

## Planning a Family Reunion at Yellowstone National Park

Reunions are important traditions for thousands of families with more than 8 million people attending such celebrations in the United States annually. Wherever these reunions are held, advance planning is a must and it's not too soon to begin.

With 2.2 million acres, nine lodges, abundant activities and incredible scenery, Yellowstone National Park makes an appealing destination. "The incredible experiences that are possible in this park transcend generations, and build bonds between them," said Rick Hoeninghausen, director of sales and marketing for Xanterra Parks & Resorts in Yellowstone.

"Next summer is the 20-year anniversary of the 1988 fires that burned about one-third of the park. This is a wonderful teaching opportunity because visitors can see how the forest has been regenerated and learn about the importance of fire in the Yellowstone ecosystem," continued Hoeninghausen.

Here are some tips to help with planning.

- Contact a Yellowstone leisure group coordinator to help with planning. This is a free resource and using a consultant who knows the park will save time and money. Agents can suggest and reserve lodges and campgrounds, make dinner reservations and recommend and reserve activities.
- Choose one section of the park rather than one lodge for accommodations and a "home base." Yellowstone has five "Villages" with lodging ranging from campgrounds and RV parks to cabins, lodges and hotels. Rates vary so family members can find sleeping arrangements that meet their budgets.
- Split up during the day. There is plenty to do for different ages, physical capabilities and interests. Active family members can go for a hike, rent a bicycle, fish the lakes or tour Yellowstone Lake aboard the "Lake Queen." Readers can settle down with

a good book on a bench in a geyser basin. Experience the park on a custom tour led by knowledgeable guides or on scheduled day trips in 1930s era touring buses which returned to the park in 2007 after a 50-year absence. Get the kids involved in the Junior Ranger program.

- Gather in the evening with dining options ranging from cafeterias to elegant restaurants.
- Plan some activities together. Active participants can slow down and readers can put down books to enjoy as a group an easy walking tour of Old Faithful or a stroll through the Upper Geyser Basin.
- Allow plenty of free time to allow participants to explore on their own and simply chat and get reacquainted with family members.
- Have some toys available for rainy weather, quiet times, and intergenerational fun. Perfect for travel with convenient storage containers, LEGO Creator Minis come in robot, flyer, construction, and animal themes while LEGO Tiny Turbos create small racers.

Reservations and information on family reunions is available by calling 307-344-5347. Visitors can also go online at [www.TravelYellowstone.com](http://www.TravelYellowstone.com) and submit a group request form. Xanterra will follow up shortly after the receipt of the form.



In addition to Yellowstone, Xanterra, the country's largest park concessioner, also operates at the North Rim of Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Zion, Crater Lake, Death Valley, Rocky Mountain and Petrified Forest National Parks, Mount Rushmore National Memorial; the Silverado Resort in Napa, CA; Gideon Putnam Resort and Spa in Saratoga Springs, NY; and eight Ohio State Parks. Affiliate Xanterra South Rim, L.L.C. operates concessions at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. For links to individual properties and reservations numbers, visit [www.xanterra.com](http://www.xanterra.com).

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