

## Yellowstone National Park Non-Commercially Guided Snowmobile Access Program

Frequently Asked Questions  
August, 2015

### Program Overview

#### What is the Non-commercially Guided Snowmobile Access Program?

The program permits authorized parties to enter Yellowstone National Park without the presence of a commercial guide, and to instead travel with a non-commercial guide. The program allows up to four non-commercially guided groups – with up to 5 snowmobiles per group – to enter the park daily, one group event per oversnow entrance. Before entering the park, all non-commercial groups must have a Non-commercially Guided Snowmobile Access Permit and new Best Available Technology (New BAT) snowmobiles. Additionally, all snowmobile operators in the group must have successfully completed the online Yellowstone Snowmobile Education Certification Program and have a valid driver's license.

#### What steps do I need to take to lead a non-commercial trip into Yellowstone?

1. First, secure a non-commercially guided access permit at recreation.gov through the online lottery or on a first-come-first-serve basis after the close of the lottery. For more information on how the lottery works, see the Lottery section below.
2. Second, successfully complete the free, online Yellowstone Snowmobile Education Certification course, and ensure that all the snowmobile operators in your group have done the same. All snowmobile operators in your group must bring a paper or digital version of the course certificate as well as valid driver's licenses. See the Yellowstone Snowmobile Education Certification section below for additional details.
3. Third, ensure all snowmobiles in your group are new best available technology (New BAT) compliant and that all members of your trip have the necessary safety equipment. See this page for a list of approved New BAT snowmobiles:  
<http://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/management/newbatlist.htm>. If you do not have a New BAT-compliant snowmobile you may be able to rent one. A list of rental companies can be seen here:  
<http://www.nps.gov/yell/parkmgmt/snowmobilevendors.htm>. See the New BAT Snowmobile section below.
4. Fourth, schedule an appointment within 48 hours with a NPS ranger to check-in at the park entrance gate. Rangers will ensure that that all snowmobiles in the group are New BAT

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compliant and that all members possess the necessary documentation (such as access permit, certification of completion for the education course, driver's license, snowmobile registration, etc.). The NPS ranger will also run a brief on-site orientation session for all members of your group to reinforce components of the educational program you've completed and update you on any closures or hazardous conditions in the park.

### **Who can be a non-commercial guide?**

Any member of the public can be a non-commercial snowmobile guide provided they are at least 18 years of age by the first day of the trip, possesses a permit, have led no more than 2 trips throughout the current winter season and are certified under the Yellowstone Snowmobile Education Certification Program.

### **What are the responsibilities of a non-commercial guide?**

Non-commercial snowmobile guides are responsible for the actions of their group. They should have working knowledge of snowmobile safety, natural resource protection, general first aid, snowmobile repair, and navigational techniques. Non-commercial guides should be able to help their groups travel safely through the park, be familiar with daily weather conditions, and know how to use hand signals to warn group members about wildlife and other road hazards, indicate turns, and indicate when to turn the snowmobile on or off. They will employ a single file "follow-the leader" approach and communicate frequently with group members.

### **How many trips can a non-commercial guide lead per winter season?**

Up to two. A non-commercial guide may awarded one trip through the lottery and may lead a second trip if they secure a permit after the lottery closes on a first come, first served reservation basis.

### **How does the "first come, first served" reservation system work?**

After November 3<sup>rd</sup>, interested parties can check on <http://recreation.gov> to reserve any permits that were not allocated via the lottery or that come available due to cancellations. Permits may become available due to cancellations throughout the winter season, so check the permit availability calendar on the recreation.gov website often.

### **Can I lead an overnight trip into the park under a non-commercially guided trip?**

Yes, non-commercial guides may lead an overnight trip (maximum of 3 days and 2 nights) by securing a multiple-day permit in the N-CGSAP lottery or reservation system.

### **Is there a group size limit?**

Yes, non-commercially guided groups are limited to a maximum of 5 snowmobiles per group.

**When do I have to tell the Park who is coming with me on the trip?**

You will have the opportunity to enter the names of the friends and family you plan to bring when you obtain your permit through <http://recreation.gov>. If these names change, you can call <http://recreation.gov> personnel to make the update or you can wait until you arrive at the entrance. Remember all prospective snowmobile operators must meet certain qualifications, specified in the FAQ document.

**What do other snowmobile operators have to do to join my trip?**

Other snowmobile operators must be 16 years or older, have a valid driver's license, have passed the Yellowstone Snowmobile Education Certification course, and operate a current New BAT snowmobile with proof of registration.

**Do snowmobiles have to be insured?**

Yes, all snowmobiles must be insured, either through your personal insurance or through the rental company.

**Can I charge people for my guide services through this program?**

No, you may not charge anyone to join you on this trip; it is for friends and family groups only.

**Can I change the dates of my trip?**

You may only change the dates of your trip if the desired dates are open after the close of the lottery. When the lottery closes, days that have not been filled are available on a first-come, first-served basis at <http://recreation.gov>. You will need to cancel your permit and apply for a new permit through the <http://recreation.gov> reservation system. You will receive a reservation fee refund if you cancel at least two weeks before the start of your trip. The park is not responsible for rescheduling your trip in the event of poor weather or road closures.

**During which hours may I enter the park and operate a snowmobile within the park?**

Park roads are open from 7:00am – 9:00pm (MST). However, you may not enter the park on your first day until after you've checked in with a ranger (which you must schedule before you arrive). The east, west, and south entrance gates open at 8:00am and the north entrance check-in location at Albright Visitor Center opens at 9:00am. On the last day of your trip, you must exit the park by 9:00 pm. If you secure a permit for a one-day trip, you must exit the park on that day. Please note that the NPS recommends only traveling during daylight hours and that winter days this far north are relatively short with late sunrises and early sunsets.

**Where are the four oversnow vehicle entrances?**

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You can enter the park through the North (Mammoth Hot Springs), South, East, and West entrance stations under the Non-commercially Guided Snowmobile Access Program. See the "Planning Your Trip" section below for more details about getting to and from the entrances, entrance hours, and seasonal conditions and restrictions.

### **Do I need to check in at the entrance before I start my trip?**

Yes, you will need to call the entrance associated with your permit within 48 hours in advance of your trip to schedule a time to check-in with a ranger and plan to check-in before 4:00 pm on the day of your trip. Phone numbers for each of the entrance stations are as follows:

North Entrance:	(307) 344-2263
East Entrance:	(307) 587-2682
South Entrance:	(307) 543-2800
West Entrance:	(307) 344-2867

### **Do I need to check out at the conclusion of my trip?**

No, you do not need to check out, but you must exit the park by 9:00 pm on the last day your permit is valid.

### **Can I enter through one entrance and exit through another, or exit and re-enter?**

Yes, and you can exit and re-enter the park while your permit is valid, but be sure to carry all necessary documentation with you when you exit if you plan to re-enter.

### **If I have a multi-day trip booked, can others begin a trip from that entrance during my second or third day?**

No. If your group has booked a multi-day trip from a particular entrance, your group occupies that gate's entrance allocation for each day of the trip.

### **What if I decide not to use some of the days in my multi-day permit?**

Please contact <http://recreation.gov> with this information as soon as possible so that the un-used dates can be released for others to enjoy.

## **Obtaining a Non-commercial Permit to Enter the Park**

### **How can I book a trip?**

There are two ways to book a trip, both of which are through <http://recreation.gov>: through the September lottery or after November 3<sup>rd</sup>, when you can pick up an unallocated or cancelled permit.

### **How do I enter the lottery?**

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Visit <http://www.recreation.gov> to enter the lottery from September 1<sup>st</sup> –September 30<sup>th</sup>. You can apply once per year and in your application, you can choose up to 8 different date/entrance chances. You will be notified by mid-October of the lottery results.

### **How does the lottery work?**

When you apply for the lottery, you will be able to select up to eight different date/entrance/number of days configurations, in the order of your preference. When the lottery runs, it will chose applications randomly by name and award the first available configuration. The lottery will then remove that name from the system and move to the next.

### **Is there a limit to how many times I can enter the lottery?**

You may submit one application per year for the lottery and in that one application you can select as many as eight date/entrance/number of days configurations. However, you can only be selected for one trip per year through the lottery.

### **How do I obtain a permit after the lottery runs?**

Beginning November 3<sup>rd</sup>, any remaining permits will become available on a first-come, first-served basis on <http://recreation.gov>. These permits could either be cancellations or were not allocated by the lottery. You may also call the <http://recreation.gov> reservation line at 1-877-444-6777.

### **How can I increase my chances of obtaining a permit?**

You should put in as many different date/entrance/number of days configurations as possible—entering the same configuration more than once will not increase your chances of obtaining that configuration.

### **How many trips can I book through recreation.gov?**

Two trips per year. One trip can be booked through the lottery system. After the lottery runs, you can secure permits on a first-come-first-serve basis.

### **Is there a waiting list?**

No, there is no waiting list.

### **When can I book a “first-come-first-serve” trip?**

You may book a “first-come-first-serve” trip if dates are available beginning November 3<sup>rd</sup>

### **How much does a reservation for the N-CGSAP cost?**

To apply for a permit through the lottery system, there is a \$6.00 non-refundable application fee. The reservation fee is \$40.00/day. See below for refund information.

**Do I also need to pay the park entrance fee?**

Yes, non-commercially guided snowmobiles groups must also pay the park entrance fee of \$25 for each snowmobile or show your annual park pass.

**Can my registration fees be refunded?**

If you cancel your trip 14 or more calendar days before your entrance date, you will be issued a full reservation fee refund. Permit (reservation?) fees will not be refunded in the event of poor weather, road closures, or under other any other circumstances.

**How do I cancel my trip?**

Visit <http://recreation.gov> or call their reservation line at 1-877-444-6777. If you decide not to use all the days on a multi-day trip, please contact <http://recreation.gov> staff as soon as possible so that others may use those dates.

**What if the weather is bad on the day of my trip?**

Winter weather in Yellowstone can be harsh, and in the event of a winter storm, it may be prudent to delay or cancel your trip. For instance, the East Entrance Road, which crosses Sylvan Pass, can close due to avalanche danger for hours or days. Alternatively, warm or dry weather conditions can result in insufficient snow on park roads, causing roads to open late or close early in the season.

**What if there is a road closure in effect on the day of my trip?**

You will be contacted either by email, text, or phone as soon as possible. You can either wait for the closure to be lifted, reschedule your trip through <http://recreation.gov>, or cancel.

**Can I reschedule my trip?**

You can cancel your original trip for a full refund as long as you do so at least 14 calendar days in advance of the first day of your trip. You can then make a new reservation for open dates with the first-come-first-serve reservation system on <http://recreation.gov>.

**The Yellowstone Snowmobile Education Certification Course**

**What is the Yellowstone Snowmobile Education Certification Program?**

The Yellowstone Snowmobile Education Certification (YSEC) is the education course that all snowmobile operators who wish to participate in a non-commercially guided trip must successfully complete before operating a snowmobile in Yellowstone.

**Do I have to pay to take the YSEC course?**

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No, the course is free.

**What will I learn in the YSEC?**

The online course will educate participants about the N-CGSAP, trip planning, park rules and regulations, safety, and knowledge specific to operating a snowmobile in Yellowstone.

**How do I access the YSEC?**

The online course is available at <http://provalenslearning.com/yellowstone-snowmobile-education-certificate>.

**What are the requirements to get certified?**

You will need to complete a test at the end of the course.

**Do I need to bring proof that I passed the YSEC with me to Yellowstone?**

Upon successful completion of the program, you will be able to print your certificate from your computer or save it to your digital device. You must bring either the paper or digital certificate with you when you check-in with a ranger.

**Is there a way to take the YESC offline?**

No. This course is only offered online.

**Snowmobiles**

**Do I have to have a particular type of snowmobile to enter Yellowstone?**

Yes, you must have a currently certified New Best Available Technology (New BAT) snowmobile in Yellowstone National Park.

**What is a New BAT snowmobile?**

As of December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, all snowmobiles entering Yellowstone National Park must operate at or below 67 dB(A) and must be certified to a Family Emission Limit (FEL) no greater than a total of 15 g/kW0hr for hydrocarbons and 90 g/kW-hr for carbon monoxide. These requirements are known as New BAT. See <http://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/management/newbatlist.htm> for a list of approved New BAT snowmobiles

**Can I bring my own New BAT snowmobile?**

Yes, provided that it is certified as meeting the New BAT standards described above and here: <http://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/management/newbatlist.htm>.

**I've modified my own snowmobile and am confident it meets the park's New BAT standards; can I bring it into the park?**

No, only snowmobiles that are certified New BAT by the manufacturer can be used in Yellowstone National Park.

**Can I rent a New BAT snowmobile?**

Yes. You can find information about renting snowmobiles in each of the gateway communities online by visiting <http://nps.gov/yell/parkmgmt/snowmobilevendors.htm>.

**Where can I get snowmobile fuel?**

Snowmobile fuel may be available with a credit card at Canyon Village, Fishing Bridge, Mammoth Hot Springs, Grant Village, and Old Faithful. See the map below.

**What happens if my snowmobile breaks down?**

You are responsible for your actions and equipment. In the event your snowmobile breaks down, you are responsible for towing it out of the park, either through the operator from which you rented the snowmobile or a through an approved towing company located in the gateway communities. This page contains a list of approved companies:

<http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/snsproviders.htm>. It may be a good idea to leave an extra seat or two open in case some riders need to abandon their snowmobile.

**Can I use a side-by-side machine with tracks instead of a snowmobile?**

No, they do not meet the definition of a snowmobile (36 CFR Part 7.13(l)).

## **Planning Your Trip**

**What should I bring to check-in?**

Each member of the group who intends to operate a snowmobile in Yellowstone must bring the following on the day of their trip:

- 1) a valid government-issued driver's license,
- 2) a certificate of completion from the YSEC,
- 3) current snowmobile registration documentation,
- 4) New BAT snowmobiles.

**What kind of clothing do I need?**

You will need to dress warmly, as wind chill becomes much colder with increased speed. Suggested clothing items include a helmet with a face shield, sunglasses and/or goggles, heavy gloves, boots

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and heavy wool or synthetic socks, a moisture wicking under layer, an insulating layer, a protective outer layer or snowmobile suit, and a ski mask/balaclava or neck gaiter.

### **What should I carry with me on a trip?**

In addition to the documentation listed above and warm clothes, you should plan to bring food, water, extra layers, map, spare snowmobile drive belt, a basic tool kit or multi-tool, a first aid kit, a flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries, and a survival kit.

### **What should be included in my emergency/first aid/survival kit?**

Suggested first aid contents include: gauze, bandage or sling, antibiotic salve, aspirin, adhesive dressings, cotton swabs, hand sanitizer, hot packs, latex gloves, moleskin, needles, hydrocortisone cream, adhesive tape, safety pins, scissors, sterile eyewash, thermometer, tweezers. Suggested survival kit contents should at minimum include a thermal foil blanket, rope, whistle, fire starter kit, water purification system, and signal flares.

### **How do I find out about road conditions?**

We recommend that visitors check the following resources before travelling:

[Park Roads](http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/parkroads.htm) (<http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/parkroads.htm>) - shows current road status in the park

[WYDOT Road Information](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/) (<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/>) 888-WYO-ROAD (Wyoming)

[M-DOT Road Information](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/) (<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/>) 800-226-7623 (Montana)

Road conditions are also available by calling 511, the National Traveler Information System. If your phone does not support 511, call 1-800-226-7623. Both numbers are toll-free. Select "Yellowstone National Park Tourist Information" from the main menu to hear Yellowstone's road report.

### **Where are each of the park entrances located?**

The North Entrance is located adjacent to the gateway town of Gardiner, MT, which is approximately 55 miles south of I-90 and Livingston, MT and 75 miles from Bozeman, MT. Wheeled vehicles may enter the North Entrance but may only drive the road between the North Entrance and the Northeast Entrance during the winter season. N-CGSAP participants will proceed via wheeled vehicle to the Albright Visitor Center, five miles north of Gardiner at Mammoth Hot Springs, for check-in with park personnel.

The West Entrance is located adjacent to West Yellowstone, MT, which is 107 miles northeast of Idaho Falls, ID, and 88 miles south of Bozeman, MT. N-CGSAP participants will stage their trips at the West Yellowstone Visitor Information Center.

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The South Entrance is located 55 miles north of Jackson, WY. N-CGSAP participants will stage their trips at Flagg Ranch, several miles south of the park's entrance.

The East Entrance is located 52 miles west of Cody, WY. Visitors entering through this entrance must travel over Sylvan Pass, which is a high elevation pass frequently subject to avalanche danger. Sylvan Pass, and therefore access through the East Entrance, is subject to periodic closures with little advance notice to visitors due to avalanche mitigation, avalanche danger, or severe weather.

### **Where can I stay overnight in the park?**

In the winter time, visitors can stay at either the Mammoth Hotel and Cabins or the Old Faithful Snow Lodge and Cabins. Visit

<http://www.yellowstonenationalparklodges.com/lodging/reservations/> early in your trip planning process for availability and reservations.

### **Can I camp overnight in the park?**

Yes, the Mammoth Campground is open year-round on a first-come, first-served basis. More information about the Mammoth Campground is located here:

<http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/campgrounds.htm>. Backcountry camping is allowed in designated sites. Permits are available through NPS backcountry offices; see this page for more information: <http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/backcountryhiking.htm>.

### **Where can I eat in the park?**

Winter dining opportunities include the Mammoth General Store, which serves lunch on weekdays; the Mammoth Hotel Dining Room; the Old Faithful Snow Lodge Geyser Grill; or the Old Faithful Snow Lodge Dining Room. Some of these options open late or close early in the season, so inquire at the park when you arrive to verify facility availability.

### **What's the weather like in Yellowstone?**

High temperatures range from below zero to 20°F and much colder wind chills are common. The temperature usually drops to 20 or more degrees below zero overnight. The record low temperature is -66° F, and hazardous weather conditions like snowstorms, whiteouts, and fog are common. Check the "weather" link on our website, located underneath the "plan your visit tab" at <http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/weather.htm> for weather reports and forecasts. You may also call 307-344-2117 for current road conditions. However, the weather can change quickly, and is often different in different parts of the park, so be prepared for the most extreme conditions, even if they're not forecasted.

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**Where can I find the park weather forecast?**

Check the “weather” link on our website, located underneath the “plan your visit” tab, or <http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/weather.htm> for weather reports and forecasts. You should also check the National Weather Service Zone Forecast for Yellowstone National Park, located at [http://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?zoneid=WYZ001#.U6yQb\\_IdVsl](http://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?zoneid=WYZ001#.U6yQb_IdVsl), keeping in mind that the weather can vary greatly within the Park.

**How much snow does Yellowstone get in the winter?**

Snowfall in the park is highly variable. While the average is 150 inches per year, it is not uncommon for higher elevations to get twice that amount and for snow drifts to create much deeper areas.

**Yellowstone Maps and Facilities**

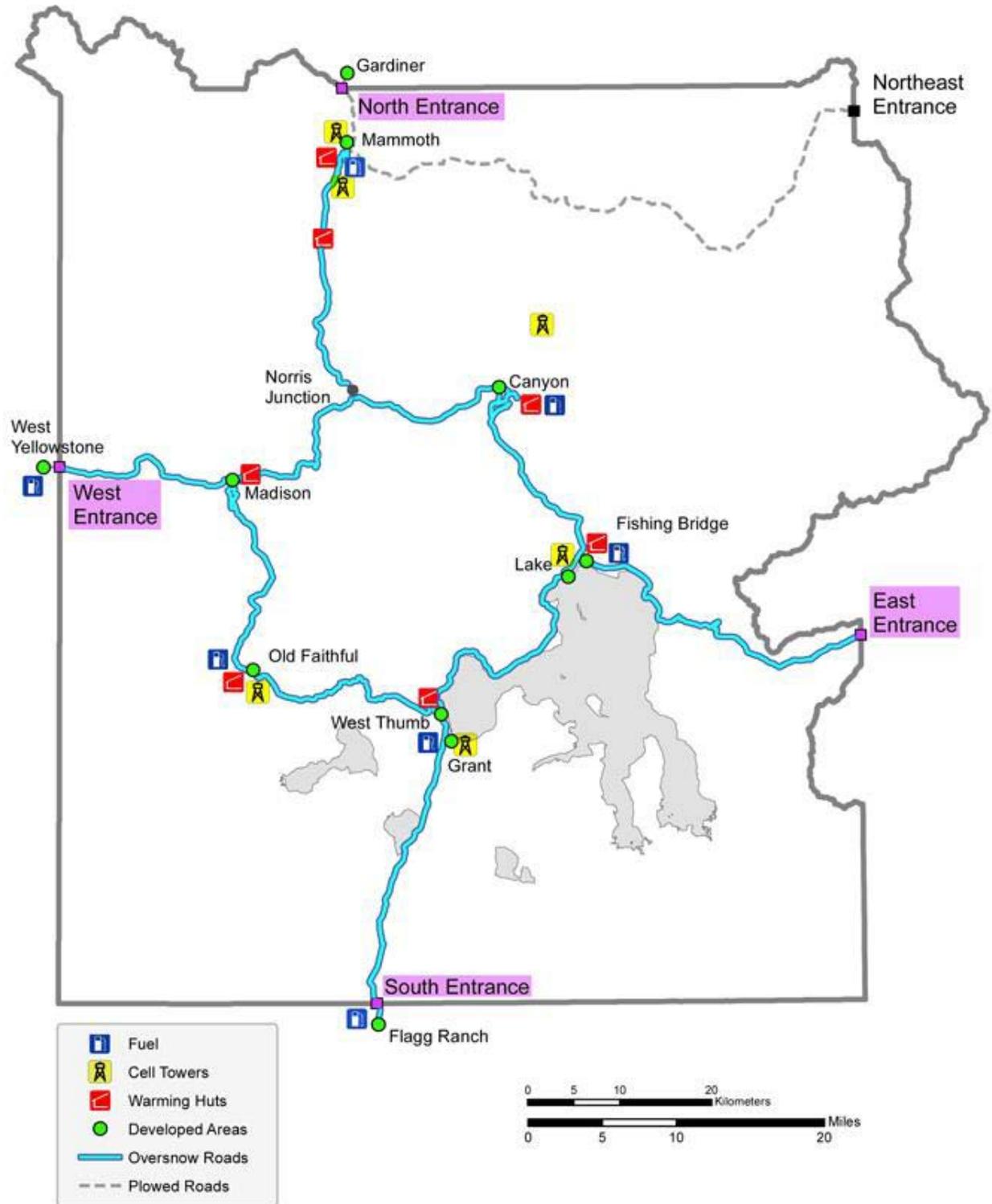
**Where can I find a map of the park?**

A park map can be found on the park website at <http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/placestogo.htm>.

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This map shows important winter-related information:

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**Where are the warming huts located?**

Warming huts, which are shelters that you can stop at to rest, warm up, or use the restroom, are located at Mammoth, Madison, Old Faithful, Canyon, Fishing Bridge, and West Thumb (see the map below). Warming huts look different in each area; the Canyon Visitor Education Center serves the Canyon area while a temporary mobile building is located at Madison. If you are uncertain as to the location of a warming hut, look for groups of snowmobiles around a building that has been cleared of snow.

**Is there cell phone coverage in the park?**

Cell phone coverage in the park is extremely limited and non-existent for some providers. Contact your cell phone provider to see if they offer service within Yellowstone National Park.

**How do I contact a ranger?**

You can call 911 to contact a ranger if you have cell service. Warming hut attendees can also help you call a ranger. Additionally, rangers patrol oversnow roads during daylight hours, so you can flag one down as he or she passes by. Alternatively, you can ask one of the commercial snowmobile or snowcoach guides to use their radio to call for help.

**How do I access medical care?**

Emergency medical services are provided by rangers on duty. Medical services are also available year round, except some holidays, at Mammoth Clinic (307-244-7965). If in-patient care or advanced services are required, the clinic staff can stabilize patients and arrange for appropriate transfer to a hospital outside of the park.