

Lesson 7

READ THIS STORY #2, Basic

Yellowstone National Park

In 1807, John Colter opted to leave the Lewis and Clark expedition to explore and trap on his own. He then stumbled upon plateaus filled with natural hot springs. When he described the smoking pits filled with steam and smelling of brimstone, people scoffed at the mountain man's tale and labeled the fictional place "Colter's Hell."

Seventy years later, after two geological expeditions confirmed the presence of his geothermal wonders, Congress passed legislation making Yellowstone our first National Park. Unfortunately, Congress didn't appropriate any funds for the park. That's because it was miles from nowhere in hostile Indian territory. At that time, each of the two access routes required tourists to travel first by steamboat or train, and then by stagecoach for 10 to 14 days. To protect the tourists, the Army administered the park until 1916.

Today, tourists flock to Yellowstone to observe the spectacular waterfalls and meandering rivers in the valley. Hikers in the mountainous backcountry follow old army supply trails. Many are able to view bison, bear, pronghorn antelope, and elk.

But most are attracted by the hydrodynamics of the area. The lure of the hot springs, the eruptions of spectacular geysers, and the noisy bubbling pools that smell like rotten eggs continue to enthrall visitors.