

YELLOWSTONE
SKI
TOURS



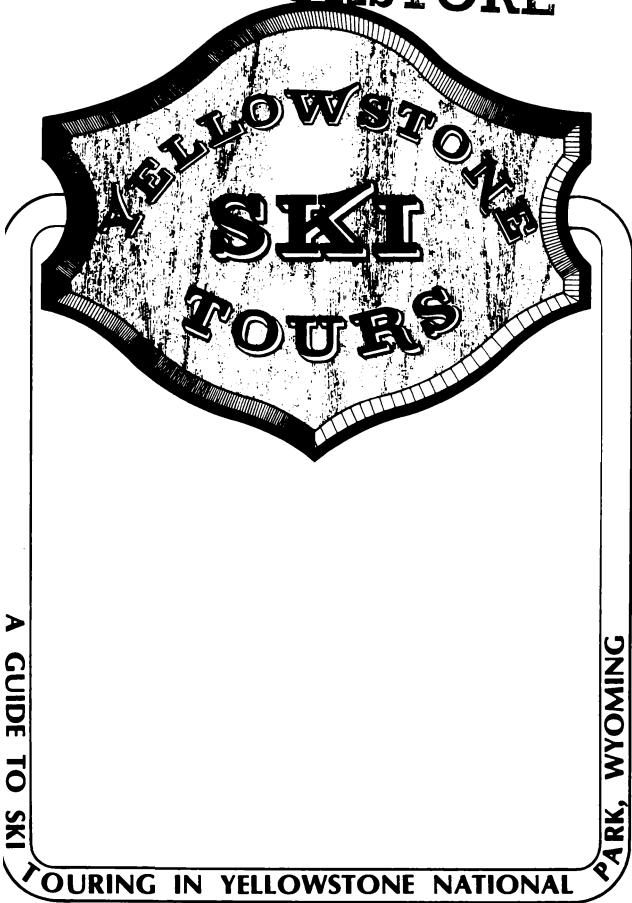
A GUIDE TO SKI

PARK, WYOMING

TOURING IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL

JOHN F. BARBER

BOOKSTORE



A GUIDE TO SKI

TOURING IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL

PARK, WYOMING

JOHN F. BARBER



This little fellow was one of the first ski-tourers—over 4000 years ago. Since then, a lot of folks have provided incentive to get me started. And today, there's lots of friends encouraging me to continue.

Thanks to all those people who have helped, or who are helping to make my dreams a realization. The design is my own, but the final product is a group effort. I am truly grateful.

Thanks to Marc for his maps. Special thanks to Chris who still doesn't believe a person can ski to Trout Lake.

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SKI TOURING IN YELLOWSTONE

Until recently, winter in Yellowstone National Park has been largely unknown and unexperienced. Too big, too remote, too harsh and too unfamiliar, Yellowstone has been slow to share its “other season.”

John Colter, paragon of the mountain men, was probably the first. He traversed the Yellowstone region twice in the winter of 1807.

Next were the Park Scouts, U.S. Army personnel who adapted the long, skinny Scandinavian snowshoes to protect Yellowstone National Park against abuses from 1886 to 1916.

Today, there's a line of continuity to winter travel in Yellowstone. You become a part of history. You ski the same terrain, cope with the same conditions, marvel at the same wonders, see the same panoramas and experience the same profound remoteness that John Colter did over one hundred years ago!

In winter, Yellowstone surrenders to the snow. Although snow-machines are permitted on some of the unplowed roads through the park, the Yellowstone backcountry which contains over 3,000 square miles of more natural wonders than you can find anywhere else on the face of the earth, is reserved for ski tourers.

And what a ski touring opportunity! Yellowstone stretches out for miles, running through forests and over mountains like some immense piece of white rice paper waiting for a ski stylus to inscribe haikus to your passing.

But there's a problem—some people prefer a definite route, with a definite goal and a definite answer to the question: “Where can we ski today?”

Now describing places to ski is like describing places to fly—both are limited only by your imagination, ability and equipment performance. And then both demand a great deal of preparation.

And that's another problem — how much preparation should a guide like this do for you? Which ski tours should I recommend? Which should I leave for your own discovery? How much detail should I give you? How much should be left to your own surprise? And whom should a guide to Yellowstone ski touring be written for? Recreational skiers out looking for bunny tracks? The family skiers out looking for peace of mind? Or the endurance skiers out looking for survival situations?

Questions and confusion! What to do? But then I got to thinking about something Huckleberry Finn had said:

... I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before.

Well sir, it all made sense then because we're all in this together. As ski tourers we're all looking for the same thing—a chance to light out for the “Territory” before civilization gets us boxed in. Ski touring gives us freedom.

We're all using ski touring as a way of escaping but we want to go at our own pace, to our own limits and reach our own levels of satisfaction.

So, I tried the proverbial compromise. I tried to give basic information on half-day, one-day, overnight and extended ski tours. I tried to pick tours that would provide an enjoyable, rewarding way to experience winter Yellowstone for all types and levels of ski tourers with their own particular motivations.

Because I thought half-day and one-day tours would have more participation, I tried to give a little more detail in their descriptions without sacrificing your element of surprise.

And then because they demand more thorough planning, I've only sketched out some possible overnight and extended tours leaving the detailed preparations to you. You're on your own here in the winter, you might as well accept the responsibility from the start.

Of course the tours that I've described aren't your only opportunities—they're just easier to find and follow. Yellowstone is a big place, anything that looks good to your imagination and suits the fancy of your ski tips is a good bet!

Please understand that I have natural reservations about inviting total strangers to share a place I've grown to know and love as home. But I'm tempering those reservations with the thought that folks involved in cross-country ski touring are concerned with quality of living and environment, that they are responsible individuals, concerned with and participating in the protection of natural habitat and wilderness areas.

Don't let me down—don't let everyone else down. Sure, this is your national park to enjoy—but also to preserve and protect. Don't screw up. To paraphrase a familiar saying, "Keep a clean camp. Take only photographs. Leave only ski tracks."

Ski touring is its own peculiar form of meditation, where, with a little attention to rhythm and efficiency, you can do good things for your body and mind—and have fun doing it! With attention to your impact on Yellowstone, you can leave it just as you found it for the next pilgrim.

Pardon the sermonizing but the option comes with authorship. It's getting cold here on this log and new snow falling in the Territory is inviting me to light out. Got to make tracks.

Welcome. And good touring!



*On a ridge above Mammoth Hot Springs
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming
First snowfall, November 1978
John F. Barber*

BEFORE YOU GO

Winter is the pre-eminent force in Yellowstone and all things take note of it. You should too!

Temperatures and weather conditions can be severe, distances can be deceiving, there's no road over the next hill, no traffic cop to whistle you away from avalanche dangers or bail you out of whatever trouble. And of course, it's worth it!

But do come prepared. Be in condition for skiing, know your abilities. Know the abilities of your equipment, make sure it's in good repair. Make sure you understand the symptoms and treatment for the related dangers of hypothermia, frostbite and wind chill.

Yellowstone's trails are not groomed so you may find yourself breaking trail through deep powder snow. Most trails are marked with bright orange markers attached to poles or trees.

Carry a map and be very familiar with the use of a compass should you desire to venture off over that untracked hill.

Never ski alone.

Let someone know where you are going and when you will be back. Someone who cares. Someone who will call out the troops if necessary.

Check weather conditions.

Take extra clothes, high-energy food, repair items, matches and a first-aid/survival kit.

Help preserve Yellowstone's natural beauty for your next ski tour—carry out all your trash.

If you have any doubts, check with National Park Service personnel at ranger stations or visitor centers.

Overnight winter camping situations are not those for the uninformed. Again, be prepared, doubly so, and know what you're about, and up against.

For all overnight tours you must obtain a free backcountry permit at a ranger station or visitor center. Not only does obtaining this permit reserve a campsite for you, but it also lets someone know where you are going and when you will return. It's also a good way to pick up valuable (maybe even lifesaving) information on snow and avalanche conditions.

Much longer ski tours are available in Yellowstone—with certain qualifications! Because snow and weather conditions are never predictable, only experienced skiers, in top condition, using good equipment should attempt extended trips. And then only after much, very careful preparation.

Check the **RESOURCES** section for sources of more complete and detailed information.

Never trust your luck. Plan any winter adventure into Yellowstone precisely. Arrange all details beforehand.

Remember that when you venture into the winter backcountry you're not out there to conquer the elements. You can't bend the natural world to your will. You must meet winter here on its own terms and strive to become a part of it. Treat the winter environment with respect.

Enjoy, but be careful. And, like John Colter, your experiences here will be something you'll make your own campfire legends about.

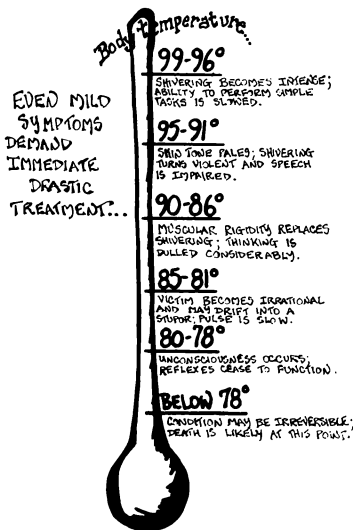


WINTER'S DANGERS

Enjoyable as ski-touring in Yellowstone is, unless you're prepared for them, you risk the related dangers of hypothermia, frostbite and windchill. Other potential dangers include sunburn, snow blindness and altitude sickness. Make sure you understand their symptoms and treatment before setting out on any ski-tour.

HYPOTHERMIA is a subnormal temperature of the body caused by exposure to the cold, which is further aggravated by wet, wind and exhaustion. This lowering of body temperature leads to mental and physical collapse, and if unchecked... "the big ski-tour in the sky".

Hypothermia



Treatment

- Get the victim out of the wind & rain.
- Strip off all wet clothing.
- If victim is mildly impaired; give warm drinks, warm clothes, & a warm sleeping bag.
- If victim is semi-conscious, or worse; try to keep awake, give warm drinks, leave stripped, put in a sleeping bag with another person - also stripped.
- Build a fire.

FROSTBITE, unlike hypothermia, is seldom fatal. Symptoms include gray or yellowish-white spots forming on fingers, nose, cheeks or feet.

The best treatment for frostbite is to seek shelter and rapidly warm the affected area in a water bath around 100 degrees Fahrenheit in temperature. For minor frostbite on fingers, put them against your chest, under your arms or between your thighs. If a foot is frostbitten, place it between another person's legs or on their stomach.

WIND CHILL can aggravate hypothermia and frostbite by wicking away body heat, especially if you are wet. Wind, combined with temperature can produce some pretty harsh conditions for your body. Putting on wind proof clothing or seeking shelter from the wind will be the most effective treatment.

SUNBURN and **SNOWBLINDNESS** (sunburn of the eyes) both can occur quickly in Yellowstone's winter environment.

Sunburn can be prevented by using ointment and lip ice—even on overcast days.

The best form of prevention for snow blindness is to wear some sort of protective glasses or goggles designed to cut the transmission of ultraviolet and infrared light—even on overcast days.

ALTITUDE SICKNESS affects everyone, to some degree, who travels to higher elevations without first becoming acclimated.

Symptoms include headaches, difficulty in sleeping, loss of appetite, mild nausea and shortness of breath. These symptoms may increase in severity leading to vomiting, severe headaches, vertigo and unconsciousness.

Recent research seems to indicate a connection between a disruption of the acid/base balance in the body and altitude sickness.

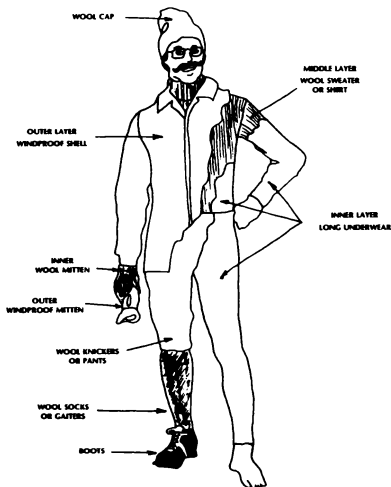
This research also suggests that the effects of altitude sickness can be lessened by increasing the intake of water, avoiding foods which set up acidic reactions in the body (meat, eggs and acidic fruits) and going slow.

CLOTHING

The “layered look” is the only fashion consideration you’ll have to give ski-touring. Start at the bottom with a suit of open-weave underwear, which traps body heat but allows moisture to escape. The second layer should be a wool shirt or sweater and wool pants or knickers. Wool repels snow and water and, even when soaking wet, will help keep you warm. The outer layer of clothing should protect you from the wind—a lightweight nylon parka is good.

Protect your head with a wool cap that can be pulled down over the ears, neck and face. Wear wool mittens—they’re warmer than gloves as each finger warms its neighbor. Wool socks will help keep your feet warm. And to help keep them dry, wear a pair of gaiters.

Clothing should be loose fitting and allow for plenty of free movement. By adding or removing layers you can control your temperature. Avoid overheating and subsequent sweating. Evaporation of sweat may cool your body too quickly.



EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUE

Unfortunately, ski-touring, like most other outdoor activities, has run amuck with equipment manufacturers who pump out all sorts of gear, clamoring for your attention.

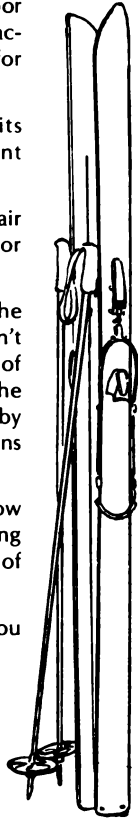
One of ski-touring's major attractions is its simplicity and freedom from this equipment paranoia. Help keep it that way.

Do make sure your equipment is in good repair though before starting out. Losing a binding or breaking a pole could ruin your tour.

Technique is another area where "the state of the art" threatens to overcome simple good times. Don't let it go to your head! The wide-open spaces of Yellowstone are forgiving of your lack of form, the chances are good that you won't be embarrassed by meeting anyone else on the trail and the mountains don't care what you look like.

The joy of making fresh tracks through quiet snow is the essence of ski touring. Untracked touring through Yellowstone will require a modification of your polished track technique for best results.

Adapt as necessary, you'll find a way. Relax, or you won't feel a thing!



WAXING

Waxing contributes to the “mystique” that surrounds ski-touring by performing the seemingly impossible task of allowing your skis to grip and glide at the same time.

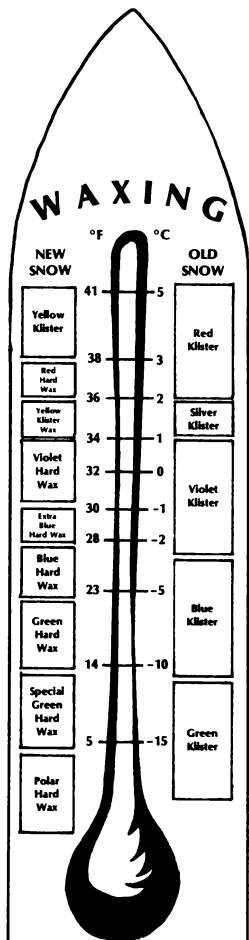
Don't let it scare you off. There are several good books available, your local outdoor store should provide waxing clinics and most wax manufacturers give instructions with their products.

Snow conditions in Yellowstone are usually dry and powdery requiring the harder waxes ranging from light green to red.

Klusters may be necessary in the spring when the snow begins to melt.

SOME BASIC GUIDELINES

- Check snow conditions at the trailhead before you wax.
- Use several thin layers of wax. The ski bottom should be warm and dry when you apply it.
- If you can't decide between two grades of wax, use the harder one first. Later you can add a layer of softer wax if necessary.



This chart can help you decide on what wax to use for what conditions.

ANIMAL SAFETY

Elk, moose, bison and deer winter in Yellowstone's river valleys and on some ridges. You'll have the opportunity to see them at close range. But not too close! Always keep a minimum distance of at least 250 yards between yourself and any animal. All animals in Yellowstone are wild, potentially dangerous and can move much faster than you through the snow.

Besides endangering yourself, you're also creating adverse impacts on the animals by approaching too closely. Approaching an animal too closely triggers its fear instincts causing it to run—or attack. Running through deep snow requires great energy expenditures. That energy could be better used in the survival business.



TRAIL FOOD

“You are what you eat” is doubly true with regards to ski touring. Your body's only source of energy is the food you eat.

There are three basic food groups: carbohydrates, proteins and fats.

Carbohydrates digest easily and provide the quickest source of energy. But, they get used quickly and you've got to keep the engine stoked to maintain constant energy levels.

Proteins are carbohydrates with the addition of amino acids: "A tiger in the tank." The digestion of proteins requires more steps and more time before the energy can be used by your body. Pound for pound carbohydrates and protein produce the same amounts of energy. The difference is a time factor.

Fats produce more energy than carbohydrates or proteins but are often hard to digest and, like proteins, require a long time for digestion.

So how do you plan a menu to provide you with maximum energy throughout the day of ski touring?

Breakfast—should be light and quickly digested. You'll probably be skiing right away and will want all the quick energy you can get. Pancakes with lots of syrup are good. Same with oatmeal. Top breakfast off with some low acid fruit.

Lunch—is a good chance to get in a little protein or fat since you'll probably be resting for a bit also. Peanut butter and honey on whole wheat bread is a good menu item. So is cheese. If you want a hot drink try hot tea with honey.

Dinner—is where you can pack away the protein and fat. Their slow digestion will help keep you warm through the night. Meat, wild rice and vegetables go well with short overnight or weekend tours. Freeze-dried dinners are a good choice for extended tours.

Trail Snacks—help keep your energy and heat levels constant and therefore should be mostly carbohydrates. Hard candy, raisins, dried fruits, granola or honey drops work well.

With all your meals and snacks drink plenty of water to replace what you're constantly losing. Cold weather robs your body of moisture which must be replaced to prevent dehydration.

Suggestions here obviously don't follow a balanced diet—if continued over long periods of time. But for the short duration of your ski tour they will help provide optimum results.

GEAR

The important rule governing the selection and use of any gear for any ski tour in yellowstone is that you should be able to survive the night if forced into an emergency bivouac situation as a result of injury, becoming lost or other circumstances.

THE SKIER'S TEN ESSENTIALS

1. **Map**
 2. **Compass**
- } Know how to use them.
3. **Flashlight**—with fresh alkaline cells and spare bulbs.
 4. **Emergency Food** — wrapped securely. High-energy goodies like raisins, nuts, hard candy, etc.
 5. **Supplemental clothing and shelter**—wool hat, wool socks (can double as mittens), wool net underwear, a space blanket and sheet of plastic or large garbage bags.
 6. **Sunglasses and suncream**
 7. **Knife**
 8. **Waterproof matches in a waterproof matchesafe**
 9. **Firestarter**—plumbers candle, paste, toilet paper coated with candle wax, etc.
 10. **First Aid/Emergency Kit** — whistle, needles, thread, safety pins, aspirin, band-aids, gauze bandages, moleskin and whatever else you feel necessary.

The compass, flashlight, sunglasses, knife, waterproof matches and whistle should be carried on your person, attached in some way to prevent their loss.

A good idea is to secure your essentials in a waterproof stuff sack and always carry it on your ski tours.

Other gear to take along might include: lip salve, toilet paper (unrolled from tube and rerolled flat. Use sparingly. Burn after use); plastic bags (heavy duty zip-lock—no polluting wire ties); extra matches stashed here and there; candle lantern (provides good light and substitutes for the warm glow of a campfire); and a large bandanna (can be used as a potholder, scarf, wash cloth, napkin, bandage, etc.).

Choose carefully between essentials and desirables. Pack lesser used items at the bottom of your pack, frequently used and heaviest items near the center. Put clothes next to your back for comfort. Secure them in plastic bags. Pockets on the outside of your pack are great for small items often in big demand.

Be prepared! Wear proper clothing, be in good shape, carry high-energy foods like raisins or nuts and snack on them often, stay dry and avoid getting over-heated. Rest often to keep from becoming exhausted. Know your own limits and stop short of them. This will keep you from depleting your valuable energy stores.

WIND CHILL CHART

TEMPERATURE IN DEGREES FAHRENHEIT

WIND IN MILES PER HOUR	0	30	20	10	0	-10	-20	-30
	10	16	2	-9	-22	-31	-45	-58
	20	3	-9	-24	-40	-52	-68	-81
	30	-2	-18	-33	-49	-63	-78	-94
	40	-4	-22	-36	-54	-69	-87	-101
	50	-7	-24	-38	-56	-70	-88	-103

SKI TOURING ETIQUETTE



Cans, glass and tinfoil should be left at home. **ALL** trash should be carried out. Carry out what others leave behind.



Disposal of human waste should take place on a hillside, away from streams and lakes, and away from the trail. Burn all toilet paper used.



No dumping **ANY** waste within 100 feet of any stream or other body of water.



Use a stove instead of building a fire for cooking or melting snow for water. A fire ring is an ugly reminder of your passage to all those who follow. A candle lantern hung in your tent will substitute for the warm glow of a campfire.



Don't feed or harass any animals. Always keep a minimum distance of at least 250 yards between yourself and any animal. Dogs especially disturb wintering wildlife, are not permitted in Yellowstone's backcountry and should be left at home.



It's illegal to swim or bathe in any natural hot spring, pool, or run-off channel.



Ask yourself: "What effect did my presence and activity have on the environment? Did I damage it? Or did I preserve and protect it?" Remember . . . wilderness preservation is your responsibility.

ABOUT GETTING LOST



Probably the best advice is: DON'T.

Plan. Think ahead. Be prepared. Know where you are going. How to get there. And how to get back.

Before leaving on any ski tour, spend some time with maps detailing the area of your tour. Topographical maps are the most useful for cross-country travel so being familiar with them is important.

A compass, and a thorough knowledge of how to use it is another important prerequisite before starting out—especially if you're going to be touring through areas where there is no marked trail.

And finally, before leaving, tell someone who cares, someone who will call out the troops if necessary, where you are going and when you will be back.

If, despite all these precautions, you suddenly find yourself disoriented, or looking at strange country, don't panic. After all, you're not lost. You know right where you are—it's the rest of the world you've misplaced!

Be calm. Sit down. Think through the situation. The solution may become obvious. Plan first; then act.

Perhaps some backtracking, reconnoitering or looking at your map will put you back on the trail.

If all else fails, dig in, find yourself some sort of shelter, make yourself as comfortable as possible and wait. If you followed the precaution of letting someone know when you should return they should sound the alarm when you don't. Generally it will be easier for rescuers to find you if you stay in one spot. It also helps to conserve your own energy.

But really, why worry? Avoid it all! Plan ahead. Be prepared. Know what you're doing. Rather than losing yourself ski touring you should instead become closer to yourself.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Whatever type of camera you have it should be sufficient for winter photography. Obviously, the more complex cameras allow a greater degree of creative control, but the smaller, simpler cameras have a real advantage in their light weight.

Film is a matter of personal choice but the medium and faster films might be a better choice for changing light conditions.

A special photographic interest will of course influence what equipment you take along.

WINTER PHOTO TIPS



Don't breathe on the lens or viewfinder—the frost is difficult to remove. The same applies to the camera body, especially interior.



Keep a lens cap secured on the front of the lens. It keeps snow out should you take a fall.



Cold temperatures cause your camera to operate sluggishly sometimes. Take it slow and easy. Don't force anything.



The bright light of a winter scene could fool your camera's light meter. Bracket your exposures on either side of the one indicated as correct.



Wear some sort of light gloves when you handle your camera equipment. Metal becomes very cold very quick and can zap you with instant frostbite.





GENERAL INFORMATION

BACKCOUNTRY USE, CAMPSITES, WINTER PARK TRAVEL

Superintendents' Office
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190
(307) 344-7381

MAPS, BOOKS, GUIDES, ETC.

Yellowstone Library and Museum Association
P.O. Box 117
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190
(307) 344-7381

SNOWCOACH AND BUS TRANSPORTATION, LODGING AND FOOD

Yellowstone Park Company
Reservations Office
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190
(307) 344-7321

HOW TO GET HERE

Both Bozeman, Montana and Jackson, Wyoming have year-round airline service. Car rentals and bus transportation are available from these towns also. Check with your travel agent.

NORTHERN YELLOWSTONE

RANGER STATIONS

Mammoth — (307) 344-7381

Tower — (307) 344-7746

Northeast Entrance — (307) 344-7753

GUIDE SERVICE, SHOPS, INSTRUCTION

Nexus Enterprise
P.O. Box 272
Gardiner, Montana 59030
(406) 848-7346

The Ski Surgeon
210 E. Main Street
Bozeman, Montana 59715
(406) 587-4546

Parks' Fly Shop
P.O. Box 196
Gardiner, Montana 59030
(406) 848-7314

Crazy Mountain Sports
Murry Hotel, P.O. Box 773
Livingston, Montana 59047
(406) 222-6565

Trailhead Sporting Goods
P.O. Box 127
Gardiner, Montana 59030
(406) 848-7712

Beaver Pond, Inc.
1716 W. Main Street
Bozeman, Montana 59715
(406) 587-4261

OVERNIGHT LODGING, FOOD, ETC.

Several motels and restaurants are open year round in Gardiner, Montana (North Entrance), Cooke City, Montana and Silver Gate, Montana (Northeast Entrance). Check with your travel agent.

OLD FAITHFUL AREA

RANGER STATIONS — (307) 545-7201

SNOWCOACH TRANSPORTATION, LODGING, FOOD

**Yellowstone Park Company
Reservations Office
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190
(307) 344-7321**

GUIDE SERVICE, SHOPS, INSTRUCTION

Yellowstone Park Company provides these services at Old Faithful Snow Lodge during its winter operations. Information about prices, services, etc. can be obtained from the address above.

CANYON AREA

RANGER STATION — (307) 242-7376

SNOWCOACH TRANSPORTATION

**Yellowstone Park Company
Reservations Office
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190
(307) 344-7321**

CAMPGROUND INFORMATION

**Superintendents' Office
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190
(307) 344-7381**

WEST ENTRANCE

RANGER STATION — (406) 646-7332

SNOWCOACH TRANSPORTATION

**Yellowstone Park Company
Reservations Office
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190
(307) 344-7321**

GUIDE SERVICE, SHOPS, INSTRUCTION

**Rendezvous Ski Shop
P.O. Box 429
West Yellowstone, Montana 59758
(406) 646-7712**

**Yellowstone Nordic
P.O. Box 488
West Yellowstone, Montana 59758
(406) 646-7319**

OVERNIGHT LODGING, FOOD, ETC.

Several motels and restaurants are open year round in West Yellowstone, Montana.

**Contact: West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce
123 Yellowstone Ave.
West Yellowstone, Montana 59758
(406) 646-7528**

Or, check with your travel agent.

SOUTH ENTRANCE

RANGER STATION — (307) 242-7509

SNOWCOACH TRANSPORTATION

**Yellowstone Park Company
Reservations Office
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190
(307) 344-7321**

GUIDE SERVICE, SHOPS, INSTRUCTION

**Skinny Skis
P.O. Box 392
Jackson, Wyoming 83001
(307) 733-6094**

**Teton Mountaineering
P.O. Box 1533
Jackson, Wyoming 83001
(307) 733-3595**

OVERNIGHT LODGING, FOOD, ETC.

Several motels and restaurants are open year round in Jackson, Wyoming.

**Contact: Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce
532 North Cache
Jackson, Wyoming 83001
(307) 733-3316**

or, check with your travel agent.

SKI TOURS IN NORTHERN YELLOWSTONE

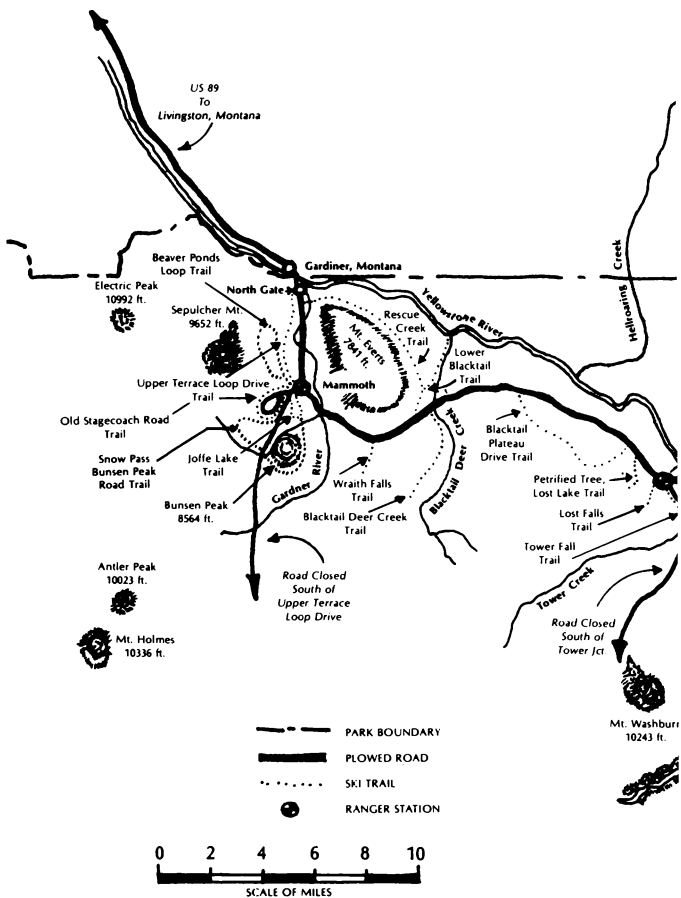
I'm one of those skiers who likes to let my ski tips follow their own fancy. And there's no place where they do that better, or I have more fun chasing after them, than in the northern portion of Yellowstone National Park.

The only road through Yellowstone, open for automobile travel during the winter months, is the road from Gardiner, Montana (North Entrance) to Cooke City, Montana (Northeast Entrance) via Mammoth Hot Springs and Tower Junction. The only winter access to this Gardiner-Cooke City road is by driving south from Livingston, Montana on Highway 89. Cooke City is not accessible in the winter via U.S. Highway 212. The plowed road ends in Cooke City so you'll have to turn around and retrace your route in order to return.

This road will introduce you to some unparalleled scenery, wildlife shows and half-day or one-day ski tours.

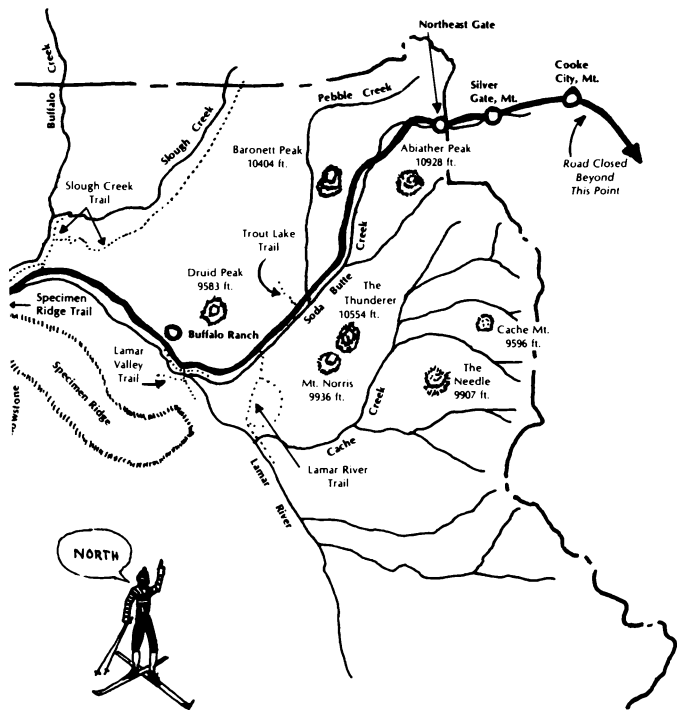
If you're interested in spending a few days in the area, motel accommodations are available in Gardiner, Montana (just outside the North Entrance) or the Mammoth Campground is open all year. Overnight accommodations are also available in Cooke City, Montana. See **RESOURCES**.

You might want to try some of the following tours. But remember, they're only an introduction. Use your imagination.



SKI-TOURS IN NORTHERN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

(This map is intended only for reference—to help you locate the trails listed herein. Please don't attempt to use it as a guide for your skiing. There's nothing that can replace a good topographical map.)



OLD STAGECOACH ROAD

The old stagecoach road between Gardiner and Mammoth used to be the road by which most visitors entered Yellowstone. Now it's only open during the summer, making it perfect for winter ski-touring.

Length: 4 miles one way.

Begin: (1) To the right, just inside the North Entrance.
(2) Directly behind the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel.

Beginning at the North Entrance will give you a long flat stretch before starting uphill to Mammoth. Beginning in Mammoth will give you mostly a down-hill ski to Gardiner.

Snow cover may be marginal or blown away by the wind so watch for ski-bottom-gouging rocks!

The mountain to the west is Sepulcher Mountain (9,652 feet), named for a tomblike rock on the northwest slope which can be seen from the North Entrance.

The mountain to the east is Mount Everts (7,841 feet), named for Truman Everts who was separated from an early exploring party and wandered for 37 days before being rescued.

Mt. Everts is one of the many places where you can become familiar with Yellowstone's geology. The horizontal layers of rock are sedimentary sandstones and shales—deposited 70-140 million years ago when this area was covered by an inland sea.

All along this road you'll have good opportunities to see wildlife. Toward the North Entrance you might see antelope. Watch the roadside aspen groves for deer, elk, and coyotes. If you've brought

binoculars, check the bench to the left (north) of Mt. Everts for bighorn sheep.

The canyon below you belongs to the Gardner River. This ski-tour is not a loop so unless you have a car waiting at the other end, you'll have to retrace your tracks.

RESCUE CREEK TRAIL

This tour takes you around the back side of Mt. Everts and traverses mostly open sagebrush terrain.

Length: 8 miles one way.

- Begin:** (1) 0.6 miles from North Entrance Gate, second pull-out to the left.
(2) 6.4 miles east of Mammoth on Gardiner-Cooke City Road, past Blacktail Lakes to the left.

If you begin just past the North Entrance, park your car well off the road, cross the bridge over the Gardner River and continue to the top of the bench.

Because this area of yellowstone is in a precipitation shadow, the lack of snow could force you to walk the first 1.5-2 miles. Check the snow conditions.

Follow the orange metal flags posted on poles or trees which mark the trail. If you continue all the way you'll come out on the Gardiner-Cooke City Road but unless you have a car waiting, it's best to pick some half-way point and turn back.

If you begin from the trailhead on the Gardiner-Cooke City Road, drive east of Mammoth 5.8 miles. The Blacktail Lakes will be on your left. 0.5 miles beyond, on the right, will be a parking area. Get your gear and ski off the road's edge back toward Mammoth. (Park regulations make it illegal to ski on the plowed road. For your own safety, please observe this regulation). There, on the right, about 60 yards from the parking area, will be the trailhead.

Once again follow the orange trail markers. Traveling north up a small hill you'll pass a fenced in "elk enclosure" where park biologists can study the effects of browsing on vegetation.

Just over the top of the hill the trail branches—straight ahead (north) for Rescue Creek and off to the right (northeast) for the Lower Blacktail Trail. Continue to follow the orange trail markers north around Mt. Everts to the Gardiner-Cooke City Road or pick a "half-way" point and return the same way you came.

On either route watch for elk, deer, sheep and coyotes.



BEAVER PONDS LOOP TRAIL

This tour provides pleasant scenery, fairly easy skiing and a good introduction to winter wilderness Yellowstone.

Length: 5 miles round trip.

Begin: Behind the stone house just north of Liberty Cap, 0.2 mile past the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel.

From behind the stone house the trail climbs about 350 feet up Clematis Gulch. Before Yellowstone became a national park, a hotel and bath house was operated in this area. Clematis Creek was at one time impounded to provide water for the buildings in the Mammoth complex.

At the top of the gulch you'll find a tree stump with a sign carved in it indicating the "Nature Trail". Follow it to the right (north).

Soon you'll enter a large open area known as Elk Plaza. Elk, or Wapiti as the Indians called them, and deer winter here. The mountain to the right (east) is Mt. Everts (see Old Stagecoach Road Tour).

The rolling terrain along this tour is the landscaping work of retreating glaciers depositing tons of rock and dirt called moraine.

The Beaver Ponds are a series of small lakes formed by beavers building dams across a stream. It's not advisable to ski out onto any of these lakes as the ice may not be thick enough to support your weight.

Continue around the Beaver Ponds and back to the eastern side of Elk Plaza. Along the way watch for the white barked aspen trees. During the summer, the unusual flat stem construction of the leaves causes them to shimmer and "quake". The dark scars on the trunks mark spots where deer, elk and moose have eaten the bark. Notice also how the aspen tend to grow in groups or stands. This is because new trees sprout from the roots of old trees—much like strawberries sending out runners.

The trail may be hard to follow across the open area of Elk Plaza but just continue straight toward Bunsen Peak which lies south-east. Mt. Everts will be on your left.

A large hill marks the end of Elk Plaza and if you traverse down the eastern side you can intersect with the Old Stagecoach Road. From here it's a quick downhill run to the back of the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel and a short walk back to your car.

JOFFE LAKE

An easy ski-tour into a beautiful little lake at the base of Bunsen Peak.

Length: 1-2 miles one way.

Begin: (1) Behind Mammoth trailer housing area.
(2) One mile south of Mammoth Village, past the hot springs at end of plowed road.

If you begin behind the Mammoth trailer housing area, go south of Mammoth Village, past the hot springs. Where the road takes a sharp right, you should turn left into the trailer area. Stay to the right and follow the road around behind the trailer area. Park in the equipment storage and construction area.

Ski along the road through the trees for about one mile. You'll top a small rise and there's Joffe Lake! Return the same way.

If you choose the other route, drive south from Mammoth Village, past the hot springs, past the trailer area turn-off to the end of the plowed road. Park your car and ski past the barricade and up the road about 50 yards and look for a small wooden sign set back from the road on the left.

This is the beginning of the Joffe Lake Ski Trail and it continues 1.7 miles through sagebrush and pines to the lake itself. Follow the orange markers on the trees. Return the same way, or if you like follow the road out to the trailer area.

Whichever route you take watch for deer, elk and moose.

The mountain ahead of you most the time is Bunsen Peak (8,564 feet), named for Robert Wilhelm Bunsen who did some pioneering research about the workings of geysers. The "bad hair-cut" effect on the slopes of Bunsen Peak is the result of a forest fire in the 1880's. The forest below the scar line has regrown since that fire.

SNOW PASS — BUNSEN PEAK ROAD

This trail climbs 1,200 feet to Snow Pass, drops into Gardners Hole which is edged by the Gallatin Mountains, and continues around Bunsen Peak, skirting Sheepeater Canyon with good views of Osprey Falls.

Length: 12 miles round trip.

Begin: One mile south of Mammoth Village, past the Hot Springs, at end of plowed road.

Drive south from Mammoth Village, past the hot springs to the end of the plowed road. Park your car, ski past the barricade and up the road 0.4 mile. Look for a small wooden sign set back from the road on the right.

Continue on the well defined trail 1.5 miles to the top of Snow Pass (7,400 feet). The old stagecoach road from Mammoth used to cross here between Clagett Butte to the north and Terrace Mountain to the south before the present road was built through the Golden Gate.

From Snow Pass the trail drops into the northern end of Gardners Hole—named for Johnson Gardner who trapped beaver here as early as 1832. Notice the difference in spelling between Gardners Hole, with its Gardner River, and the town of Gardiner, Montana.

Local legend has it that Johnson Gardner didn't know how to read, write, or spell his own name. Friends who signed for him created the two spellings.

From here the trail continues along the base of Terrace Mountain back to the Mammoth-Norris road. Because of drifting snow the trail may be difficult to follow but if you proceed with the base of Terrace Mountain always to your left (east), you should have no trouble intersecting the road.



The Gallatin Mountains are those to the west. This range is a 20 mile long uplifted block of stratified, sedimentary rocks. Electric Peak (10,992 feet) is the northernmost and Mt. Holmes (10,336 feet) is at the southern end.

Cross the road and continue past the barricade on the Bunsen Peak Loop Road. See the Joffe Lake tour for more information on Bunsen Peak.

The first portion of this road is fairly level but on the back side of Bunsen Peak it becomes steep and winding. Be careful if you encounter ice as some of the curves have abrupt, steep drop-offs into Sheepeater Canyon on their outsides.

This canyon, with a maximum depth of 800 feet, is named for the Sheepeater Indians—the only people known to have made what is now Yellowstone park their year round home.

Along some of those sharp curves you'll have good views down into the canyon. Look for Osprey Falls (150 feet), formed as the Gardner River plunges to the depths of this impressive canyon.

The road continues down the slope of Bunsen Peak and ends in the Mammoth trailer housing area described in the Joffe Lake tour.

Continue out to the plowed road, turn right (west) and follow it .5 miles to the parking area where you left your car.

All along this tour watch for deer and moose.

UPPER TERRACE LOOP DRIVE

The Mammoth Hot Springs are one of Yellowstone's more interesting thermal features. The varied-size springs, often veiled by steam or ice formations, can be viewed along this ski tour.

Length: 1.6 miles round trip.

Begin: One mile south of Mammoth Village, past the hot springs, at end of plowed road.

The thermal activity in this area is the result of surface water seeping into the mountain side where it is heated by molten rock less than two miles down. As it rises back toward the surface, the hot water often dissolves the underlying limestone and then redeposits it at the surface in the constantly changing travertine terraces.

Begin your tour in either direction around this loop. There are several uphill sections and good downhill runs.

It's not advisable to leave the road on this ski-tour as the surface crust is very thin and fragile. Breaking through into a cauldron of boiling water could sure ruin your day!

All along the tour watch the trees for deer, elk, coyotes and moose. This ski-tour is a loop so you'll be able to ski right back to your car.

WRAITH FALLS

This is a level, easy tour, especially good for children.
Take your time and enjoy.

Length: 0.25 mile one way.

Begin: 4.5 miles east of Mammoth, just past
Lava Creek Bridge, parking area to right.

This ski-tour begins in a meadow but enters a forest of pine, spruce and fir near the falls.

These “falls” are actually only a cascade of Lupine Creek but certainly lovely with winter ice formations.

Watch for elk, deer and moose.





LOWER BLACKTAIL TRAIL

This trail traverses gently rolling sagebrush terrain before plunging to the bottom of the Black Canyon of the Yellowstone.

Length: 2.5 miles one way.

Begin: 6.4 miles east of Mammoth on Gardiner-Cooke City road, past Blacktail Lakes, to the left.

Drive east of Mammoth 5.8 miles. The Blacktail Lakes will be on your left. 0.5 miles beyond, on the right, will be a parking area. Get your gear and ski off the road's edge back toward Mammoth. (Park regulations make it illegal to ski on the plowed road. For your own safety, please observe this regulation). There, on the right, about 60 yards from the parking area, will be the trailhead.

Follow the trail until it divides and then take the right (northeast) branch. The orange trail markers may be down so follow what appears to be an old road through the sagebrush.

It's not advisable to follow the trail down to the river as it is steep and hazardous. Instead, turn around at the top and ski back the same way you came in.

The creek to the east is Blacktail Deer Creek. Watch for the deer that gave their name to the creek. Also elk and coyotes.

BLACKTAIL DEER CREEK

This ski-tour takes you into an open, rolling plateau where you can let your imagination and ability run wild. It is a good place to practice your downhill maneuvering or stretch out your stride.

Length: It's up to you.

Begin: 6.5 miles east of Mammoth on the Gardiner-Cooke City Road, parking area on right.

Follow the road south out of the parking area and you'll be crossing the ancient Bannock Indian Trail used as a route to summer buffalo hunts in the east.

The stream to your left is Blacktail Deer Creek. If you use some imagination you can still see the stream crossing used by Indians, early explorers and prospectors alike.

Continue on up the road, to the top of a small hill. Stretching out ahead of you are acres of gently rolling terrain. Go to it and enjoy! Watch the creek bed for deer and the open meadows for herds of elk.



BLACKTAIL PLATEAU DRIVE

The Blacktail Plateau Drive is a section of the original stagecoach road used to traverse this portion of the park. This road crosses a gently rolling plateau and offers good views of Yellowstone backcountry and wildlife. It is showcased at its far end by a gentle 3 mile descent through a Douglas Fir forest deep with quiet snow.

Length: 6 miles one way.

- Begin:** (1) 11.1 miles east of Mammoth, large sign, parking area on either side of the road.
(2) 18.1 miles east of Mammoth, just west of Petrified Tree Drive. Park at beginning of Petrified Tree Drive or 100 yards east in the large plowed turnout.

If you begin this tour 11.1 miles east of Mammoth, you'll have no trouble finding it, as a large sign marks the road. Park in the plowed turnout on either side of the road and ski past the pipe gate following Blacktail Plateau Drive.

The first half of this ski-tour traverses open meadows. Watch the tree lines for deer, elk, coyotes and the occasional moose.

About 1.5-2 miles east along the drive you'll come to a spur road to the right (southwest) leading to a large series of corrals. These were used occasionally to contain elk herds for biological studies.

Unless you have a car waiting at the other end of this ski-tour this is a good spot to stop for a rest before turning around and returning.

If you do continue on to the end, the road will climb gently before passing through a gap at about the 3-mile-mark and descending back to the Gardiner-Cooke City Road.

This descent is actually the best part of the tour as it gently drops through deep Douglas Fir groves and powder snow. If you're quiet and watch carefully you may see a moose.

If you prefer this section of the ski-tour but don't want to ski the entire Blacktail Plateau Drive just to reach it, drive 18.1 miles east of Mammoth to the Petrified Tree Road. Park your car on the right at the beginning of Petrified Tree Drive or 100 yards east in the large plowed turnout and ski off the road's edge back toward Mammoth. (Park regulations make it illegal to ski on the plowed road. For your own safety, please observe this regulation). On your left will be the end of the Blacktail Plateau Drive, 60-160 yards, depending on where you parked.

Ski past the pipe gate and continue uphill as far as you like—the top is about 3 miles away. This will take you through the Douglas Fir forest. This is really quite a beautiful tour and you'll soon see why ski-touring is also called “quiet skiing.”

PETRIFIED TREE DRIVE— LOST LAKE

Here's another chance to view some of Yellowstone's geologic past. Although Yellowstone has extensive petrified forests, this is the only example that can be viewed from the road and is made more unique by the fact that this tree is petrified in a standing position, just as it once grew. To continue on to Lost Lake adds a visit to a unique beaver pond. A good tour for the whole family.

Length: 0.25 mile plus another 1 mile if you continue on to Lost Lake.

Begin: 18.1 miles east of Mammoth, small sign and parking area on the right, or park in large plowed turnout 100 yards east.

Follow the Petrified Tree Drive as it gently climbs .25 mile through fir trees to the petrified tree itself. Along the way, watch the woods for deer, elk and moose.

As you reach the top look for the petrified tree above you and to your left. It's up there in that sturdy cage—not to keep it in, but to keep thoughtless souvenir hunters out. This is another case of “Please look but don't touch.”

If you turn back now it's a nice gentle downhill back to your car. If you want to go farther, the Lost Lake Trail begins from the southern edge of the road, down at the bottom of the slope. Ski south-east up the creek bed for about 1 mile to Lost Lake.

This is a beaver pond and you can see the top of the lodge out there in the middle of the lake. It's not advisable to ski out on the ice of the lake as it may break through with your weight.

It was beaver that first brought the early explorers to Yellowstone. When the demand for beaver skin hats died, the Yellowstone region dropped into the protection of obscurity. Only just before it became the world's first national park in 1872 was it “rediscovered.”

The Lost Lake Trail can be followed on past the lake to a vantage point above Lost Creek Canyon. The views are spectacular along the canyon's edge but snow cornices present a very real danger. Do not ski out to the edge—view from a safe distance.

The trail also continues on to Roosevelt Lodge (a summer dude ranch run by Yellowstone Park Company, 1.5 miles away) and even Tower Campground (3 miles away) near Tower Fall.

The trail divides in an open meadow. One route leads down a series of switchbacks to the Roosevelt Lodge horse corrals. Caution is advised while skiing down these switchbacks. The other route leads directly across the meadow from the trail junction and continues on to Tower Campground and Tower Fall.

Return the same way you came, or arrange for a shuttle if you continue on to Roosevelt Lodge or Tower Fall.

LOST CREEK FALLS TRAIL

This short trail takes you along Lost Creek to the foot of 40 foot Lost Falls in a steep canyon.

Length: 0.25 mile one way.

Begin: At the end of the plowed road at Tower Junction.

Park your car and ski up the entrance road to Roosevelt Lodge, a summer dude ranch run by Yellowstone Park Company.

Continue, behind the lodge building, upstream along Lost Creek into a steep canyon full of timber. Lost Falls will be at the end, wrapped in it's winter shawl of ice.

Under certain conditions, avalanche danger can be very high in Lost Creek Canyon. On approaching the waterfall, be aware of the danger of falling ice—especially on warm days.

Along the way, watch for deer, elk, moose or bison. Return to your car the same way.

TOWER FALL

This is a 2.5 mile mostly-gentle uphill ski to 132 foot Tower Fall. Along the way there are many good views into the northern end of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Tower Fall itself is quite impressive as it drops between tower-like rock formations from which it gets its name.

Length: 2.5 miles one way.

Begin: At the end of the plowed road at Tower Junction.

Park your car at Tower Junction where the plowed road ends, ski past the pipe gate and continue on up the road toward Tower Fall.

The buildings to your right are part of Roosevelt Lodge—a summer dude ranch run by Yellowstone Park Company. Watch the meadow to your left for signs of bison.

The Calcite Springs Overlook affords a spectacular view down into the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. This is also a great place to look for bighorn sheep and bison on the ridge across the canyon.

It was near this spot that President Theodore Roosevelt camped during his visit to Yellowstone in 1903. Roosevelt Lodge is named for him.

Continuing around the next bend you have your first good look into the northern end of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. This 24 mile long canyon has been carved out of soft rhyolite lava by the Yellowstone River. The yellow-hued canyon walls are the result of percolating thermal gases and oxidation. The name Yellowstone was derived from an early Indian word describing this canyon as that of “The Yellow-Rock River-Running.”

Across the canyon you can see a shelf of columnar basalt—a type of lava which cooled very slowly and thus formed large columns. This formation continues to your side of the canyon as you ski under Overhanging Cliff.

A stone bridge crosses Tower Creek and just past that is the Tower Fall parking area. The trail to the overlook runs along the side of the hill to your left.

There is a trail to the bottom of Tower Fall (0.4 miles) but it is not recommended that you try to ski it as the trail is steep and has several drop-offs along the edge. There are usually enough people walking down this trail to keep it well packed but caution is still advised as the footing may be slippery.

Under certain conditions, avalanche danger can be very high in Tower Fall Canyon. On approaching the waterfall, be aware of the danger of falling ice—especially on warm days.

Return to your car the same way you came.

SPECIMEN RIDGE

This tour demands a steep, strenuous climb in return for views of some of the finest examples of standing petrified trees in the world, spectacular views of the northwest corner of Yellowstone and some exciting downhill runs.

Length: 3.5 miles one way.

Begin: 5 miles east of Tower Junction, at the Lamar River Bridge on the Northeast Entrance road.

Ski south from the bridge and continue up the ridge to the west of Crystal Creek. Near the top of the ridge, and south of your starting point, you should be able to see two outcroppings of rock separated by a patch of trees rising to the top of the ridge. Near the top of the near outcropping (east one) is a fine collection of petrified trees.

This area of Yellowstone has experienced a great deal of volcanic activity. Lava flows, ash and debris buried all living things and then slowly exchanged minerals for living matter.

The huge petrified stump is the remains of a giant redwood tree which was 26 feet in circumference and 200-300 feet in height when living. The two trees below are the remains of pine trees.

Caution should be used at all time while viewing these specimens as footing along the rock outcropping is hazardous. And please note: these fossil trees represent great scientific significance. Respect them! Leave them for others to enjoy! Collecting specimens is absolutely forbidden!

Continue to the top of Specimen Ridge for some spectacular views. A topographic map will help name what you're seeing.

When it's time to return, batten down and swoop off the ridge for some exhilarating downhill skiing. Watch for wind blown areas where snow cover might be marginal.

SLOUGH CREEK

There are actually three different ski-tours that begin from this one spot. Two follow roads over open, rolling terrain and the third branches off for a more diverse tour over a small ridge to the upper reaches of Slough Creek. All are fine tours with good wildlife viewing opportunities.

Length: 2-4 miles one way.

Begin: At road into Slough Creek campground, 5.7 miles northeast of Tower Junction.

Park your car at the beginning of the road into the campground. Just to your left, heading west, is an old wagon road. Follow it 2 miles down to the ford across Slough Creek. Watch for herds of elk and bison.

The campground is 2 miles north via the road straight ahead of you—beautiful scenery. At the head of a small canyon, Slough Creek flows next to the campground. Once again, watch for elk, bison and coyotes.

Just before you ski into the campground area, a horse barn appears to your left. Off to the right the Slough Creek trail enters. It's a good trail, try it if you don't mind some uphill sections.

The trail follows an old wagon road up over a small ridge, passing through nice stands of Douglas Fir and aspen. At the top ski out onto the western facing promontory to your right for a good view into the Lamar River Valley. Continue through the saddle to the other side of the ridge for a good view into upper Slough Creek. Ski down there if you like, it's a magnificent valley about 1 mile wide and 8 miles long.

On all these tours, return the same way you came.



LAMAR VALLEY

A huge open valley with unlimited ski-touring. The terrain is open, mostly level and inviting for skiers of all levels with a desire to make their own trails.

Length: It's up to you.

Begin: 12.3 miles northeast of Tower Junction. Park in the plowed turnout 2 miles east of the Buffalo Ranch.

Park your car, put on your skis and go to it! The Lamar River drains this broad valley, that's it down in the bottom there.

At the turn of the century, the bison population here was very low and their extinction was feared. Efforts were centered at the Buffalo Ranch to preserve them. Some of the corrals used then are still preserved now. The last bits of buffalo ranching disappeared in the 1950's and since then a stable population of bison has continued in Yellowstone.

Watch for some of them in the valley today. Elk also! These animals tend to seek shelter here when storms move through.

The long ridge to the south is Specimen Ridge, site of Yellowstone's most extensive fossil tree forests. Check the geology exhibit in the parking area and see the Specimen Ridge ski-tour for a description of this interesting portion of Yellowstone's geological history.



LAMAR RIVER TRAIL

Another opportunity to strap on your skis and let your imagination run wild. Open terrain at the junction of the Lamar River and Soda Butte Creek surrounded by some of Yellowstone's most spectacular country.

Length: It's up to you again!

Begin: 14.5 miles northeast of Tower Junction, parking area on right.

Park your car in the pullout area. Ski down the hill and over the bridge crossing Soda Butte Creek. The trail itself is indicated by orange markers on posts.

Following the trail for about 4 miles will put you into a pretty incredible backcountry situation. Take time to enjoy the silence, solitude and probably untracked snow.

If you feel imaginative and want to explore some of the surrounding area—go to it! The terrain is open and gently rolling. Have fun!

The area you're skiing through is a culmination of all the geological processes you've already seen. 300 million years ago it was covered by an inland sea. With the creation of the Rocky Mountains about 70 million years ago the landscape was crumbled and folded. Then volcanic lava flows covered the area. Since then erosion has been working to uncover the oldest limestones again.

TROUT LAKE TRAIL

A steep, hard climb up over a small ridge which is more than rewarded by the spectacular view. A good chance to test your waxing skill and herringbone.

Length: 0.3 mile one way.

Begin: 15.4 miles east of Tower Junction, just past Soda Butte, parking area on left.

There's no sign to mark this trail, but if you feel up to a climb don't miss it. From the top you have a good view of the Thunderer (10,554 feet) to the southeast and Mt. Hornaday (10,036 feet) off to the north. Both are part of the Absaroka Mountain Range.

Trout Lake is surrounded by open country which will give you a good chance to explore on your own.

Be careful, though, about skiing on the lake itself as the ice could break through with your weight.

Watch for elk, deer, bighorn sheep and bison. This is not a loop tour so return the same way you came.



SKI TOURS IN THE OLD FAITHFUL AREA

Half-day or one-day ski touring is by no means limited to the northern portion of Yellowstone, just easier to get to.

With a little more effort you can arrange to have yourself and skis transported via snowcoach from West Yellowstone, Montana (West Entrance) or Flagg Ranch, Wyoming (South Entrance, 60 miles north of Jackson, Wyoming) to the Old Faithful area.

A lodge is operated here from mid-December to mid-March by the park concessionaire and you can probably arrange for transportation to different trail heads.

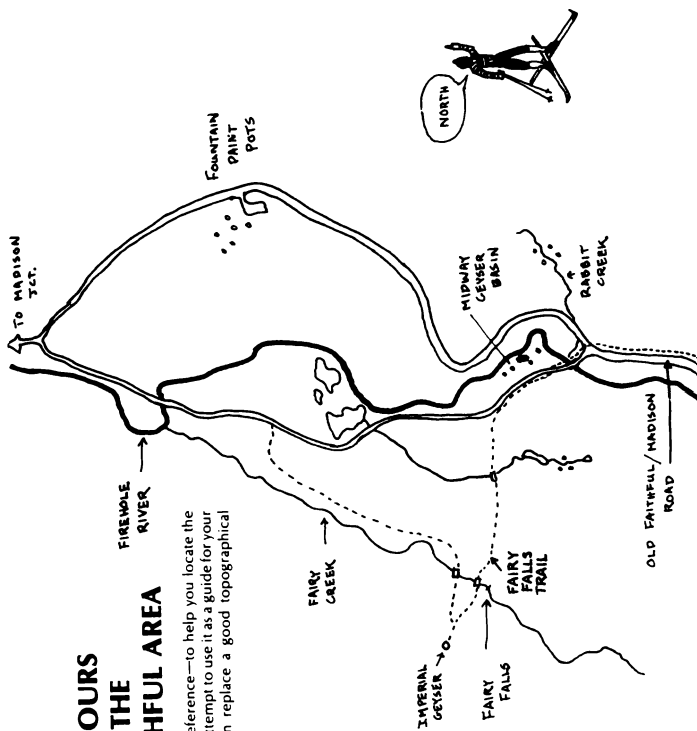
Most ski tours in this area begin from the Old Faithful Visitor Center. It's strongly suggested that you check there before and after each tour—just as a way of letting someone know where you are going and when you should be back.

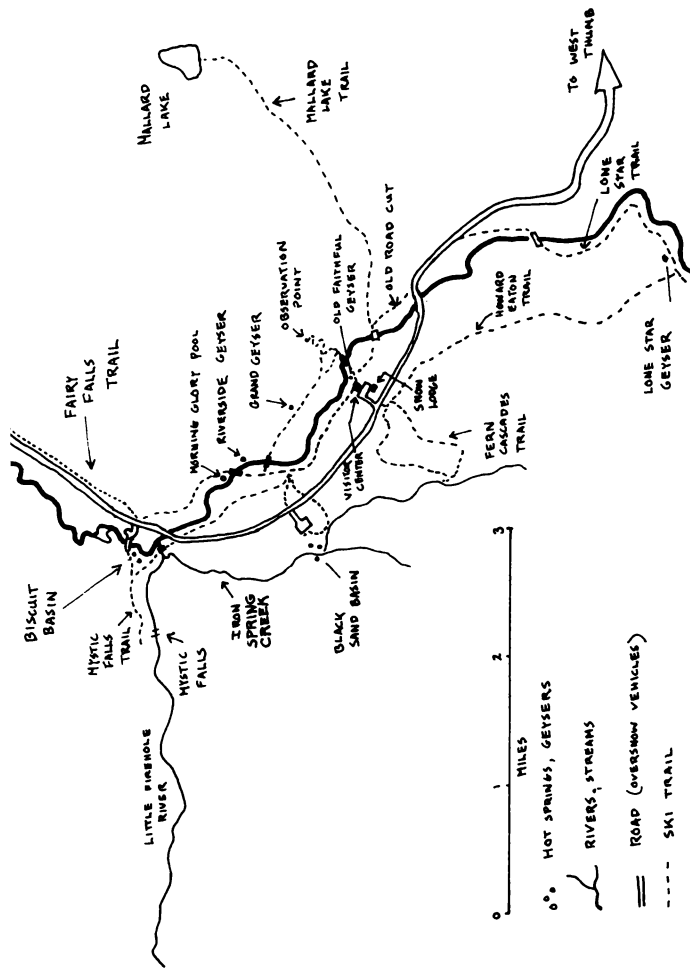
Ski tours you might like to try include . . .



SKI-TOURS IN THE OLD FAITHFUL AREA

(This map is intended only for reference—to help you locate the trails listed herein. Please don't attempt to use it as a guide for your skiing. There's nothing that can replace a good topographical map.)





MORNING GLORY POOL — BISCUIT BASIN

A fairly level, partially looped trail that passes by several of the outstanding thermal features in the Upper Geyser Basin.

Length: 5 miles round trip.

Begin: Old Faithful Visitor Center.

From the front of the visitor center, ski to your left (NW) along the old roadway which has been converted to pedestrian use. The trail will take you in front of the Old Faithful Inn—a world-famous log hotel built in the winter of 1903-1904.

Castle Geyser will be on your right about 0.5 mile from the visitor center. Castle has the largest cone and may be the oldest geyser in Yellowstone. An eruption reaches a height of 90 feet, lasts for about 20 minutes and is followed by about an hour of rushing steam.

The trail swings down close to the Firehole River and passes within sight of several other interesting thermal features. Watch for bison and elk along the river. They winter in the basin where steam from thermal features lessens the snow cover making it easier to find food.

Grotto Geyser, 1.2 miles from the visitor center, gets its weird shape from geyserite formations on tree trunks. Apparently spray from Grotto Geyser hit surrounding trees, causing them to bend and slump closer to the geyser where they were completely covered!

An interesting side trip can be taken from here to Riverside Geyser which is situated on the bank of the Firehole River in such a way that it sends its 75 foot column of water arching out over the river. Eruptions last about 20 minutes.

0.3 mile past Grotto Geyser is Morning Glory Pool, probably Yellowstone's most famous hot spring. Morning Glory Pool was named for the flower it resembles in shape and color.

Algae and bacteria growing in the hot water are responsible for the coloration of this pool. The algae change color with differences in water temperatures, beginning to appear as light yellow around 167°F and deepening to green and brown as the water cools.

From Morning Glory Pool continue following the conspicuous old roadbed north through the lodgepole forest. There are many interesting thermal features along this section of the trail and you will be able to get a closer look at them. But not too close! Remember, the ground around such thermal features is often unstable and thin.

When the trail emerges from the trees you will be able to look across the Firehole River and see Biscuit Basin which can be reached by skiing across the unplowed Old Faithful-Madison road.

Biscuit Basin was named for some unusual biscuit shaped deposits surrounding Sapphire Pool. An earthquake in 1959 jolted Sapphire Pool into a short series of violent eruptions which washed away the scalloped "biscuits."

Other interesting thermal features that can be seen by following the boardwalk around Biscuit Basin include Jewel Geyser, Shell Geyser, Avoca Spring and Mustard Spring.

To return, ski south from Avoca Spring just a few yards on the Mystic Falls Trail. A spur trail heads off to the left (southeast). Follow it down to a bridge which crosses the Little Firehole River and then to the unplowed Old Faithful-Madison road. Cross the road and continue into the trees on the other side.

From here it's 1 mile to the old roadbed near Grotto Geyser and then another 1.1 miles to the visitor center.

MYSTIC FALLS

A fairly level, partially looped trail that takes you through the Upper Geyser Basin and Biscuit Basin before reaching 70 foot Mystic Falls.

Length: 7 miles round trip.

Begin: Old Faithful Visitor Center.

From the front of the visitor center, follow the same trail described in the Morning Glory Pool—Biscuit Basin tour to Avoca Spring at the west end of Biscuit Basin. Along the way, be sure to notice the many interesting thermal features and watch for wintering elk and bison.

A sign marks the trail to Mystic Falls which is less than 1 mile away from here. The trail is well marked, signed and easy to follow as it continues through the lodgepole pine forest. The trail is mostly level with a few gentle hills.

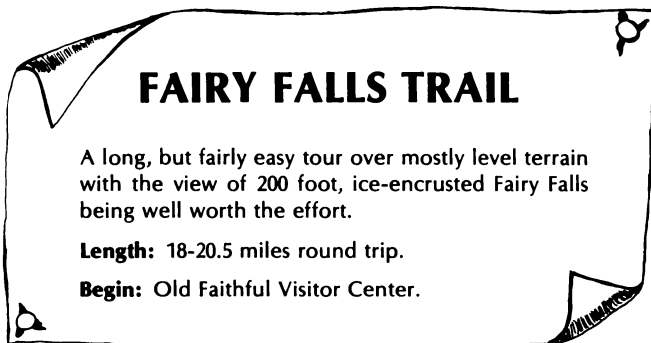
The Summit Lake Trail branches off to the south 0.5 miles from the Mystic Falls trailhead. Just past this point the Mystic Falls Trail traverses a hillside above the Little Firehole River. Be careful of the steep slopes and patches of ice from frozen trailside springs.

The last 200 yards to the overlook is a series of steep switchbacks. It's best to remove your skis and walk up. The view of 70 foot, ice-encrusted Mystic Falls is well worth the extra trouble.

The trail continues up the hillside by a series of switchbacks. You might want to continue up higher for an impressive view back into the Upper Geyser Basin with its columns of steam rising from the various thermal features. You may even see an eruption of Old Faithful Geyser from here!

Return the same way you came or for variety, take the spur trail to your right (southeast) just a few yards before reaching Avoca Spring. Follow it down to a bridge which crosses the Little Firehole River and then to the unplowed Old Faithful-Madison road. Cross the road and continue into the trees on the other side.

From here it's 1 mile to the old roadbed near Grotto Geysler and then another 1.1 miles to the visitor center.



From the front of the visitor center, follow the same trail described in the Morning Glory Pool-Biscuit Basin tour to Morning Glory Pool. Along the way be sure to notice the many interesting thermal features and watch for wintering elk and bison.

From Morning Glory Pool, continue following the conspicuous old roadbed through the lodgepole forest. There are many interesting thermal features along this section of the trail and you will be able to get a close look at them. But not too close! Remember, the ground around thermal features is often unstable and thin.

The old roadbed trail emerges from the trees on a hillside above the unplowed Old Faithful-Madison road. You can look across the Firehole River and see Biscuit Basin. The Fairy Falls Trail begins to your right (north) and continues above the unplowed road about 3 miles.

The trail crosses the unplowed Old Faithful–Madison road and continues 1 mile along the Fountain Flat Freight Road to the Fairy Falls trailhead.

This road skirts the edge of Midway Geyser Basin which will spread out ahead of you and to the right. Several thermal features come into view close to the roads' edge. Do not approach too closely, or ski out into the basin itself, as thin crust and boiling water present very real dangers.

Ahead you'll notice two distinct and very large steam outpourings. The one to the right is Excelsior Spring which was once the largest geyser in Yellowstone. The last known eruption was in 1888. Its underground plumbing system was destroyed and the tremendous water pressure necessary to power geyser eruptions can no longer build up. Now it's a huge hot spring (276 feet by 328 feet) pouring 6 million gallons of hot water a day into the Firehole River.

The steam outpouring to the left comes from Grand Prismatic Spring, the largest hot spring in Yellowstone with a diameter of 370 feet. Notice how the steam rising from this spring appears to be colored. This is a reflection of water and algae.

You'll have a chance to see these thermal features from closer vantage points as you continue along the road to the trailhead.

Caution is advised while skiing on the Fountain Flats road as it is used by concessionaire snowcoaches and private snowmachines. It's best to stay on either side of the road.

A sign on the right side of the road marks the Fairy Falls trailhead. The trail itself begins across the road to the left. The trail is well defined, fairly level and continues 1.4 miles through thick lodgepole pine to Fairy Falls.

Fairy Falls is one of the most spectacular waterfalls in Yellowstone. An unnamed fork of Fairy Creek takes a 200 foot drop off the edge of the Madison Plateau into a pool at the bottom. A winter wrapping of ice makes the scene even more impressive.

From Fairy Falls a spur trail makes connections with the Fairy

Creek Trail 0.4 miles away. Imperial Geyser is only 0.3 mile west from this junction. The trail is signed and marked. Taking this side trip is highly recommended.

Imperial Geyser erupts almost constantly from a crater of boiling water about 150 feet across. At the beginning of each eruption water may shoot up to 40 feet but the average height is 5-15 feet.

You can return to the Old Faithful area the same way you came. Or, for some variety and a longer tour, rather than taking the spur trail back to Fairy Falls continue straight ahead at the trail junction on the Fairy Creek Trail.

This trail follows Fairy Creek through an open meadow containing several thermal features. Sections of this trail are poorly marked so watch carefully for the orange markers which will guide you. Stop and look back for a good view of the edge of the Madison Plateau, Fairy Falls and the Twin Buttes. Watch for bison along this trail.

At the end of the meadow the trail forks. Straight ahead the trail continues for 1 mile to a thermal area known as Queens Laundry. The fork bearing off to the right leads a short distance through the trees to the Fountain Flat Road.

When you reach the road, turn right (south) and follow it 3 miles to the bridge which crosses the Firehole River. Once again, watch for snowmachines on this road.

From the bridge you can retrace your tracks to Biscuit Basin, where once again you have two choices for a return route. The way you came will give you more opportunity to examine fascinating thermal features, but if you want variety, try this alternate route.

Just a few yards south of Avoca Spring on the Mystic Falls Trail, a spur trail leads off to the southeast. Follow it down to a bridge which crosses the Little Firehole River and then to the unplowed Old Faithful-Madison road. Cross the road and continue into the trees on the other side.

From here it's 1 mile to the old roadbed near Grotto Geyser and then another 1.1 miles to the visitor center.

FERN CASCADES LOOP TRAIL

This tour lies completely in a lodgepole pine forest, combines a steep uphill climb, gently rolling terrain and good downhill runs with an impressive view of Fern Cascades. This trail is a one-way only trail and should be followed as described below, allowing you to avoid a very steep and dangerous downhill section.

Length: 4.3 miles round trip.

Begin: Old Faithful Visitor Center.

From the visitor center, ski south through the eastern end of the cabin area behind Old Faithful Snow Lodge. Cross the unplowed Old Faithful-West Thumb road (watch for snowmachines) and continue into the trees on the other side about 40 yards where you'll intersect the Fern Cascades Loop Trail.

Turn right (west) and follow the orange markers 0.4 miles along the power line, behind the government utility and trailer housing area to the Fern Cascades trailhead. A double sided sign saying "Motor Vehicles Excluded" and "Old Faithful 0.8" marks the trail which leads into the woods to your left. From here it's 1.3 miles to Fern Cascades.

This first section of the trail climbs steeply to the edge of a small plateau. It will be a good test of your waxing skill and herringbone.

At the top, the trail levels out and continues to Fern Cascades which are formed as Iron Spring Creek tumbles over the rocks lining a small canyon.

The trail to the Fern Cascades overlook is marked. It's advisable that you remove your skis here and walk the final 100 yards. The overlook trail goes to the right around a small rise and out into a steep slope. Use extreme caution here as icy conditions can make your footing less than secure.

From the overlook continue east on the Fern Cascades Trail. Old Faithful is 2 miles from here.

The fairly level trail makes an easy descent of about 250 feet before intersecting the Lone Star Geyser trail at the 1.3 mile mark.

It's conceivable at this point to lengthen your tour by continuing around the Lone Star Geyser Loop Trail and then back to the Old Faithful complex.

If you choose an immediate return, ski west 0.3 mile on the trail paralleling the Old Faithful-West Thumb road which will bring you back to your starting point at the trail junction.

From here, retrace your tracks 0.4 mile to the visitor center.



LONE STAR GEYSER LOOP TRAIL

This tour passes mostly through lodgepole pine on its way to Lone Star Geyser and then returns along the Firehole River. Following this trail as described below allows you to avoid a steep and difficult downhill section.

Length: 9 miles round trip.

Begin: Old Faithful Visitor Center.

From the visitor center, ski south through the eastern end of the cabin area behind Old Faithful Snow Lodge. Cross the unplowed Old Faithful-West Thumb road (watch for snowmachines) and continue into the trees on the other side about 40 yards where you'll intersect the Lone Star Geyser Trail. Turn left and follow the trail.

The first portion of this tour involves a few steep sections as you climb 500 feet.

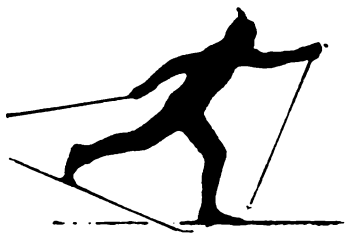
At the 3.5 mile mark you will arrive at Lone Star Geyser. The average time between eruptions of Lone Star is three hours with the eruption itself lasting one-half hour.

The return portion follows an old roadbed for 2.5 miles along the Firehole River to the unplowed Old Faithful-West Thumb road. Turn left (NW) here and follow this road back toward the Old Faithful complex. This unplowed road is used by snowmachines and caution is advised while skiing on it.

The Old Faithful-West Thumb road crosses the Firehole River via bridge just before entering the immediate Old Faithful area. The trail turns off to the right just before you cross the bridge. A swath, cut through the surrounding trees and partially filled in by young trees, marks the trail.

Continue up over a small rise and then it's a gentle downhill to the Firehole River. Turn right (north) and follow the river a short distance until you reach a small foot bridge across the river. Cross the bridge and continue along the trail which will bring you into the cabin area behind Old Faithful Lodge.

From here it's 0.4 mile to the visitor center. Turn left, follow the road up between the first two rows of cabins, in front of the Lodge, to the walkways around Old Faithful Geyser and then to the visitor center.





MALLARD LAKE TRAIL

A gradual uphill tour through lodgepole pine, past a small thermal area and offering a few steep slopes where you can try your maneuvers on returning.

Length: 7.5 miles round trip.

Begin: Old Faithful Visitor Center.

From the front of the visitor center ski southeast toward the Old Faithful Lodge, one of the visitor accommodations operated in this area during summer months.

Continue southeast in front of the lodge and down between the first two rows of cabins. The trailhead will be 0.4 miles from the visitor center at the end of the cabin access road.

A bridge crosses the Firehole River and almost immediately the trail enters the lodgepole pine forest.

You will notice a small thermal area to your left 0.4 miles from the trailhead containing several interesting features. Be careful about approaching any of them too closely since the ground crust is very thin here.

The trail enters a narrow canyon at the 2.2 mile mark and becomes quite spectacular with boulders on either side.

Mallard Lake remains hidden from view until you're almost at its shores. It's not advisable to ski out onto the lake as ice, covering air pockets could give way, plunging you into the freezing water.

Return the same way you came.



OBSERVATION POINT — SOLITARY GEYSER LOOP TRAIL

This short tour gives you a good view from above of Old Faithful and the Upper Geyser Basin. A special experience is to watch a sunrise eruption of Old Faithful Geyser.

Length: 2 miles round trip.

Begin: Old Faithful Visitor Center.

From the visitor center, ski out to the boardwalk and then continue right (east) around Old Faithful Geyser. A bridge crosses the Firehole River at the 0.3 mile mark.

The Observation Point Trail begins just across this bridge on the north side of the river. The trail climbs 200 feet in 0.5 mile to Observation Point—a rock outcropping which provides a bird's-eye view of Old Faithful Geyser. This trail is steep and icy in spots, making for some hazardous skiing conditions. You will find it easier (and safer) to remove your skis and walk to the top.

Although it's not the largest or most regular geyser in Yellowstone, Old Faithful does erupt more frequently than the other big geysers. Intervals between eruptions range from 45-80 minutes, an eruption lasts 2-5 minutes and reaches 100-180 feet in height. It's a good show from here and well worth the wait.

From Observation Point, the trail makes a gentle traverse along the ridge to Solitary Geyser 0.3 miles away. Solitary Geyser erupts to the height of about 4 feet every 5-7 minutes.

From Solitary Geyser the trail makes a gentle descent 0.3 mile to the Geyser Hill walkway. I recommend that you turn to the right and follow the walkway around to see Plume and Beehive Geysers as both are near the trail.

You may even want to plan this tour in conjunction with an eruption of Plume or Beehive Geysers. Plume is one of the more predictable geysers in the upper basin with eruptions every 22-27 minutes. Height of an eruption is about 15 feet. Beehive's narrow cone acts like a nozzle and projects a column of water to a height of 150-180 feet. Eruptions occur once or twice a day usually lasting 4-5 minutes.

A geyser is a hot spring that erupts periodically. Water circulating below ground level is heated by hot rocks. The hot water begins to circulate back toward the surface. Somewhere along its route an obstruction prevents the water from freely circulating.

Pressure increases with depth and the water column becomes progressively hotter. Steam bubbling upward lifts the water column causing the geyser to overflow. This releases pressure on the remaining column which instantly produces violent boiling. An explosion of superheated steam drives the water out and projects it into the air. The geyser is then erupting.

An eruption will eventually exhaust the water and pressure reservoirs below. The geyser must build up sufficient pressure to power its next eruption. This could range from minutes to years!

Continue around the Geyser Hill walkway to the bridge across the Firehole River and then return to the visitor center.

DIVIDE LOOKOUT TRAIL

This tour takes you to a fire lookout tower from where you can view Shoshone Lake. Caution is advised though, as a good portion of this tour follows the unplowed Old Faithful-West Thumb road which is used by snowmachines.

Length: 15 miles round trip.

Begin: Old Faithful Visitor Center.

From the visitor center, ski south through the eastern end of the cabin area behind Old Faithful Snow Lodge to the unplowed Old Faithful-West Thumb road. Turn left here and follow the road 6.7 miles to a parking area on the south side of the road. Watch for snowmachines.

A sign marks the trailhead and from here it's 1.7 miles to the lookout tower.

To avoid a short section of the unplowed Old Faithful-West Thumb road, follow the Mallard Lake Trail over the footbridge which crosses the Firehole River. Turn right here and follow the river to the high road bridge spanning the Firehole. A short uphill climb here will put you on the Old Faithful-West Thumb road. Turn left and follow the road to the trailhead described above. Again, use caution and watch for snowmachines.

The Divide Lookout Trail crosses Spring Creek and enters a lodgepole pine forest. The 60 foot steel lookout tower is at the end of the trail and from here you can enjoy unobstructed views of Shoshone Lake in the distance.

You can climb the steps of the tower for a better view but be careful—ice may make your footing less than secure.

Return to the Old Faithful area the same way you came.

UPPER GEYSER BASIN

By all means, take the time to explore the Upper Geyser Basin. Experience the world's largest concentration of thermal features and watch for wintering wildlife. Because of icy conditions foot travel only is recommended, but carry your skis in case a side trip interests you.

Length: It's up to you.

Begin: Old Faithful Visitor Center.

From the visitor center, head out into the geyser basin by following the walkways in any direction.

Old Faithful Geyser certainly isn't the only thermal feature here. Beehive, Castle, Grant, Grotto and Riverside, which erupts out at an angle over the Firehole River, are worth seeing.

Punch Bowl Spring and Morning Glory Pool are sights of thermal coloration you'll never forget. An interesting side trip leads from Punch Bowl Spring to Black Sand Basin and back. Be sure and see Emerald Pool while in the Black Sand Basin.

All through the geyser basin you'll have good chances for spotting elk and bison. They winter in thermal areas such as these where lessened snow cover makes it easier to find food.



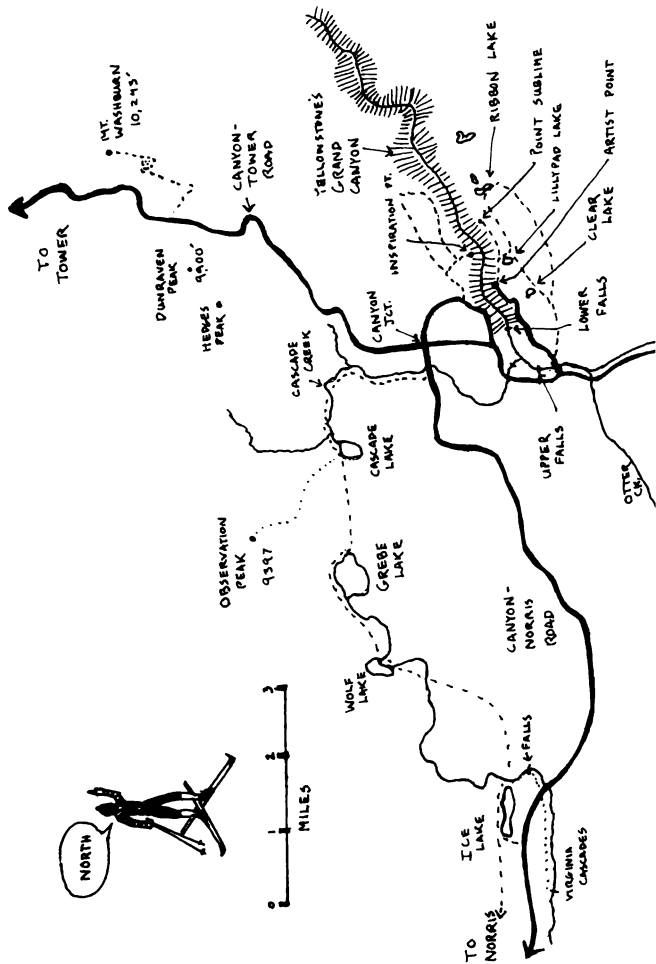
SKI TOURS IN THE CANYON AREA

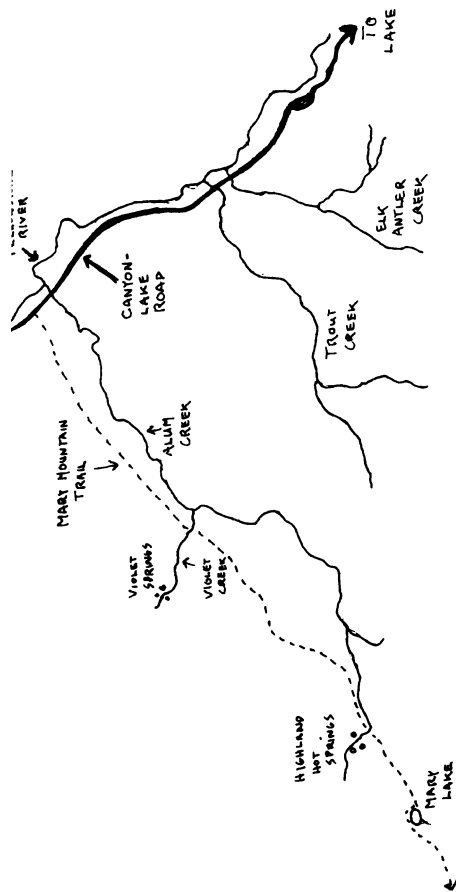
Spectacular scenery and incredible powder snow (tons of it) await the ski tourer in the Canyon area. So do some special logistical problems.

Transportation to and from the Canyon area is not always regular and should be arranged in advance via concessionaire snowcoach or private snowmachine.

The Canyon Campground is available and can easily be used as base camp for whatever ski tours interest you.

Once you're in the Canyon area, you're on your own. Plan accordingly. I'll just make basic suggestions for possible ski tours and leave it up to you to fill in the details.





SKI-TOURS IN THE CANYON AREA

(This map is intended only for reference—to help you locate the trails listed herein. Please don't attempt to use it as a guide for your skiing. There's nothing that can replace a good topographical map.)

Touring along the rim of the **GRAND CANYON OF THE YELLOWSTONE** is simply breathtaking. This 24-mile-long canyon was carved through soft rhyolite lava by the Yellowstone River and shaded every imaginable variation of yellow by percolating thermal gases. The canyon is further enhanced by the displays of three waterfalls—Upper Falls (109 feet), Lower Falls (308 feet) and Crystal Falls (129 feet), all encrusted in their winter wrappings of ice. Please note that snow cornices and potential avalanche conditions present very real dangers all along the canyon rim. Stay away from the edge! Do not ski out on snow cornices or narrow points!

The climb to **DUNRAVEN PASS** is long and fairly steep but the unplowed Canyon-Tower road provides a feasible route. The view from the top on a clear day will be worth your efforts. Use your topographical map to see the Absaroka Mountains, the Grand Canyon, the Mirror Plateau, Hayden Valley, Yellowstone Lake and 75 miles away, sticking up from the horizon like an upturned saw, the Teton Mountains. Any plans to continue beyond Dunraven Pass on the unplowed road should be checked against potential avalanche dangers. Watch for snowmachines on this unplowed road.

HAYDEN VALLEY, a portion of the Old Yellowstone Lake bed, is open, vast and tranquil. The Yellowstone River winds through the bottom of this valley. Bison and Canada Geese winter along the banks. Always keep a minimum distance of at least 250 yards between yourself and any bison. Ski touring here is unlimited—the open, rolling terrain beckons to your ski tips. You need only follow for the adventure.

A short tour can be made to **CASCADE LAKE** from Canyon Junction. Skiing through the meadows along **CASCADE CREEK** offers many fine views.

The **GLACIAL BOULDER TRAIL** is another day tour which provides views into the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Washburn Hot Springs is reached at the 4 mile mark. Take time to view these thermal features before returning but remember not to approach too closely—thin crust may break away beneath you resulting in serious burns.

The **RIBBON LAKE—CLEAR LAKE LOOP TRAIL** begins near the Chittenden Bridge across the Yellowstone River and travels above the south rim of the canyon. Views into the canyon, views of the Washburn Range, Hayden Valley and the opportunity to visit a backcountry thermal area make this an interesting ski tour. Note the hazards of skiing too close to the canyon rim—snow cornices and potential avalanche conditions. Also note the dangers of approaching thermal features too closely—thin crust may break away beneath you resulting in serious burns.

OVERNIGHT SKI TOURS

Beyond half-day or one-day ski tours in Yellowstone, you'll probably find yourself in an overnight camping situation.

It's a great way to see more country, but winter camping is no situation for the uninformed. Again, be prepared, doubly so. Know what you're about, and up against.

For all overnight tours you must obtain a free backcountry permit at a ranger station or visitor center. Not only does obtaining this permit reserve a campsite for you but it also lets someone know where you are going and when you will return. It's also a good way to pick up valuable (maybe even lifesaving) information on snow and avalanche conditions.

What follows is a series of basic outlines for overnight ski tours in **NORTHERN YELLOWSTONE**, the **OLD FAITHFUL AREA** and the **CANYON AREA**.

They by no means are all Yellowstone has to offer. Use your imagination to pick other tours but don't go anywhere without much very careful planning.

NORTHERN YELLOWSTONE

The **FAWN PASS TRAIL** (12 miles) is a tough, scenic tour which leaves the Mammoth Hot Springs area, continues over Snow Pass, crosses the northern end of Gardners Hole and gains lots of elevation climbing into the Gallatin Mountains. Fantastic views from Fawn Pass (9,100 feet) and good campsites along the way are featured. Return by the same route or see **EXTENDED TOURS** for some thoughts on a different way back.

The **PEBBLE CREEK TRAIL** (13 miles) starts out with a 1,000 foot strenuous climb over a saddle in a ridge. The trail here is poorly marked and often hard to follow but is compensated by spectacular views of Abiathar Peak (10,928 feet) to the southeast and the Soda Butte Creek Valley below. Your efforts will be further rewarded when you reach Pebble Creek which flows through an open valley surrounded by some of Yellowstone's more spectacular mountain scenery. One of Yellowstone's most beautiful campsites is located here. Use your topographical map to help locate Cutoff Mountain, Wolverine, Sunset and Meridian Peaks which represent some of the spectacular scenery to be seen on this tour. The trail follows Pebble Creek between Baronette Peak (10,404 feet) to the east and Mt. Hornaday (10,036 feet) to the west, passes through spruce and fir forests before ending at the Pebble Creek Campground.

The ski tour up **SLOUGH CREEK** can be extended to an overnight experience. Good campsites are available near the confluence of Slough Creek and Elk Tongue Creek. Return the same way you came or see **EXTENDED TOURS** for some thoughts on a different way back.

Skiing up the **LAMAR RIVER TRAIL** offers several overnight camping opportunities depending on how far you want to go. Miller Creek is about 9 miles in and provides a good introduction to this rugged, seldom visited portion of the Absaroka Mountains.

CACHE LAKE can be reached from the Mammoth area by skiing over Snow Pass and then following the trail up the Glen Creek drainage. The lake sits at the base of Electric Peak (10,992 feet) and a beautiful campsite is located here. Return the same way you came or see **EXTENDED TOURS** for some thoughts on a different way back.

Following the **BLACKTAIL DEER CREEK** drainage to **COOKE PEAK**, up the ridgeline to **OBSERVATION PEAK** and then down into the **CANYON AREA** is a good overnight tour for those interested in true cross-country skiing with a little alpine touring thrown in for spiciness.

It's about a 15 mile tour which takes you through the Washburn Range, but please note that this is not a tour for casual skiers and should be attempted only by those in top physical shape, using the proper equipment and being very knowledgeable about winter camping, survival, compass and map reading. Spring weather can produce hazardous downhill skiing conditions. Caution is advised.

OLD FAITHFUL AREA

SHOSHONE GEYSER BASIN (20 miles) is reached by skiing south from the Old Faithful area, past Lone Star Geyser, over Grants Pass and the Continental Divide and down to the edge of Shoshone Lake. One geyser in the basin erupts every few minutes to a height of 10-15 feet while others erupt higher at less frequent intervals. Wind conditions may keep the trail unbroken and icy. Overnight campsites are available along the trail and near the geyser basin.

The **SUMMIT LAKE TRAIL** (20 miles) is a challenging one for the experienced skier. This tour involves a strenuous climb of over 1,000 feet through lodgepole pine and meadows to the lake where there is a campsite.

If you can arrange transportation to the trailhead, the ski tour into **HEART LAKE** (8 miles) is a good one. Heart Lake is Yellowstone's fourth largest and this tour blends alpine scenery, lodgepole pine forest and thermal activity. Excellent campsites are available. Sunrise over Heart Lake is maybe one of the more beautiful experiences in Yellowstone—calm, a haze over the frozen lake, and then the first rays of morning over Chicken Ridge to the east.

The **FAIRY CREEK TRAIL** (13 miles) climbs past Mystic Falls and up onto the Madison Plateau, through Little Firehole Meadows to the headwaters of Fairy Creek. From here the trail descends the Madison Plateau, passes beneath the Twin Buttes, skirts around Imperial Geyser and continues via spur trail to Fairy Falls. You can then ski to the old Fountain Flat Freight Road, continue south along the Firehole River back to Biscuit Basin and from there return to the Old Faithful complex.

The **MARY MOUNTAIN TRAIL** (23 miles) is another popular overnight ski tour. Originating in the Old Faithful area, it ends near Canyon Village and with some advance planning you can enjoy some skiing there too.

This trail begins 6 miles south of Madison Junction on the unplowed Old Faithful-Madison road. You'll have to arrange transportation via concessionaire snowcoach or private snowmachine to the trailhead.

The trail follows Nez Perce Creek most of the way to Mary Lake. From Mary Lake, the trail leads through Hayden Valley to the old Otter Creek Campground entrance road which intersects the unplowed Canyon-Lake road about 3 miles south of Canyon Junction. Map and compass navigation will be necessary through Hayden Valley.

Along the way you should see bison (always keep a minimum distance of at least 250 yards between yourself and any bison) and thermal areas (do not approach too closely as thin crust may break away beneath you resulting in serious burns).

CANYON AREA

Several good overnight ski tours can be made into Hayden Valley with the **MARY MOUNTAIN TRAIL** to Mary Lake probably being the best.

This trail begins about 3 miles south of Canyon Junction. Follow the unplowed Canyon-Lake road to the entrance of the old Otter Creek Campground. From here the trail leads through Hayden Valley to Mary Lake. Map and compass navigation will be required along this section of the trail. Watch for bison wintering in Hayden Valley but remember to keep at least 250 yards distance between yourself and any bison.

You can return the same way you came or follow the Mary Mountain Trail west to the unplowed Old Faithful-Madison road about 6 miles south of Madison Junction. If you can't arrange ahead for any sort of transportation pickup you can ski on to the Old Faithful area (14 miles) or West Yellowstone, Montana outside the west entrance (20 miles) by following the road.

In the immediate Canyon Junction area interesting overnight tours can be taken to **CASCADE, GREBE,** and **WOLF LAKES.**

And for those of you equipped and prepared for true cross-country skiing with a little alpine touring thrown in for spiciness, it's possible to descend from **OBSERVATION PEAK** along the **WASH-BURN RANGE** to **COOKE PEAK,** down the **BLACKTAIL DEER CREEK** drainage to the Gardiner-Cooke City road. Or, you could start from the road and ski into the Canyon area this way. The Blacktail Deer Creek trailhead described earlier would be the place to begin or end this 15 mile tour.

Longer overnight tours can be taken down through **HAYDEN VALLEY** and then over into **PELICAN CREEK VALLEY** and even to the shores of **YELLOWSTONE LAKE.**

Please note that these tours are not for casual skiers and should be attempted only by those in top physical shape, using the proper equipment and very knowledgeable about winter camping, survival, compass and map reading.

EXTENDED SKI TOURS

Much longer, extended ski tours in Yellowstone are available—with certain qualifications! Because snow and weather conditions are never predictable, only experienced skiers, in top condition, using the proper equipment and being well versed in survival, winter camping, compass and map reading should attempt extended tours. And then only after much very careful preparation.

I'm only throwing out some basic thoughts on extended ski tours. Use them only as guidelines. Check the **RESOURCES** section for sources of further, more detailed information. Plan any extended ski tour carefully and completely.



NORTHERN YELLOWSTONE

The **CACHE LAKE** overnight tour can be extended by skiing cross-country to the **FAWN PASS TRAIL** and from there to **FAWN PASS**.

The **FAWN PASS** overnight can be extended by continuing west over the pass until intersecting the **CUTOFF TRAIL** which will take you over to the **BIGHORN PASS TRAIL** which in turn can be followed back to the Mammoth Hot Springs area. Total tour is 35-40 miles. Check at a ranger station for current avalanche conditions before leaving.

For variety, either the **FAWN PASS TRAIL** or the **BIGHORN PASS TRAIL** can be followed down the west side of the **GALLATIN RANGE** to U.S. Highway 191 between West Yellowstone and Bozeman, Montana. This road is open all winter and if you could make arrangements to be picked up . . .

The **SLOUGH CREEK** overnight can be extended into a huge loop tour by taking the **BUFFALO PLATEAU TRAIL** out of **SLOUGH CREEK VALLEY** over the plateau itself, down into the **HELL-ROARING CREEK** drainage and then back around the base of **BUFFALO PLATEAU** to the Slough Creek area where you started. Total tour is about 30 miles and the scenery ranks with the finest in Yellowstone. Map and compass navigation are necessary.

Another good extended ski tour in northern Yellowstone begins in Cooke City, Montana, climbs over **REPUBLIC PASS** (10,000 feet) and then follows **CACHE CREEK** down to the **LAMAR RIVER**. From here you can ski back to the Gardiner-Cooke City road. Good views of the surrounding **ABSAROKA RANGE** and a good introduction to some of the more remote regions of Yellowstone are possible. Check at a ranger station for current avalanche conditions before leaving.

OLD FAITHFUL AREA

The **SHOSHONE GEYSER BASIN** overnight can be extended down through the **BECHLER RIVER CANYON** and **BECHLER MEADOWS** to the road toward Ashton, Idaho. Plowing starts about 12 miles away where you could arrange for a pickup.

Or, from the **BECHLER RANGER STATION** you could follow the **SOUTH BOUNDARY TRAIL** to the **SOUTH ENTRANCE**. Pickup could be arranged at nearby Flagg Ranch. Old Faithful to Bechler Ranger Station is 29 miles. Skiing on to the South Entrance adds another 20.

Also from **SHOSHONE GEYSER BASIN** you can make an extended tour by following the **SHOSHONE LAKE TRAIL** around to the unplowed South Entrance road. Crossing the road you can connect with the **HEART LAKE TRAIL** and follow it to **HEART LAKE**.

The **HEART LAKE** overnight can be extended by following the **HEART LAKE TRAIL** down **BASIN CREEK** to the **SNAKE RIVER** and then following the north side of the river to the **SOUTH ENTRANCE** which will save you fording the river later.

SOUTH ENTRANCE

Yellowstone's **SOUTH ENTRANCE** is a good jumping off point for extended ski tours. Those already described as ending here can be done in reverse with arrangements made beforehand for transportation back to the South Entrance.

Several good campsites and opportunities for extended ski tours can be enjoyed by following the **SNAKE RIVER** into Yellowstone's **THOROFARE REGION**—probably some of the most remote wilderness to be found in the lower 48 states.

Fording the **SNAKE RIVER** at the **SOUTH ENTRANCE** can be done easily by using a pair of fishing waders which can wait on the river bank for your return trip. Or, stay to the north side of the river until you're above the **SNAKE RIVER HOT SPRINGS**. The river should be frozen solid above these springs allowing you to ski right across connecting with the trail on the south side. **BUT CHECK CAREFULLY FIRST.**

WEST ENTRANCE

A good extended ski tour into Yellowstone's **GALLATIN RANGE** originates from **WEST YELLOWSTONE, MONTANA** just outside Yellowstone's West Entrance. Drive north from West Yellowstone on U.S. Highway 191 to **DIVIDE LAKE**. One mile north of here is the **BIGHORN PASS TRAILHEAD**.

It's a little over 10 miles to **BIGHORN PASS** (9,110 feet) with splendid views of surrounding peaks making this tour well worth the effort required. Check at a ranger station for current avalanche conditions before leaving.

If you prefer to make a loop tour out of this one take the **CUTOFF TRAIL** at the 5 mile mark which joins the **BIGHORN PASS** and **FAWN PASS TRAILS**. The **FAWN PASS TRAIL** descends back to U.S. Highway 191 through mostly open country. From here it's 2 miles to the **BIGHORN PASS TRAILHEAD** where you started.



NOTES



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