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Wonder in Yellowstone

Untouched by man. A paragon of bliss. Nature's utopia. Resting at an elevation of eight thousand feet lies the greatest wonder of the world and my greatest adventure. Boasting an empyrean of 3471 square miles, Yellowstone is Eden on Earth. Every aspect of Yellowstone creates the atmosphere of adventure: from the vibrancy and striking colors of the Grand Prismatic Springs, to the billowing shoots of Old Faithful, and to the unspoiled wildlife within the woodland borders. There are just not enough adjectives to describe the beauty and awe of the country's first national park.

My adventure began around approximately seven in the morning, December 22, 2019. A rap on the door commenced what would be the paramount experience of my lifetime. Our tour guide, Tyler, picked us up from our cabin and we headed to Flagg Ranch, where we would board the snow coach that would travel along the snowy paths of the park. The sun had just begun to crest the horizon, with the stars still visible in the sky. The feelings of sleepiness and excitement loomed in the air as we drove along the roads of Jackson and Moose, Wyoming. As far as the eye can see, there was snow covered plains laden with shrubbery and bushes at the base of the Teton Mountains. We saw a few moose, and a couple of bushes that we thought were moose, along with bison and coyotes and foxes even before we were in the proximity of the park. We had been to Yellowstone once before, thinking nothing could top that day in wonderland. Oh boy, were we wrong.

After eating breakfast and loading the snow coach at Flagg Ranch, we finally began our journey into the park. Alongside the road were thousands upon thousands of tall, skinny lodge pole pine trees. The trees lined the snow dusted paths, darting down into the valleys and dotting off into the distance. It was like we were in a holiday card- driving down a snowy lane, in the middle of a quiet, white forest, snow creating sparkles in the cold, crisp air, days before Christmas. We soaked in the serenity and continued our drive to the first adventure.

We got out of the coach, and followed a path into a treasure trove of biothermal amenities- hot springs that is. The springs scattered along the boardwalk, with steam pirouetting into the air. Hot air replenished our cold faces as we approached the springs with curiosity. Tyler, our tour guide, told us about the many ecosystems among these biothermal pockets, and how each spring had differentiating ecosystems based on the temperature of the water. He also told us about how a single object dropped into the water can disrupt everything. This made me reflect on its similarities towards life- the fragility and instability, how everything can change in an instance- from a single touch. The warm air drifting off the springs relieved these thoughts from my conscience and brought me back to the escapade.

The next stop was to another hot spring- the ‘grandest’ one might say. Behold, the Grand Prismatic. The striking colors against the white snow was a sight to be seen. A brilliant blue was the primary visible color- with the cold temperatures and weather, not all of the regular colors were displayed. During the summer, the colors of the prism are visible- hence the name “Prismatic.” Steam was rolling off the hot water, dancing atop the blue hues. The mountains concealed by the misty veil peaked through, drawing the eyes toward the tall peaks. The sun began to make its presence as the golden rays shined through the pockets of the clouds,

illuminating the ice, making the ripples of the frozen surface shimmer like a sea of diamonds. Beauty cannot compare to the sight of the Grand Prismatic.

Our next spot was the famous geyser, Old Faithful. The eruptions occur about every ninety minutes. Upon waiting for Old Faithful, a geyser in the distance began to go off with steam and water shooting above the trees and into the clouds. Water and steam escapes the ground and shoots into the air and freezes into ice crystals. A tower of streaming white billows over us against the bright sky. Nature's show ends with one last streak of white.

We were driving back to the entrance of Yellowstone when we saw a herd of bison. They were on the other side of the road, several feet away. A couple of bison were shoveling snow with their noses, grazing. Others were nuzzled against each other, taking a much needed nap. With a spotting scope, we could see snow dusted on the fuzzy faces of the bison. Their eyes drew heavy from the work of meandering about. Seeing the bison in their natural habitat truly captured the essence of Yellowstone- the wildness and purity.

The journey back continued. As we were driving along, we approached a lone, male bison. With such spunkiness the bison shook its head and chased our coach for several feet. This did not cause fear as the bison prancing about much resembled that of our dog. It was an exhilarating experience, really, looking out the window and seeing a magnificent creature in its natural habitat. Thankfully, our spunky friend let us pass. Finally, we arrived at the endpoint of our journey, Flagg Ranch.

As we walked out of Flagg Ranch, ending our greatest escapade, we came across the most beautiful sunset. Bright orange and pink hues adorned the yellow sky, reflecting off of the snow and creating a pleasant stroke of serendipity. As I looked out the window, at the moonlit

mountains set amongst the constellations, I knew I had experienced the true wonders of the great outdoors.

Time stops in Yellowstone, along with your thoughts and worries. You cannot escape the tranquility embedded in every root. You cannot escape the wind whispering in your ear, “don’t think, just be.” You cannot escape the adventure, the story, the journey in which Yellowstone creates. You cannot escape nature’s beauty, but nature’s beauty can escape you. So hold on, protect, breathe in, and live in nature’s bliss- for you can always find it in Yellowstone.