



Yellowstone is where the bison roam—and often cause traffic jams. Just as common and no less eye-catching are the park's active geysers and more than 10,000 hot springs and other geothermal features, many of which are connected by the Grand Loop Road.

→ into the limestone rock. Today's visitors can see these names, some from 1820s-era fur traders and trappers, but most from Oregon Trail settlers passing through in the 1840s and '50s.

It's one thing to walk the ruts—it's another to rumble along the pitted earth in an actual covered wagon. To experience first-hand what the Oregon Trail trekkers did, stop in Casper, Wyoming, for a two-hour wagon tour with Historic Trails West.

Once you're comfortably settled back in your modern mode of transportation, take another side trip, this time to the country's first national park, Yellowstone. There's nothing like this wondrous place where geysers erupt, springs run hot, scalding ash petrifies trees, and the entire park sits on a massive volcanic caldera.

See more evidence of volcanic activity at Craters of the Moon National Monument in Arco, Idaho. So named for its basalt terrain dotted with cinder cones and striped with lava flows, the monument invites you to hike miles of wilderness trails (you can even camp) or drive a 7-mile (11-kilometer) scenic loop.

Each bend in this road is more scenic than the last.

Onward to Boise, Idaho, for an overnight layover. Spend time in the city's Basque Block, the largest Basque community outside of Spain. →

Soak up the culture at the Basque Center, stroll the Basque Market, or nosh on traditional Basque cuisine. For more Oregon Trail history, head to the Idaho State Museum or check out the Old Idaho Penitentiary, a prison that once housed more than 13,000 people, from train robbers and desperadoes to bounty hunters and bandits.

Your last stop in Idaho should be Fort Boise, a replica of the 1834 original that served as a supply stop for those heading west on the Oregon Trail. Once you reach Oregon, go to the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City. Artifacts, life-sized dioramas, true stories of pioneers, plus wagon ruts and remnants of a gold mine all illustrate the struggles of the settlers. →