

Jackson Hole gem hiding in plain sight

Small Wyoming town a nirvana for skiers, adventurers

Jackson Hole is an untarnished jewel. It's a gem that never stops shining. It ranks among Mother Nature's finest creations.

The Wyoming ski town is nestled between Grand Teton National Park and miles of forest in all directions. It's a treasure hiding in plain sight.

Jackson Hole's beauty and vastness immediately grab your attention. Its quaint atmosphere will enhance your relaxation and have you wondering why it took so long to visit.

Perhaps, it's because it doesn't share the glamour and glitz associated with Aspen and Lake Tahoe, locations where celebrities flock to unwind and find serenity, while staying in castle-like lodges, and dining and shopping in some of the United States' most extravagant restaurants and boutiques.

Or maybe the location had been responsible for this once clandestine town that no longer is being ignored by those eager to spend time outdoors. Nearly 3 million people visit Jackson Hole annually.

It's a winter wonderland for skiers and an adventurous playground during the warmer months, boasting a pair of resorts: Jackson Hole Mountain Resort and Grand Targhee Resort.

Jackson Hole is the primary destination in the valley. It occupies a large section of Teton Village and has several hotels



SNOW WAY – Jackson Hole lights up in the presence of the snow-covered Rocky Mountains and pine trees. *Image: MelissaMN. Adobe Stock.*

and timeshares and an adventure park, as well as a variety of restaurants atop and below the mountain. Located at the base of Rendezvous Mountain, it offers access to 2,500 acres of ski runs and 4,139 feet of vertical drop.

The resort also provides visitors opportunities to hike, mountain bike and paraglide. A trip on the Jackson Hole Aerial Tram is a nine-minute ride that runs to the top of Rendezvous Mountain at a summit of more than 10,000 feet,

allowing for magnificent views of the Teton Mountains.

Less-seasoned skiers likely will find Grand Targhee more appealing. Its family-friendly atmosphere provides easier runs down the mountain and caters to beginner or intermediate skiers. Located in Alta, Wyoming, the resort is comprised of a pair of the Teton Mountains. There is more than 2,500 acres of ski terrain. The resort's smaller setting provides fewer crowds than Jackson Hole and less

congested slopes.

Grand Targhee, too, is open year-round. Mountain biking, hiking and swimming are popular activities during the warmer months and there are plenty of sightseeing opportunities.

The National Elk Refuge is an opportunity to observe animals from vehicles or a guided sleigh ride during the winter months, the recommended time to visit. More elk can be spotted during the coldest time of the year. The Miller Ranch is a two-story log home that was constructed in the 19th century. It's open during the summer season and is staffed by volunteers, who share the history of National Elk Refuge and its earliest settlers.

Meanwhile, Granite Hot Springs might be more attractive to visitors seeking rest and relaxation. This thermal pool is open during the spring and summer months and offers fantastic views of the Bridger-Teton National Forest. It rests 7,000 feet above sea level, making it difficult to imagine the breathtaking views that await.

Travelers also can take advantage of Jackson Hole's plethora of restaurants, bars and shops, as well as the National Museum of Wildlife Art that houses pieces from as early as 2500 B.C.

Jackson Hole is a discovered treasure, waiting to share its wealth of activities with adventurers who are searching for a rare gem.

What passengers should know about cruising

Voyages offer number of benefits, perks; chance to see the world

Cruising is one of the most popular and cost-effective ways to see the world. Glamorous ships sail vast waterways to myriad ports. You can choose to cruise from nearly all parts of the globe and for as many days as you would prefer.

Travelers pay one price upfront that includes accommodations, the voyage, dining and onboard activities. You have the option to pay more for shopping, signature dining, drink passes, spas and more, but the initial cost provides a trip you won't soon forget.

AAA offers tips for first-time cruisers about what to expect:

Some ships are more all-inclusive than others – Many major cruise lines do not include gratuities, shore excursions, wine at dinner, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages in bars and lounges and other onboard activities. Check what is included before comparing fares.

Choose the right cruise – Those who enjoy scholarly lectures shouldn't choose a ship that has a reputation for boisterous activities.

Expect to tip – Many major cruise lines automatically add gratuities that range in price per-person, per day. Do your homework when choosing your trip.

Take precautions when you go ashore – You're typically safer on the ship than on land. Travel with only two credit cards – take one with you ashore and leave the other in the cabin. Bring only a small amount of cash you'll need each day.



SAIL AWAY – There are so many benefits to cruising. Research and advice will assure you of not missing any of them. *Image: Phuung. Adobe Stock.*

Never put your wallet or smartphone in your back pocket. Do not wear expensive jewelry.

You won't be bored – Depending on the ship, there should be a number of activities that could range from ziplining, rock climbing or ice skating. Nightly entertainment can range from Broadway-style productions and there most likely will be a casino.

Don't assume you'll get seasick – Most of today's ships have stabilizers that minimize rolling. Choose a cabin toward the middle or lower-middle part of the ship if you have a tendency toward motion sickness.

You can eat very well – Several lines have partnered with famous chefs. That means dining rooms and casual buffet restaurants, where meals are included in

your cruise fare, offer high-quality eating options.

You don't have to dress up, unless you want to – Dress codes vary by cruise line. Each night's dress code will be indicated on the daily program. But cruising, in general, is more informal than it once was. Longer voyages might designate one or two nights as "formal" nights.

Cruising is great for solo travelers – The safety and camaraderie make it an ideal vacation for singles but be aware of the single supplement: Solo travelers can pay 125-200% of the per-person, double-occupancy fare.

Cruising is ideal for couples – What is more romantic than strolling the promenade deck at night and stopping to look at the moonlight reflecting off the water? Or going to the top deck to watch the sunset or sunrise? Cruising allows you to leave everyday tensions and conflicts at home.

You can pack lightly – Traveling with only carry-on luggage means you don't need to wait for bags to be delivered when you board or put them out to be collected the night before you disembark.

Cruising is its own reward – It introduces you to a world of possibilities. You stop at points that give you a sampling of what a country or city is like. On a ship, you can recapture the Golden Age or enjoy transatlantic crossings. Being cut off from land, with nothing but ocean around you – spotting the occasional dolphin or flying fish – is reason enough to cruise.