BIRDING AND MAMMAL TOUR USA: WYOMING AND MONTANA – EXPLORING YELLOWSTONE AND GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARKS

18 – 26 SEPTEMBER 2027
20 – 28 SEPTEMBER 2028
20 – 28 SEPTEMBER 2029



*The massive **American Bison** is a staple megafauna of the region.*

One of the world's greatest national parks, Yellowstone, covers a vast area in sparsely populated Wyoming, a state where antelope outnumber people, and marginally into both Montana and Idaho. Arguably the most impressive-looking mountains in all of America lie just to the south and are protected in another national park adjacent to Yellowstone, Grand Teton National Park. The majestic **Grey Wolf**, along with the fierce **Grizzly Bear**, huge herds of **American Bison**, water-loving **Moose**, wandering herds of **Elk** (Wapiti), and a plethora of other large and small mammals make this national park almost comparable to an African park with its big herds and predators. We'll be on the constant lookout for some much more difficult to spot mammals as well, including **Wolverine**, **Puma** (Mountain Lion), **American Badger**, and **Canada Lynx**. **Yellow-bellied Marmot**, **American Pika**, and the amazingly cute **Least Chipmunk** are three of the more common small mammals we are likely to encounter.

The Rocky Mountains also boast a lot of special birds, including **Black Rosy Finch**, **American Three-toed Woodpecker**, **Williamson's Sapsucker**, **Dusky Grouse**, and many more. The beautiful **Steller's Jay** and charismatic **Canada Jay** are usually easy to find roaming through the parks. **Clark's Nutcracker**, **Townsend's Solitaire**, **Mountain Bluebird**, **American Dipper**, and other classic birds of America's western mountains are also usually present. **Pine Grosbeak** and other special birds will also be sought, proving this region to be an amazing location for birds and mammals alike!



*We will scan fast moving waterways in hopes of finding an **American Dipper**.*

We run this trip in the fall, when the colors (mainly yellow in this part of the world, unlike the more varied colors of the east), are unbelievably stunning against the backdrop of America's most beautiful mountains that rise straight from the surrounding plain. In addition to our mammal and bird viewing during this tour we also stop to photograph and take in some of this incredible scenery that Yellowstone and the Tetons offer. Yellowstone Caldera, which dominates the national

park, is often called a "supervolcano", the largest volcano in North America. Not wanting to scare people off, but this volcano is due for an eruption, and the park also experiences thousands of small earthquakes a year (most of them undetectable by humans). We'll pay a visit to one of the most famous geysers in the world, Old Faithful, but we'll also be sure to look at some of the more spectacular of the 10,000 geothermal oddities in this park while searching for wildlife.

On this trip we'll look for a great many mammals and birds. Extra time will be spent trying to find tougher species that are in reality only very rarely seen (e.g. **Puma**). In general, we try to keep the pace of this trip slower than on our other tours to allow more time for scenery and wildlife photography. Having said that, there's no guarantee we'll have "down time", as there is a humongous amount to see in a vast area spanning three states. This tour can be combined with this California birding tour



Oxbow Bend in Grand Teton National Park is one example of the many breathtaking scenes.

Itinerary (9 days/8 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Bozeman, Montana

Today you will arrive at the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport (BZN) with pickup and transfer to our hotel in West Yellowstone. This is an approximate 1.5-hour drive from the airport so please schedule your arrival by 2:00pm. We will travel south along the Gallatin River keeping our eyes peeled for raptors and other birds and mammals we may encounter. Bozeman is a quaint city boasting the largest population (53,000) nearest to the natural beauty of Yellowstone. It might be of interest to some to arrive a day or two early and explore this fascinating city a bit before the

tour begins. Upon arrival in West Yellowstone, we will check in with the hotel and head out for dinner where we will go over the plans for this exciting trip.

Overnight: West Yellowstone, Montana

Day 2. Old Faithful

After breakfast we depart for Old Faithful, stopping at Lower, Midway, and Upper Geyser Basins on the way. This is geyser country in Yellowstone! With plenty to see we will concentrate on the main attractions, Grand Prismatic Springs, Castle Geyser, and the Firehole River before ending up at Old Faithful – the most famous geyser in North America and perhaps in the world. Yellowstone is unparalleled when it comes to geothermal areas boasting an estimated 10,000 features throughout the park.

Of course, scenery and geological wonders aren't the only things on display in this area. We will be scouring for birds and mammals as we explore. **Clark's Nutcracker**, **Bald Eagle**, and **Common Raven** can be found anywhere along our route so we will keep our eyes peeled. Trails surrounding the thermal features typically host species such as **Mountain Chickadee** and **Mountain Bluebird**. Herds of **Elk** and **American Bison** roam the open areas nearby. Eventually we will make it to West Thumb Lake and do a quick scan for waterfowl such as **Barrow's Goldeneye** and **Bufflehead** before heading back to West Yellowstone for dinner.

Overnight: West Yellowstone, Montana



*The impressive geyser of **Old Faithful** always puts on a great show.*

Day 3. Western Yellowstone Ecoregion to the Grand Teton Base

Today we will begin our journey southbound, venturing into Idaho and the western section of the Yellowstone ecoregion. Stops at Harriman State Park, Island Park, and Chester Wetlands may be on the cards depending on timing. These areas of water typically host loads of great species including **American White Pelican**, **Redhead**, **Gadwall**, **California Gull**, and **Trumpeter Swan**. We will continue on our way, always scanning for mammals as well as birds, and eventually end up back in Wyoming along Moose Wilson Road.

Here there is a good possibility of seeing **American Black Bear**, often with cubs, as they feed heavily on the ripened berries along the roadside of this thick forest, fattening up for the upcoming winter. Moose share the roadside wetlands with waterfowl including **American Wigeon**, **Common Merganser**, and the occasional **Barrow's Goldeneye**. Both **Williamson's** and **Red-naped Sapsuckers** are common in the surrounding woods and **American Dipper** is also often seen here in the running streams.

Once we reach Teton Village, we can ride the ski lift to the top of Jackson Hole Mountain Resort and look for **Grey-crowned** and **Black Rosy Finches**. Small flocks are often found here. **Ruby-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Kinglets** along with **Pine Grosbeak**, **Pine Siskin**, and **Dark-eyed Junco** will also be targets. This is also a good place to look for **Clark's Nutcracker** if we haven't seen any yet. From here it is onto Colter Bay Village where we will be spending the next two nights.

Overnight: Colter Bay Village, Wyoming



*We'll look for the attractive **Pine Grosbeak** at Jackson Hole Mountain Resort.*

Day 4. Grand Teton National Park

After breakfast we enter Grand Teton National Park. Antelope Flats Road here is a prime area for **American Bison**, **Pronghorn** antelope, and **Moose** along the river. The bull **Moose** are out of velvet at this time of year and quite determined to find a cow. **American Bison** are commonly found along the roadways for some good up-close photo opportunities against the dramatic backdrop of the Tetons. **Sage Grouse**, **American Pipit**, **Northern Harrier**, **Swainson's Hawk**, and **Mountain Bluebird** can all be found in these grassland flats. There is now an established pack of **Grey Wolves**, named the Gros Ventre Pack, which often roam this area, so we will be asking about recent sightings and keeping our eyes peeled. Of course, some avian friends should be around as well such as **Black-billed Magpie** and **American Kestrel**.



*We will certainly have our eyes peeled for **Grizzly Bear** throughout the trip.*

We will give this scenic area proper and thorough searching before heading back towards Colter Bay Village in the later afternoon for some birding a bit closer to the lodge. Here we will explore Jackson Lake Dam and Colter Bay itself. Loads of great species can be hanging out around the water and in the surrounding trees including **Townsend's Solitaire**, **Pine Siskin**, **American Coot**, **Double-crested Cormorant**, **Spotted Sandpiper**, and **Trumpeter Swan**. After this we will have dinner and get rested for a day of travel through the park.

Overnight: Colter Bay Village, Wyoming

Day 5. Hayden Valley and the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone

This morning will feature an optional, very early departure (sometimes leaving at 5:30 a.m.), for sunrise at Oxbow Bend. Providing an excellent wildlife habitat for both birds and mammals,

Oxbow Bend, with Mount Moran reflected in the mirror-like stillness of Jackson Lake, is one of the most photographed scenes in Grand Teton National Park. **Moose**, **Grizzly Bear**, **American White Pelican**, and **Common Merganser** are commonly seen here in the early morning. After a breathtaking morning we will head back to get breakfast and load up for a day of traveling through the amazing Yellowstone National Park!

After breakfast, we drive into Yellowstone National Park, making a quick stop at Lewis Falls along the way to take in the sights of the Snake and Lewis Rivers. Soon we'll arrive at the northern section of Yellowstone Lake. With an average depth of 139 feet/42 meters and its greatest depth of at least 390 feet/119 meters this is the largest body of water in Yellowstone and the largest freshwater lake in North America above 7,000 feet/2,134 meters. **Common Loon**, **Black-necked** (Eared) and **Pied-billed Grebes**, **Trumpeter Swan**, **Caspian Tern**, and **Barrow's Goldeneye** can sometimes be found here.

From here we will move on and venture through the Hayden Valley. This is an excellent place to search for **Grey Wolves** and sometimes **Grizzly Bears**, which are sometimes seen hunting the large herds of ungulates, especially **American Bison**, which often share the roadway with cars. There are also plenty of spots to simply stop along the road or to have lunch while admiring the beauty of this area. While in the Hayden Valley we will be sure to stop at the LeHardy's Rapids, an excellent spot for species that enjoy fast moving water like **Harlequin Duck** and **American Dipper**. Eventually we will make it out of the valley and be greeted by the amazing Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. We will be sure to stop for some awesome views and **Townsend's Solitaire**, **Clark's Nutcracker**, **Canada** and **Steller's Jays**, and, depending on timing, migrating warblers such as **Yellow-rumped** and **Wilson's Warblers** are commonly found among the thick forests of the canyon. Finally, we will make it to Cooke City, Montana where we will stay for the next two nights.

Overnight: Cooke City, Montana



***Dusky Grouse** can be found foraging along the roadside.*

Day 6. Beartooth Highway

Considered by many to be "the most beautiful drive in America", Beartooth Highway will surely leave everyone with their jaws dropped. Winding just over 60 miles between Cooke City and Red Lodge, this national treasure passes through a variety of habitats and elevation levels. We will explore the Beartooth Lake, Beartooth Plateau and eventually cross through the mountains along the Beartooth Pass over 10,900 feet/3,335meters in elevation. There alpine forests and high elevation give us great chances at some smaller mammals such as **Yellow-bellied Marmot** and the adorable **American Pika**. We'll be sure to keep our eyes peeled for **Mountain Goat** along the way, especially around the Rock Creek rest stop where they have hung around in past years.

This area full of spruce and fir trees also give us a great shot at more alpine species including **American Pipit**, **Canada Jay**, **Horned Lark**, and **Black Rosy Finch**. The steep cliffs in the area also make this section appealing to some more uncommon raptors like **Golden Eagle** and **Prairie Falcon** so we will be sure to have eyes on the skies and scan the rocky outcrops. We will have to head back to Cooke City and enjoy the views again on the way. The Beartooth Highway is susceptible to adverse weather conditions and has been known to really pile up the snow, so our participation here is always dependent upon ideal conditions.

Overnight: Cooke City, Montana



*The cute **Canada Jay** is often seen in the forests of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.*

Day 7. Lamar Valley

It is said that if one wants to see **Grey Wolves** one should spend time in Lamar Valley, and we will do our best to find them. There are currently two packs that hunt and work the Lamar Valley area, and in recent years sightings have become much more frequent, often with good views just off the roadside if there has been a recent kill. Lamar Valley has been called the "Serengeti of the Yellowstone" due to the open meadows and large herds of **American Bison**, **Pronghorn**, and other wildlife. And it isn't just wolves that follow the herds of grazers; **Grizzly** and **Black Bears** are common as well. Although not guaranteed, our chances are increased by devoting time to this area of the park and we will certainly be spending all day exploring here.

In addition to the megafauna highlights, we will be on the lookout for avian species as well and making a few stops at locations such as Slough Creek and Trout Lake along the way. Loads of great birding can be had with highlights including **Northern Flicker**, **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, **Brown Creeper**, **Red Crossbill**, and even a chance at **American Three-toed Woodpecker**. After spending all day searching the Lamar Valley, we will end up in the town of Gardiner, Montana for the night and grab some tasty dinner.

Overnight: Gardiner, Montana

Day 8. Mammoth Hot Springs

After breakfast we head off to Mammoth Hot Springs, a collection of travertine terraces which were once popular with tourists. Sadly, they have largely dried up, and many of them have eroded due to the heavy human traffic, but they are still impressive. It is a long hike to the top, however; for those wishing to go there, we can drive to the top and walk down the well-maintained boardwalk/steps and be picked up at the parking lot. From this vantage point you can still enjoy and appreciate some of the remaining colorful terraced pools alive with blooming algae.

In addition to the famous geological features here, we will be birding the area as well as the nearby Beaver Ponds. These bogs and wetlands play host to several nice bird species including **Ruffed Grouse**, **Dark-eyed Junco**, **Blue-winged Teal**, **Cedar Waxwing**, and **Townsend's Solitaire** among others. This area is also favored by **Grizzly** and **Black Bears** as well as **Muskrat**, **Moose**, and **American Beaver**. Depending on timing and success of previous days, the afternoon may be spent back on the western portion of Lamar Valley to really maximize our chances at spotting some **Grey Wolves** in the area as well as any other wildlife we might be missing still.

Overnight: Gardiner, Montana



*We hope to find **Grey Wolf** in the Lamar Valley.*

Day 9. Departure from Bozeman

This morning we will make the journey back to Bozeman to catch our flights home. This is approximately a 1.5-hour drive back to the city and we will likely want to do some birding and sightseeing along the way as we pass through mountains and meadows so, please plan for afternoon flights home. This will conclude what is surely to be an amazing trip to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem!

Be sure to check out our California tours immediately preceding this one as they are easily combinable to make for an amazing time in the western USA.

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides, and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling or other factors.

Duration:	9 days
Limit:	5–8
Dates:	18–26 September 2027 20–28 September 2028 20–28 September 2029
Start:	Bozeman, Montana

End:	Bozeman, Montana
Prices:	US $ 6,482 per person sharing (2027) US $ 6,690 per person sharing (2028) US $ 6,790 per person sharing (2029)
Single Supplement:	US $1,561 (2027) US $ 1,650 (2028) US $ 1,720 (2029)

Price includes:

Meals
Accommodation
Guiding fees
Entrance fees
All transport while on tour
Fuel/tolls

Price excludes:

Flights
Laundry
Gratuities (please see our tipping guidelines blog)
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts