

Yellowstone National Park

7 min read

DIY Guide to the Best Fly Fishing in Yellowstone National Park



Posted by Ken Sperry
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The United States has a large number of national parks scattered all across its landscape, but few are as well-known and visited as Yellowstone National Park. This was actually the [very first national park](#) in the country and received the designation in 1872.

People tend to be very familiar with the diverse amount of wildlife, the stunning natural scenery, and geysers such as the world-famous Old Faithful.

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The park covers more than 2.2 million acres, is home to Yellowstone Lake, a vast amount of waterfalls, streams, and rivers, and has 16 different species of fish, seven of which are gamefish.

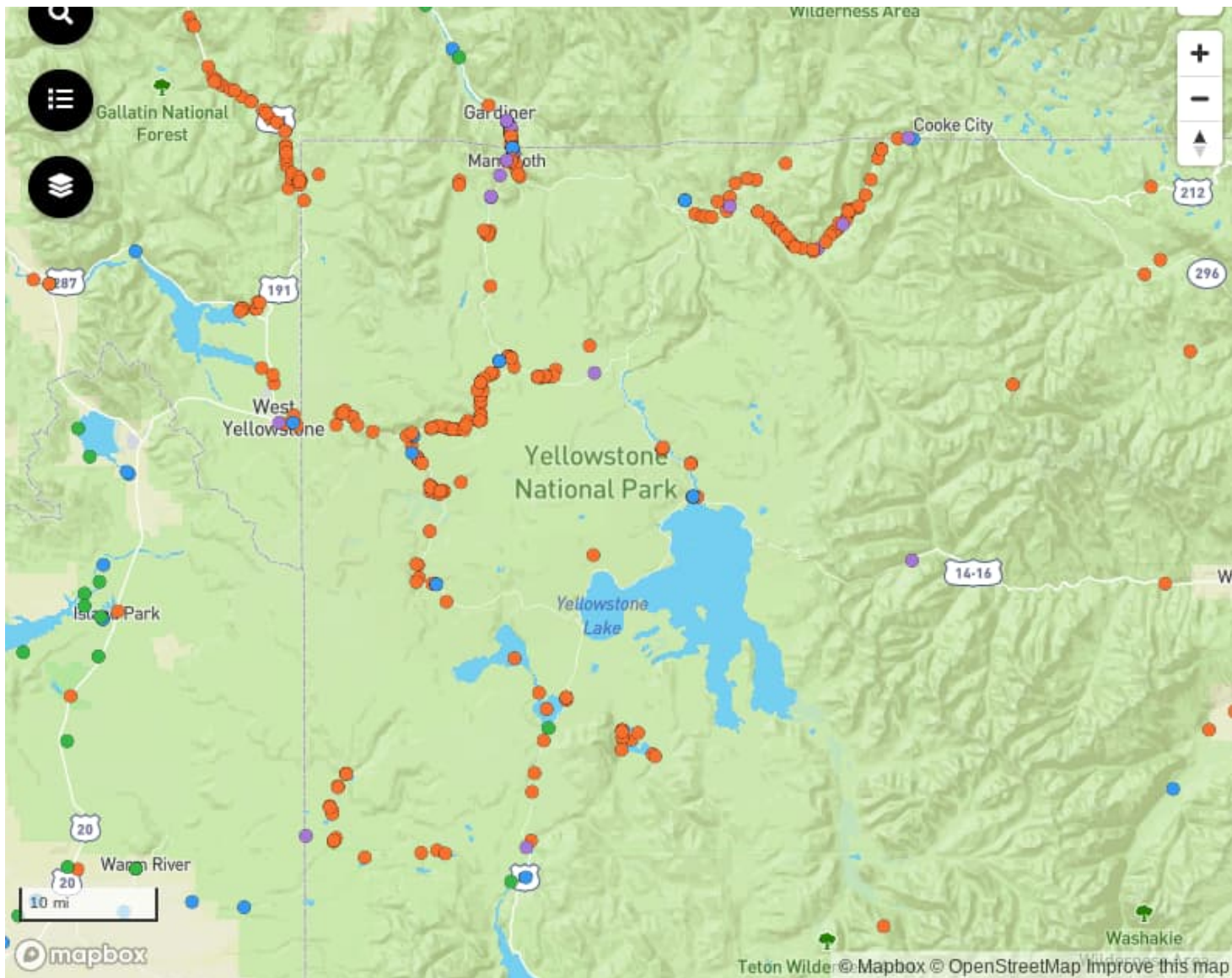
The park isn't just in one state, rather a few as it stretches into Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. This is the kind of [fly fishing destination](#) that isn't just great for a day trip, but rather a full vacation as you explore all the nooks and crannies of the park.

In this guide we'll take a look at some of the top spots for fly fishing within the park, as well as some basic advice to ensure your visit is successful and enjoyable.

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Yellowstone National Park Fishing Map



Get Directions to the **Fishing Access Points** shown above with the [**DIY Fly Fishing Map**](#)

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Finding Your Way in Yellowstone National Park

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southwest, southeast, northwest, and northeast. You can make your way through them by the roads that connect them all. These are called the Loop Roads in the park. Each section also has its own entrance.



Source: Yellowstone National Park Fishing Regulations

As mentioned the park is home to seven different species of game fish which are: lake, brook, rainbow, cutthroat, and brown trout, as well as mountain whitefish and grayling. Of these species only three are native, the others were introduced through stocking. Let's take a look at some of the top rivers for fishing in the park.

Northwest

- [Firehole river](#)
- [Gallatin River](#)
- [Gibbon River](#)
- Grayling Creek
- [Grebe Lake](#)
- [Madison River](#)
- [Nez Perce Creek](#)
- Solfatara Creek

Northeast

- [Lamar River](#)
- [Gardner River](#)
- [Slough Creek](#)
- [Soda Butte Creek](#)
- Pebble Creek
- [Trout Lake](#)

Southwest

- [Bechler River](#)
- DeLacy Creek
- [Falls River](#)
- [Heart Lake](#)
- Lewis Lake
- [Lewis River](#)
- [Shoshone Lake](#)

Southeast

- [Yellowstone River](#)

Firehole River



Firehole River near Old Faithful Geyser in Yellowstone National Park. Photo by [Ken Lane](#)

If you want to get a head start on the fishing season, the Firehole River is typically the first one to be open for fly fishing. Because it is located in the southwest region of the park, the snow is melted here before any of the other major rivers.

This is an interesting area to fish as the water is made up of a spring creek and a freestone stream. The reason the snow is able to melt much faster here is that the geysers empty into this river, which of course warms it up. This stream is at its peak in the early spring months and then isn't as great as you move into summer. At this point the water gets too warm for the trout.

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makes the river interesting and it forces you to use various skill levels and techniques. The typical fish you'll find here are brown and rainbow trout.

See our [DIY Guide to Fly Fishing the Firehole River](#) for more information on this fishery.

Lamar River Valley



Huge boulders in the Lamar River Canyon provide ample places for cutthroat trout to hide

If you plan to visit the northeast of Yellowstone then the [Lamar River](#) can make for an excellent option. The river itself sits in a valley and feels like a beautiful and quiet oasis.

This is quite a long river that actually begins in the Absaroka Mountains. The river has different sections and each has their pros and cons.

Check out our [DIY Guide to Fly Fishing the Lamar River](#) for more information on this fishery.

Soda Butte Creek



Soda Butte Creek near the junction with the Lamar River. Photo by [Scot Butner](#)

Several other rivers in the Northeast part of the park hold lots of trout and should be on your bucket list including [Soda Butte Creek](#). It is a tributary of the Lamar River that tends to get a lot of attention but is worth it. Typically you'll be fishing for cutthroats but you can also find cutbows and rainbows.

Other areas of the river include the Upper Lamar River, where the fish are small and but plentiful, Cache Creek where you can find moderately sized cutthroat, the Canyon Section where the water can run fast making the fishing a bit more difficult, and the famous [Slough Creek](#) which can yield some wonderful fishing opportunities.

Gibbon River



Elk are frequent visitors to the Gibbon River in Yellowstone National Park (don't worry, there are plenty of cutthroat trout to be caught as well). Photo by [Don Graham](#)

While the Gibbon River isn't huge you can find areas that yield a variety of rainbow, brook, and brown trout. Occasionally you can find grayling here as well. Depending on which section you head to the river may be running quite fast as there are many pockets where the water is rough. With that said anglers love how challenging the Gibbon can be and find the conditions thrilling and enjoyable.

The various sections of the river are the Lower Gibbon Meadows, the Upper Gibbon River, Gibbon Falls to Lower Meadows, Gibbon Meadows, Gibbon Meadows to Gibbon Falls, Norris Meadows, and Elk Park.

See our [DIY Guide to Fly Fishing the Gibbon River](#) for more information on this fishery.

Planning Your Fishing Trip to Yellowstone

Yellowstone National Park has a [set season](#) for fishing which begins Memorial Day weekend (the Saturday) and lasts until the first Sunday in the month of November. The public is able to fish during the season from sunrise to sunset each day. With that said there may be areas that are closed from time to time, this is due to water levels and even the fish population. Should a certain area be low on fish, it may close to the public temporarily so the fish have a chance to rebound.

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all the rivers are open by this point.

If you plan to visit at the start of the season in May, typically the [only river without snow](#) is the Firehole, so it's a great place to start. It's not until mid-June that the Madison and Gibbon Rivers will lose their snow and then become another option. You'll have to wait until the start of July for all the rivers to be totally free of the snow.

Best Flies for Yellowstone National Park

There are a [number of hatches](#) that happen in the park on a seasonal basis. They can be divided into spring, summer, or fall hatches. They also tend to differ from river to river.

All the main types of hatches occur, which are mayflies, stoneflies, caddis flies, and midges along with others. Terrestrials including grass hopper, ants and beetles are also abundant in the summer.

With that said, July tends to be the absolute peak month for all the various hatches.

The best flies for Yellowstone National Park are those that most closely match the hatch.

Need flies?

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[Shop Flies](#)

Yellowstone Fishing Regulations

If you plan on bringing a boat into the park for fishing, you'll need to first ensure your boat is permissible. If it is, you'll then need a boat permit. Shore fishing is available in a number of locations, so you don't have to have a boat in order to enjoy the park. This means one less permit to have to worry about.

Yellowstone Fishing Restrictions

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use lead-free artificial lures only.

You won't be able to use weighted jigs, split-shot, or soft-lead weighted. Your lure may only have one hook and must be barbless.

Be warned that there are also restrictions and rules on limits, catch and release areas, and areas you are not allowed to release fish that are caught. You'll want to go over all the specifics before you start your fishing.

Recommending Fly Fishing Equipment

When [packing your equipment](#) it is recommended you choose a rod that is between eight and nine feet, with a four to six weight line. If you plan to be fishing in the fall, bring large sized nymphs and/or streamers. There are a number of areas where wading is permitted so you'll want to be sure you have your [chest waders](#) with you.

Yellowstone Fishing Permit

If you plan on fly fishing in Yellowstone National Park you will need to purchase a [fishing permit](#). This permit is required for anyone 16 years of age and older. They are available as a season permit for US\$40, a seven-day permit for \$25, or a three-day permit for \$18.

You can pick up your permit when you arrive at one of the visitor centers, a ranger station, or at the Yellowstone Park General Stores, which are located throughout. There are some businesses in the Yellowstone area that may also sell the permit. Keep in mind you won't need a state license, rather just the permit.

Yellowstone National Park is not only a place of beauty and natural wonder, but it is a challenging and enjoyable location for fly fishing enthusiasts of all skill levels. Just being in the park and soaking in its history can be a thing of beauty all on its own.

If you're looking for a challenge head to the first national park in the country and explore its many angling opportunities.

Additional Information and Resources

- [Fly Fishing Yellowstone National Park: An Insider's Guide to the 50 Best Places](#) by Nate Schweber
- [The Yellowstone Fly-Fishing Guide](#) by Craig Mathews

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- [Flyfisher's Guide to Wyoming: Including Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks](#) by Ken Retallic

Looking for more places to fish? Check our [DIY Guide to the Best Fly Fishing Destinations in the U.S.](#)

See more



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DIY Guide to Fly Fishing Snake River in Yellowstone National Park



Posted by Ken Sperry

March 28, 2020



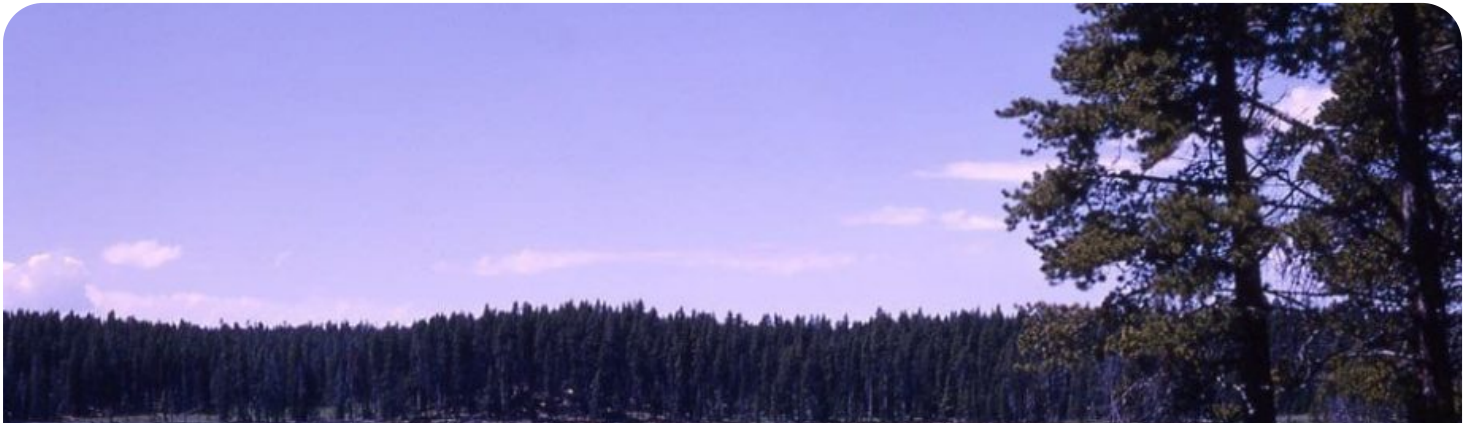
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