



Visiting the Upper Geyser Basin (Old Faithful Geyser)

The Old Faithful Area (Upper Geyser Basin) is one of the most popular and crowded areas in the Summer. Start off with a visit to the new visitor's center. Tour the center, but most importantly check the information desk for the estimated eruption times of popular geysers in the basin. (Note that they are estimated times... so plan accordingly). Beat the crowds by starting early in the morning before those who did not sleep in the area arrive. Walk around the geyser basin and witness numerous well-known features; Old Faithful, Beehive, Castle, Grotto, Riverside & Morning Glory Pool to name a few. The cool morning air temperature intensifies the steam making the basin more magical. By mid-morning the Summer crowds get larger as the day goes until sunset. (When the area gets congested... head to the hills!, and take the hikes in the back country.)

You'll never get to see all the geysers erupt and will have to pick and chose those you want to invest with your time and how long younger family members can hold out. Prep your walk with a bathroom break and pack bottled beverages. Touring the basin takes time and before you know it you have walked a few miles. (For those in need there is a no frills bathroom near Morning Glory Pool.)

Upper Geyser Basin Sites of Interest:

1. Walk through the new Visitor's Center (opened in the Summer of 2011)

2. Tour the Upper Geyser Basin Boardwalk

Upper Geyser Basin is the best place in Yellowstone to see geysers erupt. It is home to Old Faithful, the best-known Yellowstone geyser, as well as five out of six predicted geysers in the park. What's more, Upper Geyser Basin boasts the highest concentration of geysers in the world. There are more than 150 of these hydrothermal features in just one square mile!

For those adventurous hikers who want to see more thermal features, step off the boardwalk behind Comet & Daisy Geyser and follow the path to the **Black Sand Geyser Basin**. The Black Sand Basin, named by turn of the century tourists, contains small fragments of black obsidian sand which cover portions of the basin.

Black Sand Basin contains a small collection of jewel-like geysers, and colorful hot springs. Emerald Pool is the most colorful and famous of these springs followed by Opalescent Pool. This recently formed pool inundated a stand of lodgepole pine, creating a stand of white skeletons amidst a rainbow-colored pool. An unusual geyser formed on the bank of Iron Creek. Cliff Geyser formed a rim or wall-like ridge of sinter around its crater from which it erupts 30 to 40 feet high.

The famous Handkerchief Pool was once the drawing attraction to Black Sand Basin. Turn-of-the-century tourists dropped their handkerchiefs into this small spring. Convection currents then whisked their laundry away where it would reappear again at the surface, freshly laundered.

3. Take the short uphill hike to Observation Point.

The trail to Observation Point begins at Old Faithful in the Upper Geyser Basin. The trail crosses a bridge over the Firehole River and climbs to a magnificent overlook on a rhyolitic rock outcropping. Perched on the edge of the hill, the vistas extend across the entire Upper Geyser Basin and surrounding mountains, including a bird's-eye view of Old Faithful. The loop trail descends through a lush forest to Solitary Geyser, with a 4-foot eruption every 5 to 7 minutes. To witness the eruption of Old Faithful from the overlook, check at the visitor center for the estimated eruption time and allow 30 minutes to reach Observation Point.

4. Walk Thru the iconic Old Faithful Inn.

The Old Faithful Inn features a multi-story log lobby, flanked by long frame wings containing guest rooms. With its spectacular log and limb lobby and massive (500-ton, 85-foot) stone fireplace, the inn is a prime example of the "Golden Age" of rustic resort architecture, a style which is also known as "Parkitecture". Initial construction was carried out over the winter of 1903-1904, largely using locally-obtained materials including lodgepole pine and rhyolite stone. When the Old Faithful Inn first opened in the spring of 1904, it boasted electric lights and steam heat.

The structure is the largest log hotel in the world. In 2007 the American Institute of Architects conducted a survey to determine the 150 favorite buildings in America; the Old Faithful Inn ranked 36. Short guided tours of the hotel are available daily.

Although not in the Upper Geyser Basin, check out these short hikes in the area:

Always begin your hike by stopping at a ranger station or visitor center for information. Trail conditions may change suddenly and unexpectedly. Bear activity, rain or snow storms, high water, and fires may temporarily close trails.

5. Take the Hike to Lone Star Geyser.

Lone Star Geyser Yellowstone resides just a bit off the beaten path, not far from Old Faithful, and one must hike to witness its incredible display. A hike through the back country in Yellowstone is a treat all by itself. The geyser erupts approximately every three hours, reaches a height of 45 feet and lasts about 30 minutes. The Old Faithful Visitor's Center maybe able to help you with direction and eruption times.

Just three and a half miles southwest from Old Faithful, on the south side of the road, you'll find a parking area. From here you take the Lone Star Trailhead, a five-mile round-trip hike on an old paved road to Lone Star Geyser.

6. Hike to Mystic Falls and Biscuit Basin Overlook

The 3 mile loop to Mystic Falls and Biscuit Basin Overlook encounters varied river, forest and plateau scenery, and has a moderate elevation change of 550 feet. The falls are a spectacular cascade formed at a steep, narrow place in the canyon of the Little Firehole River, while the overlook has a fine view not only of the basin but also of several miles of the Firehole River valley, with Upper Geyser Basin in the distance. The loop hike is best done in the clockwise direction, visiting the falls first, since the elevation gain (up the river canyon) is more gentle, and the overlook appears suddenly and dramatically, rather than approaching gradually during the steep climb from the flat lands below.

7. Fairy Falls Trail

At 200 feet high, Fairy Falls is an impressive backcountry sight. It can be reached from two different trailheads. **The first trailhead**, 1 mile south of the Midway Geyser Basin, begins at a steel bridge across the Firehole River and follows the Fountain Freight Road hiking/biking trail for approximately 1 mile before the hiking-only trail to Fairy Falls branches off on the left. The second trailhead, 1/2 mile south of the Nez Perce picnic area on the Fountain Freight Road. **May want to consider:** Within a mile on the first trail you will come to **Grand Prismatic Spring** on your right and a small hill on your left. Although no official paths go up the hill, make the "well worth your time" climb to get a bird's eye view of Grand Prismatic Springs.

Distance: 5 miles (8 km) from trailhead #1; 7 miles (11.2 km) from trailhead #2

Please don't limit yourself to just these places of interest... if you like history, visit the museums, walk thru the buildings or visitor center. There are more strenuous hikes, but may not be recommended for first time visitors not in good physical health. Test yourself on the short hikes. There is history and beauty all around - enjoy, and have your camera ready!

For more information go to: <http://www.nps.gov/yell/index.htm>