Discover With Nature: Yellowstone National Park & Centennial Valley

The Centennial Valley stretches out just beyond the western border of Yellowstone National Park, protecting the headwaters of the Missouri River as well as critical migration routes for wildlife throughout the Northern Rockies. This area, in combination with the High Divide Headwaters and Big Hole, maintains the links between the protected wildlands of Yellowstone, Central Idaho, the Crown of the Continent, and Canada. The Centennial’s expansive wetlands are home to hundreds of bird species, and the Red Rock River system is one of the last places where Arctic grayling survive. It supports grizzlies, wolves, elk, deer, and other magnificent wildlife that draws millions of visitors to Yellowstone.

Your trip begins in Bozeman, winding South through the Tom Miner Basin before arriving at a sustainable working Ranch. See firsthand the people, wildlife and livestock that live on the land; the protection of these habitats is crucial to creating a system that can survive for generations to come. Experience unparalleled views and access to the outdoors during time at Flat Ranch Preserve. Visits to the Sandhills Preserve and Red Rock Lake National Wildlife Refuge will give you exclusive insight into the Nature Conservancy’s work in this remote region. Opportunities to hike, birdwatch, and horseback ride amongst these landscapes promise to provide an even deeper appreciation and desire to protect the Centennial Valley.

Spend a full day in Yellowstone National Park, America’s first national park. Within the park’s boundaries, visitors can find mountains, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, and some of the most concentrated geothermal activity in the world. Take in the history and sights with a field guide from Yellowstone Forever on a full day exploration of the park.

With the help of expert TNC staff – learn how the Conservancy and its conservation partners are working to protect this national treasure and ensure that the public can continue to enjoy this iconic place for generations to come.

DATES
July 29-August 4, 2023

PRICE
Double Occupancy: $5,350
Single Occupancy: $5,710
BIRD WATCHING AT RED ROCK LAKES
Explore the lakes and wetlands of the 45,000-acre refuge; home to 241 species of birds. This valley contains the highest nest density in the West for trumpeter swans and lies along one of only two primary swan migration corridors.

CENTENNIAL VALLEY
Montana is known as “Big Sky Country,” and you’ll understand why after you visit this valley.

CENTENNIAL SANDHILLS PRESERVE
With TNC staff, visit the 1,400-acre preserve, part of a larger community of sandhills, that supports four rare plant species and several uncommon plant communities.

WILDLIFE AT YELLOWSTONE
Keep your eyes open for grizzlies, bison, elk, and elusive wolves.

Your trip supports the local communities you’re traveling in and The Nature Conservancy’s efforts locally and globally. This trip has been planned specifically by The Nature Conservancy’s team of scientific experts and travel liaisons to immerse you in the work the Conservancy is doing on the ground that has global consequences.
RESTORING NATURE’S BALANCE
Nature here thrives on disturbance. Before Europeans arrived on the scene, regular fire and munching bison removed shrubs and bunchgrass, allowing diverse plants to thrive. The Centennial Valley’s absence of natural fire has left many forests out of balance, putting them at risk for unnaturally large and catastrophic burns when they do happen – leaving nature and people in harm’s way. Today, the Conservancy is working to bring that diversity back – researching what combination of controlled burns and grazing mimics these once natural disturbances.

Partnership and stewardship with the many multi-generational ranch families in the area is the foundation of The Nature Conservancy’s success in the area. This collaboration has resulted in miles of stream restoration, an all-out assault on non-native invasive weeds, increased use of controlled burning, and sustainable grazing plans.

LAKES AND WETLANDS
The Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, is bounded by high mountains, with wetlands, wildflower filled meadows, grasslands, marshes, aquatic plants, sagebrush communities, and forests. Conservation efforts in the refuge focus on providing habitat for migratory birds and endangered species.
ITINERARY

DAY 1 — Saturday, July 29th | Arrive in Bozeman by 1:00 PM. Upon arrival at the airport, you will be welcomed by your Iconic trip leader and TNC hosts. As a group, transfer in a private shuttle to B Bar ranch, a 90-minute drive. Established in 1906, the Ranch preserves and protects the land, natural resources, and property values within the Tom Miner Basin. A place of spectacular beauty, stewardship is top of mind in every aspect of the Ranch.

After settling into your home for the next two nights, meet for a brief orientation and introductions. We’ll gather around the fire to discuss the week’s itinerary before a delicious welcome BBQ outside.

OVERNIGHT AT B BAR RANCH

DAY 2 — Sunday, July 30th | Begin the day with a fresh breakfast before heading out to explore. Beginning with a morning hike, explore the landscape as TNC staff introduces the group to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. We’ll enjoy a scenic picnic lunch and have plenty of time for discussion and questions.

In the afternoon, return to B Bar Ranch for a sustainable ranch tour. There will be plenty of time for discussion and questions. The remainder of the afternoon can be spent at leisure or on another, more challenging hike. Dinner will be on-site this evening.

OVERNIGHT AT B BAR RANCH

DAY 3 — Monday, July 31st | Enjoy a final breakfast at the Ranch before checking out and heading out on a full day’s adventure. Yellowstone National Park is home to some of the most spectacular landscapes and wildlife in America. Led by a private guide, discover the various geological processes that created Grand Prismatic Springs, Fountain Paint Pots, and Old Faithful Geyser. Bring comfortable shoes, plenty of water, and of course—your camera!

Mid-afternoon, transfer (bison jams may slow down traffic!) 45 minutes to Island Park, Idaho, where we’ll spend two nights at The Pines at Island Park. Enjoy downtime before dinner.

OVERNIGHT AT THE PINES AT ISLAND PARK

DAY 4 — Tuesday, August 1st | After breakfast, depart to Flat Ranch Preserve. Upon arrival at the Visitor’s Center, you’ll enjoy an overview of The Nature Conservancy’s work in the area, followed by a light hike along the River Trail and lunch. Keep your eye open for the pronghorn, elk, deer, and occasional bear that find a safe haven within the Ranch’s borders as we discover a diverse landscape of wetlands, grasslands and waters.

LODGING

B Bar Ranch
Nestled in the pristine Tom Miner Basin, stay at this family-owned and operated working cattle ranch. Photo provided by B Bar Ranch.

The Pines at Island Park
Away from the hustle and bustle of West Yellowstone is your log cabin secluded within the Targhee National Forest. After a day of exploring Flat Ranch Preserve, enjoy relaxing in your private hot tub. Photo provided by The Pines at Island Park.

Elk Lake Resort
Set in the true wilderness of the Greater Yellowstone Region, you’ll have access to breathtaking views right outside your cozy cabin. Photo provided by Elk Lake Resort.
ITINERARY

In the afternoon, you’ll have the option to return to the Lodge to relax at leisure or take a drive up to the top of Sawtell Peak. With stunning views of the Centennial Valley, your TNC hosts will use this time to speak about migration in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Afterwards, we’ll return to our cabins and have dinner in town.

OVERNIGHT AT THE PINES AT ISLAND PARK

DAY 5 — Wednesday, August 2nd | Rise early for a 1.5-hour drive to the Centennial Valley this morning. Please note that this drive is incredibly scenic, remote, and that not all roads are paved. On arrival at Centennial Sandhills Preserve, meet with local TNC staff; take tour of the headquarters and learn more about the research work and ecology projects that are being conducted on-site. After a picnic lunch, we’ll spend time walking around the sand dunes looking for and learning about the endemic plants and insect species that live in this landscape.

In the afternoon, we’ll transfer to Elk Lake Resort, a hunting and fishing resort that dates back to the 1930s, where we will stay for the next two nights.

OVERNIGHT AT ELK LAKE RESORT

DAY 6 — Thursday, August 3rd | This morning, choose to relax in your cabin or join TNC staff at Red Rock Wildlife Refuge to participate in birdwatching. This 45,000-acre haven of lakes and wetlands is home to 241 species of bird including trumpeter swans, peregrine falcons, and a healthy population of bald eagles and osprey. We will return to the resort for lunch.

Afterwards, you’ll have the opportunity to join a guided horseback ride through the Centennial Valley. Explore the sweeping grasslands surrounded by ragged peaks and we make our way through Big Sky Country. The evening will be spent as a group, reflecting on a memorable week together over dinner before taking in the open, starry skies around the campfire.

OVERNIGHT AT ELK LAKE RESORT

DAY 7 — Friday, August 4th | Late morning, transfer 3 hours to Bozeman for your departure flight.

PRICE DETAIL

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Price is based on a minimum of 14. Trip size not to exceed 14 travelers.

Price includes all lodging, domestic transportation, activities, tips, meals, TNC expert staff and local guides. Price does not include your roundtrip flight to Bozeman, Montana.

PLEASE NOTE: This itinerary is representative of your trip, and like all natural history excursions, activities are subject to modification based on weather and unforeseen events. We will do our best to keep you informed on any necessary changes.