

SOUTHWEST YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

This is the day we drove from Wilson, WY to Gardiner, MT; the main area which we saw was Southwest Yellowstone National Park, but we also stopped at a few viewpoints in Grand Tetons National Park, including Signal Mountain and Oxbow Bend. For this day in Yellowstone, we saw the West Thumb Geyser Basin on the western shore of Yellowstone Lake, Firehole Lake Drive (the road which had recently "melted"—it now has some large sections of gravel on top of the destroyed pavement), and the Fountain Paint Pots boardwalk. We also waited in multiple traffic jams, including once for a crash just beyond Fountain Paint Pots (there were two other serious crashes which we saw remnants of, in addition to two cars off the edge of the road on the wrong side of the road, one of which was brand-new and appeared to have rolled), and once for road construction. Therefore, when planning to get anywhere in Yellowstone, we discovered that we must leave very early before the majority of the tourists get out, and plan extra time for these and similar delays.

Panorama of the tetons from the Cascade Canyon Turnout:



Looking towards Hanging Canyon:



Panorama looking in a southeasterly direction from the top of Signal Mountain:



Panorama looking towards the only view of the tetons (to the south) that can be seen from the top of Signal Mountain:



Photo of these southern tetons:



One final panorama from the parking area at the top of Signal Mountain, with the Snake River below:



This is a common view of the tetons, as seen from the Oxbow Bend Turnout:



View from Oxbow Bend, with wildflowers:



Panorama from the Jackson Lake Lodge, with the peaks left to right being Buck Mountain, Mt. Wister, South Teton, Middle Teton, Grand Teton, Mt. Owen, Teewinot, Mount St. John, Rockchuck Peak, Mt. Woodring, Mt. Moran, Bivouac Peak, Rolling Thunder Mountain, Eagle's Rest Peak, and Ranger Peak (the other main peaks, Prospectors Mountain, Albright Peak, and Static Peak, are too far to the south/left to be identifiable in this photograph):



Sign at this viewpoint which labels the peaks:



This is the only photograph I got at Coulter Bay, as we were concerned the traffic jam which we had seen when entering Coulter Bay would get worse (which it did: when we left, the vehicle lineup was almost to the parking lot, and vehicles were stopped at the entrance to Coulter Bay):



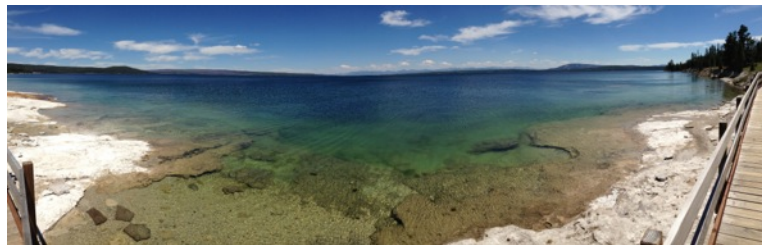
One last panorama in the tetons area, from the Jackson Lake Overlook:



After entering Yellowstone, we stopped at the West Thumb Geyser Basin boardwalk:



This is not an active geyser area, but its location on the shore of Lake Yellowstone makes it an interesting place to photograph:



Lakeshore Geysers:



Another geyser on the edge of the lake:



Black Pool:



Abyss Pool:



Another angle of Abyss Pool, with Yellowstone Lake just visible in the background:



More pools at West Thumb Geyser Basin; although I managed not to get too many other tourists in these photographs, this boardwalk was so crowded that we decided to check out another area rather than fully explore this one (we did the outer loop of this boardwalk and missed the inner section of springs/pools/geysers):



Our next stop was Firehole Lake Drive; this is Firehole Spring:



The spring was bubbling up some water:



Despite being less crowded than other areas, the parking area for Surprise Pool and Great Fountain Geyser seemed too crowded to stop, so we continued on to White Dome Geyser (it is interesting to see how tourists often congregate in some areas and not in others, as we were able to check out this geyser for a number of minutes with nobody else around):



Informative sign about White Dome Geyser, which notes that this geyser's cone is many centuries old:



Looking back towards Great Fountain Geyser:



Another view of White Dome Geyser:



The next stop is Hot Lake; this is Steady Geyser:



The ground off the boardwalk may look safe to walk on, until you see that one could break through and end up in Hot Lake:



As is common in geothermal areas, the surrounding area looks like any normal meadow with a lake:



Another photo of Steady Geyser; I had quite a bit of difficulty photographing geysers which were almost always spewing water on this trip, as it seemed that as soon as I got my camera out they were less active (though somehow I doubt they really are camera-shy):



Another photo of Hot Lake:



This is Firehole Lake:



Next, we checked out the Fountain Paint Pots boardwalk. This is Celestine Pool:



Bacterial mats:



Silex Spring:



Panorama of Silex Spring, with the typical Yellowstone vehicular traffic jam seen on the road in the background:



Fountain Paint Pots:



Panorama of the paint pots; unfortunately, it is often not possible to get photographs in Yellowstone without other tourists in them, though it is possible to minimize the number of tourists:



Different sun angles seem to bring out more vivid colors of the paint pots than others:



Informative sign at the paint pots, which tells readers that "thermophiles", heat-loving microorganisms, consume and help convert some of the gases in the mudpots into sulfuric acid, which breaks the rock down into clay:



Red Spouter:



Two geysers splashing, with Fountain Geyser in front (to the right in the photo), and Clepsydra Geyser behind it:



Two photos of Fountain Geysers erupting:



Jet Geysers, which typically erupts just before Fountain Geysers; as Fountain was erupting when we arrived, we missed a potential eruption from Jet:



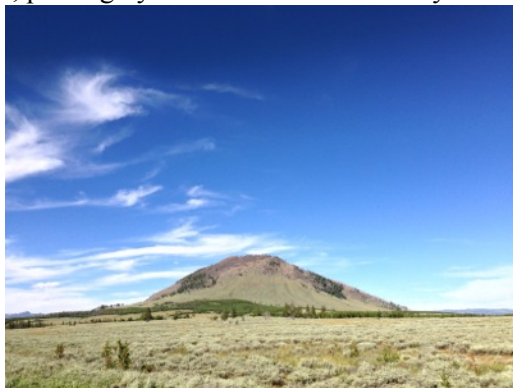
Panorama of the geyser area near Fountain Paint Pots:



There appeared to be some colorful pools a bit off the boardwalk:



From here, we headed towards Gardiner, passing by Bunsen Peak on the way:



Descending into Mammoth Hot Springs, we got a view of some nice lakes and of the bridge over the Gardner River on the road to Tower-Roosevelt:



Brief view of the Mammoth Hot Springs; the lower parking lot always seemed too crowded when we drove by, so we never were able to get good photos from here:



Roosevelt Arch; note that the main road does go through the arch, and vehicles are not supposed to take the shortcut to the right (not shown in this photo):

