

Scout Report · Fishing

FLY FISHING THE MADISON RIVER

SAMPLE

Near West Yellowstone, Montana · July 7 to 11 · 4 nights · 2 anglers · towing a 25 ft trailer

Ready, with 2 things to sort out

Base

West Yellowstone,
Montana

Water

Upper Madison River

Rig

25 ft trailer and tow
vehicle

Refresh

48 hours before you
arrive

BEFORE YOU GO

Sort these out first. Everything else on this trip is in good shape.

Fishing license

Buy a Montana fishing license for both anglers before you leave. If you plan to fish inside Yellowstone, you need a separate park fishing permit as well.

Campsites

Riverside campgrounds near town book up months ahead for July. Reserve now, and line up a backup in case your first choice is full.

GOOD TO KNOW

- **Bear country.** Grizzlies live here. Carry bear spray on the river and store food in your trailer or vehicle, never in a tent.
- **Boat inspections.** Montana checks boats for invasive species. If you bring the drift boat, stop at every inspection station you pass.

- **Busy weekends.** Popular access sites fill early on Saturdays. Fish weekdays at the busiest spots.

YOUR TO-DO LIST

☐	Now	Reserve a campsite that fits a 25 ft trailer, plus a backup.
☐	2 weeks out	Buy Montana licenses for both anglers. Add the Yellowstone permit if you'll fish in the park.
☐	2 weeks out	Check your bear spray. Replace it if it's past its expiry date.
☐	Week of	Call a fly shop in West Yellowstone or Ennis for the latest hatch and flow report.
☐	48 hours out	Read your Scout Report refresh for updated flows, weather and fire rules.
☐	Day before	Check the river gauge and road construction on your route.

YOUR KITS

Built from the gear in your garage. Bring what's marked, and leave the rest at home to save space.

Fishing kit

Bring

Cold water all day in the upper river. Waders are a must for mornings; some hot afternoons may allow wet-wading.

- ☐ 2 fly rods, 5 wt
- ☐ 2 pairs of waders
- ☐ 2 pairs of wading boots
- ☐ Landing net
- ☐ Fly boxes
- ☐ Rain shell
- ☐ Polarized sunglasses
- ☐ Licenses (printed or on your phone)

Not in your garage: a wading staff. The Madison is fast with slick rocks. Consider buying one in town.

Camp kit

Bring

Warm days and cold nights. Lows in the 40s are common, even in July.

- ☐ Warm layers for evenings
- ☐ Camp chairs
- ☐ Camp stove
- ☐ Cooler
- ☐ Headlamps
- ☐ Sun hats and sunscreen

Bear kit

Bring

One can of bear spray per angler, carried on your belt or wader strap, not in the truck.

- ☐ 2 cans of bear spray
- ☐ Holsters

Drift boat

Optional

Floating is popular, but some stretches don't allow fishing from a boat, and launch parking for trailers is limited. Worth it only if you'll float at least two days.

Bike kit

Optional

West Yellowstone has trails right at the edge of town. Good for a rest day off the water.

Paddle kit

Leave home

The river is fast and busy with drift boats. Kayaks and boards add trailer weight you won't use.

WHAT WE COULDN'T VERIFY

- Exact campground availability for your dates. Book early and confirm.
- Road construction schedules for July. Check your state transportation site the week you leave.
- Day-to-day hatch timing. Local fly shops have the most current reports.

CONDITIONS

What early July usually looks like here. Your 48-hour refresh replaces these with current readings.

ON THE WATER

Flows

Snowmelt usually settles by early July. Check the gauge the day before you fish.

Water temps

Cold mornings. Warmer afternoons on the lower river.

Hatches

Salmonflies and caddis are possible in early summer. Ask a local shop what's coming off.

Access

Many fishing access sites along the highway, some with tight trailer parking.

WEATHER

Days

Usually warm and sunny, in the 70s and 80s.

Nights

Often in the 40s. Colder after a storm.

Storms

Afternoon thunderstorms are possible. Get off the water when you hear thunder.

Smoke

Wildfire smoke can drift in during summer. Check air quality before long days out.

AT CAMP AND ON THE ROAD

Power

Open sites get strong sun. Solar should keep your batteries topped up.

Signal

Good in town. Spotty to none along parts of the river.

Fire rules

Restrictions can change in summer. Check before planning a campfire.

Wildlife

Bison, elk and bears nearby. Keep a clean camp.

Roads

Paved highway along the river. Easy towing.

Parking

Unhitch at camp. Some access sites have little room to turn a trailer.

A PLAN FOR YOUR DAYS

A suggested shape for the trip. Move days around to suit the weather and the fishing.

DAY 1

Arrive and set up

Check in, unhitch and stop by a fly shop for flies and a report. Fish an hour near town in the evening if you have energy.

DAY 2

Wade the upper river

Start early, fish through the morning, and be back at camp before afternoon storms.

DAY 3

Float or explore

Float with the drift boat if you brought it. If not, try a different access site downstream.

DAY 4

Rest day or the park

Ride the town trails, or drive into Yellowstone. Bring your park fishing permit if you plan to cast.

DAY 5

Pack out

One last morning on the water, then hitch up before noon to beat the heat and traffic.

TRIP CARD

Print this, cut along the dashed line and keep it in the truck.

BRING

- Fishing kit, plus a wading staff
- Camp kit with warm layers
- Bear spray, one per angler
- Licenses and park permit

LEAVE HOME

- Paddle kit

REMEMBER

- Off the water when thunder starts
- Food stored in the trailer or vehicle
- Stop at every boat inspection station

Illustrative sample. Rules and conditions change. A real Scout Report checks current sources for your dates. Scout Reports are planning information, not a safety guarantee. Conditions change; always check official sources and use your own judgment.