



Gettysburg National Park helps people remember a battle that happened there (top). Grand Canyon National Park boasts one of the largest, most beautiful canyons in the world (bottom).



Conclusion

Today, about three million people from around the world travel through Yellowstone every year. They come to fish, hike, camp, watch wildlife, and visit the hot springs. In Yellowstone, people can see wonders rarely found anywhere else.

The first explorers to set foot in Yellowstone knew they had found something special. Now that it is protected as a national park, Yellowstone will always be around.

Glossary

explorers (<i>n.</i>)	people who visit and learn about new places (p. 13)
haven (<i>n.</i>)	a place that offers comfort, rest, protection, or shelter (p. 11)
hot spot (<i>n.</i>)	a place in Earth's crust where hot, molten rock rises close to the surface (p. 7)
national park (<i>n.</i>)	an area of government-owned land protected for its historic importance or wonderful natural landscape and wildlife (p. 5)
protected (<i>adj.</i>)	guarded or defended from harm or danger (p. 5)
seeps (<i>v.</i>)	flows or leaks slowly through small openings (p. 7)

Words to Know

explorers

haven

hot spot

national park

protected

seeps

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Connections

Writing and Art

Imagine you are visiting Yellowstone. Draw a picture and write a postcard to a friend about your experience.

Science

Choose two animals that live in Yellowstone. Use a Venn diagram to compare how the animals are alike and how they are different.

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