

November 1, 2010 - Letter from Linda Rossi to *Yellowstone in Winter* travelers:

Dear alumni, parents, and friends,

I'm looking forward to experiencing the beauty of Yellowstone with you. The farmer's almanac shows a full moon for the evening of February 18, our arrival date. In order to photograph the beauty and complexity of this compelling winter landscape, I'm posting a suggested list of equipment.

Some of the suggestions come from Tom Murphy's book *Silence and Solitude*. He has been photographing in Yellowstone for over thirty years. His images reveal the varied flora, fauna and topography of the park that we will encounter.

Familiarity with your camera will be the most important aspect of this adventure. We will be looking at the history and aesthetics of travel photography, rather than camera functions on the trip. Whatever camera you choose to bring, just make sure you have read through the manual and have had time to practice shooting with it. Some of you might arrive with a simple digital point and shoot, while another might choose to photograph with a medium format film camera. Any camera is fine as long as you are comfortable and familiar with its operations.

For some of you this might be the first time you've really focused on photography, for others you might be very accomplished. It will be an opportunity for all of us to observe more closely the beauty of Yellowstone.

In the following list, I've included what camera equipment Tom Murphy and others have found valuable, along with winter tips. (This is a very open-ended list as one could choose to arrive with a small digital camera in a satchel along with a notebook, or a more sophisticated camera with lots of lenses. Please bring what best suits your traveling style and what photographic goals you have in mind.)

I personally use my DSLR camera, the Canon Rebel T1I with a Tamron 18-270 mm lens. I like the larger size of the viewing screen, and the body design makes it easy to hold. The menu is quite clear and well organized. It has the versatility I like and can manage enough video for my needs. It is more reasonable cost wise and has received excellent reviews. I did not purchase it with the kit lens, as that is not as good. I purchased the body and then chose the Tamron lens for my needs. Currently I just work with this lens and don't change it out. I also always carry with me my Canon Powershot SD 1000 Digital Elph (7.1 mp). I keep this in my pocket for those "sudden opportunities" as it is small, light and fast, but has a fairly good resolution from which I can print larger images.

(Whatever cameras you bring just make sure you have plenty of film, cards, back up batteries and a charger! Items with an * are recommended.)

***Camera-** any type

I recommend that you bring a second body, or even a small point and shoot as a back up camera in case something happens to the first.

If digital, bring USB cord for importing images to our laptop. We will also have a universal card reader available. (If there is time we will put together a group of images from each participant to present the last evening.)

***Batteries and Charger**

The most problematic piece of your gear in cold weather is batteries. If your camera uses lots of battery power in warm weather plan for double the use in the cold. Typically in really cold conditions keep a spare battery in your pants pocket, the one closest to your body. Your body heat keeps it warm and when the battery in the camera starts to die just swap it out for the one in your pocket. If you're using AA batteries make sure you bring plenty.

***Film or Memory Cards**

Black and white and or color- if 35mm choose 36 exposures so you don't need to change out as often- bring slow and fast film to shoot throughout the day. The type of memory card will be based on the type of camera you have. Better to bring several larger sized cards so you don't need to change them as often especially if you will be shooting in high resolution or raw images.

***Lens tissue**

Include with camera gear paper lens cleaning tissues as well as a micro fiber cloth for cleaning lenses. Snow and steam from the geysers make cleaning lenses mandatory. A small paintbrush for cleaning snow off the lens and body is a good idea. Be very careful to not breath on your lens, camera or filters when it gets really cold, as you'll soon make it difficult or impossible to shoot because of the icy build-up on your gear.

***Small towel** to wipe down tripod and camera.

***Plastic bag** to put camera in when coming indoors to avoid condensation.

Camera rain cover for wet snow.

This can be purchased at a camera store- various sizes, fits right over camera for use in rain or snow. I always keep one in my camera bag.

Lenses

24-105 wide- angle zoom for wide -angle landscapes

70-300 Telephoto for wildlife or long telephoto 300-600 (make sure you bring a tripod)

Macro for close-ups of frost crystals

(Screw on close up filters are less expensive than a macro lens, they also weigh less - make sure they will work with your lens.)

***Filter/Lens cap**

To protect your lens and can help keep steam, silica, and acid water off your optics.

Laptop Computer

You might wish to import and work on some of your images while on the trip.

Flash drive

To save images or to transport them from your computer to ours for our final presentation. I always keep one in my bag.

Chemical hand-warmers

Little Hotties- fit inside boots and gloves-may want to bring several.

Tripod

Recommended tripod is the Gitzo carbon fiber with a Kirk ball head. This combination is light, fast, portable and relatively compact. I often carry a very small table- top tripod to balance on rocks, etc. rather than a large tripod. If you are using a long lens bring a heavier tripod.

***Camera Bag**

Smaller shoulder bag for equipment rather than a back- pack as they can fill with snow when you place on the ground. Good example is the Lowepro off trail 2 hip packs for camera and lenses. Look for easy access, less weight and make sure it will fit your camera needs. Consider room for a water bottle.

Small headlamp

Can be useful at night – allows your hands to be free.

***Gloves**

You must have warm gloves and then a pair of mittens you can wear over them. Scott Company makes cross-country ski gloves that are good. They have moderate insulation, typically thinulate, they have supple, leather palms and fingers and they're easy for working camera controls. The down side is that they often are not warm enough so bring a thicker pair as well. Fingerless gloves are not recommended for Yellowstone- just too cold to operate equipment. You will need to have your fingers covered.

***Notebook and pen** to record ideas

Winter Shooting Tips:

Anticipate times of clearing storm systems and use the new snow to your advantage. New snow is often better in the AM hours.

Remember to expose a bit brighter than usual to keep your snow from going too dark.

If shooting digital, keep extra batteries warm by cycling them through your pockets.



Icy streams can look very interesting, but are tough to photograph because ice and water hold about the same exposure and luminosity levels, thus blend together easily. When shooting streams, look for contrasts and utilize opportunities of reflected light. Unfrozen bodies of water, usually rivers, can create a misty atmosphere of their own in very cold weather due to the air and water temperature differential. Show up early in the morning and look for opportunities to shoot them when it gets really cold.

If your tripod has been around wet snow or water, make sure you don't collapse it until it's totally dry, otherwise you might not be able to get it open again in below-freezing temps. Bring a small towel to help prevent this.

When changing lenses be careful about mist getting inside the camera.

Brush snow off camera lens with glove or small paintbrush rather than breathing on it- or you'll have condensation.

Place camera in a sealable plastic bag before going back indoors. Allow it to warm up to room temperature in the bag- condensation will form on bag rather than camera. If condensation occurs open battery and memory compartments to let them dry out before taking your camera back outside.

www.digitalfilm.com/webloc

Website for specific technical information for Yellowstone in the winter.

www.danheller.com/star#18BB8DDF

Website for shooting star trails. You might want to practice with your camera ahead of time so you can photograph the night sky while in Yellowstone.