

TOWER AREA SKI TRAILS



Yellowstone National Park

Welcome

Yellowstone offers a variety of enjoyable and challenging trails for skiers. Trails are marked for summer use and may not have ski tracks. On some trails, the difficult sections can be avoided by skiing part way in and returning by the same route. The quality of your experience will depend upon the amount of planning and preparation you do prior to your trip. We suggest that you stop at a visitor center or ski shop and discuss your trip. The staff will be happy to provide current information on weather, trail, snow conditions, and alert you to any special winter hazards.

Backcountry trails in Yellowstone are in the wilderness. These trails are maintained and marked for summer use. Many of them are difficult to find and follow, as they are not well marked for winter. Only experienced parties with appropriate equipment should attempt them. Overnight camping requires a free backcountry use permit that must be obtained in person from the Mammoth or Old Faithful visitor centers, the West Yellowstone Visitor Information Center, or the south entrance station. Wood fires are not permitted

Trail Etiquette

- Do not snowshoe or walk directly on ski tracks.
- Skiers/snowshoers going uphill yield to those going downhill.
- Fill in depressions in the snow after falling to reduce hazards to others.
- Ski within your ability. If you find the trail too difficult, turn back.

Safety

Trails may have natural hazards such as animals, avalanches, thermal features, downed trees, steep slopes and cliffs. When skiing near thermal areas, stay on marked trails. Approaching thermal features is dangerous and prohibited. The snow in these areas is often icy and what appears to be bare ground may be a thin crust over boiling water.

Winter weather in Yellowstone changes rapidly and can be severely cold and windy. Wear proper clothing layers. Watch yourself and other members of your party for signs of frostbite and hypothermia. For your safety, always ski with someone else. Tell someone where you are going, by what route, and when you plan to return. Carry extra clothing, food, water, map and compass, matches, flashlight, and a whistle.

Consider elevation when deciding on a ski trail. Many ski trails are at high elevation, above 6000 feet (1,829 m) and may require you to move slowly when you are out of breath. Always drink plenty of water.

Avalanche danger: avalanches can occur on any slope and hazards will not always be marked. In avalanche-prone areas carry a shovel, avalanche transceiver, probe, and first aid kit—and know how to use them. Cross slopes one at a time, while others watch from safety.

Wildlife

Do not approach wildlife. Large mammals survive on stored fat and low quality food during winter. Causing them to move will cost them precious calories vital for survival. Park regulations require you to remain *at least* 75 feet (23 m) from bison and other large animals; 300 feet (91 m) from bears and wolves. You are travelling through essential winter habitat. Never approach animals, give them time to move away from you. Travel around a herd, not through it. Always allow animals an escape route through shallow snow or on a packed trail. Pets are not allowed on ski trails or in backcountry areas.

Trail Ratings

Trails are rated by the National Park Service with trail ratings specific to Yellowstone National Park. We strongly encourage all skiers to inquire at a visitor center or Xanterra Ski Shop before beginning their first ski trip. Weather conditions may cause icy trails, deep snow, or barren sections, and in some instances make trails difficult to follow, increasing the difficulty of a trail. Trails are not groomed or checked daily.

Easiest - “Green”

Skiers need basic knowledge and limited experience in the diagonal stride, snow plow, and side stepping. Trails may have short downhill and uphill stretches.

More Difficult - “Blue”

Skiers need to be able to ski varied terrain requiring turning, snow plowing, herringboning, and diagonal stride.

Most Difficult - “Black”

Skiers need to be experienced. Trails are hazardous and terrain is frequently extreme. Turns are often sharp and linked together with no room to snow plow or herringbone.

National Park Service

P.O. Box 168
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190

For emergencies, dial 911

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Trail Descriptions

Lost Lake Trail

4 miles (6.4 km), **more difficult**,

This trail does not follow the maintained summer hiking trail after Lost Creek. Watch closely for trail markers as the route can be difficult to find. Visitors can park in the large pull out 100 yards east of Petrified Tree entrance on the Grand Loop road. Ski south on the Petrified Tree road, then through a narrow open valley up to Lost Lake. Follow the north shore to the head of the lake, approximately 1.5 miles (2.4 km), then travel through intermittent forest and meadows. After 2.5 miles (4 km) and a short steep descent use extreme caution crossing the foot bridge over Lost Creek Falls. Rolling terrain for 1.5 miles (2.4 km), then a steep descent to Calcite Springs Overlook connecting to the Tower Falls Trail, 1.4 miles (2.25 km) from Tower Junction.

Note: Trail ends at Tower Falls parking area, car shuttle or hitch hiking will be necessary.

Blacktail Plateau Trail

8 miles (12.8 km), **easiest to more difficult**,

This trail may be skied from either end. Begin 8 miles (13 km) east of Mammoth Hot Springs at a parking area across the road from a self-guiding trail, or at a service road approximately 1 mile (1.6 km) farther east (see map). The trail gradually climbs 900 feet (274 m) in 6 miles (9.7 km) through open meadows to “The Cut” - the highest point on the trail at 7571 feet. From here the trail descends 2 miles (3.2 km) down a moderate grade through a spruce-fir forest to rejoin the Mammoth-Tower Road 1.4 miles (2.25 km) from Tower Junction. Broad vistas, elk, deer, coyotes, and occasionally bison may be seen.

Note: An out and back ski is a good choice if you do not have a car shuttle. “The Cut” is a good turn around spot.

Tower Fall Trail

2.5 miles one way (4 km), **easiest**,

Begin at the parking area just southeast of Tower Junction. The trail follows the unplowed Tower-Canyon road up a gradual slope past Calcite Springs Overlook to Tower Fall. Great views of the Yellowstone River Canyon, occasional bison, bighorn sheep and bald eagles.

Note: Walkers/snowshoers please use far left lane. Groomed for skate and classic skiing.

Chittenden Loop Trail

5.3 miles (8.3 km), **easiest to more difficult**,

The Trail begins at Tower Fall which is 2.5 miles (4 km) from Tower Junction. The trail is easiest if you climb the more difficult section at the beginning of the loop by heading to the right through Tower Fall Campground. More experienced skiers may wish to ski the loop in the opposite direction; however, the “more difficult” portion of the loop can be quite fast if snow is packed. The trail continues through dense lodgepole pine returning to the unplowed Tower Fall road. From here the route goes approximately 3 miles (4.8 km) back to Tower Fall. Good views of Mt. Washburn are possible.

Note: This is a 10 mile trail in total.

Caution: Do not attempt to travel any backcountry trails without good topographical maps and first inquiring about trail conditions. Backcountry trails are marked on this map with dashed black lines. Many of them are difficult to find and follow as they are not well marked for winter travel and have not necessarily been skied recently. Many go through avalanche-prone areas that are not marked.

Current Trail Information

Please visit YellowstoneNationalParkLodges.com or visit the Bear Den Ski Shops at Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel and Old Faithful Snow Lodge for up-to-date trail grooming schedule, trail information, rentals, lessons, tours and accessories.

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