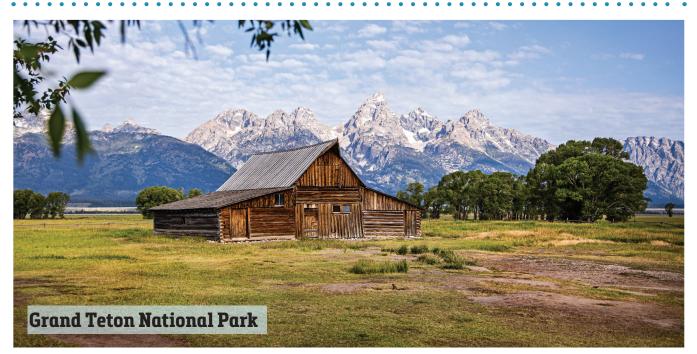
IOOO HOURS OUTSIDE Must see places near East Idaho Story and Photos by Tatiana Crandall Photography

id you know that by simply going outside for just 17 minutes a day, you can reduce stress, boost your mental health, and even get better sleep?

According to a 2019 study of over 19,000 participants, going outside for a total of 2 hours a week significantly improved their overall well-being. I was introduced to the benefits of being outside when I heard about the 1,000 hours outside challenge. At first, 1,000 hours outside seemed out of reach since we have two small kids and live in a state where there is a chance of snow 6 months out of the year. However, as I researched more about the health benefits of being outdoors (especially for kids), we decided to give the challenge a try. This will be our third year attempting 1,000 hours outside. Our record has been 725 hours! Every year 1,000 is our ultimate goal, but even if we don't make it, the motivation to get outside and make those memories are still very much worth it.

I would love it if you joined us on our journey to get outside more this year and see for yourself the amazing benefits that await you.. Here are some of our favorite destinations to get those much needed hours outside.



I had to start with my favorite one first, the Tetons. Not only does this park have some of the most photographed mountains in the nation, but you can also find several crystal clear lakes, miles of lovely walking trails, opportunities for all kinds of recreation, and epic views to enjoy and photograph. If you're really lucky, you might spot some wildlife around the park. This place is heaven on earth.

One of the most peaceful and breathtaking places in the park is Schwabacher Landing at sunrise. (You can go at sunset as well, but if you get to the park early you will be rewarded with less crowds). Our family loves the easy but beautiful trails around Taggart Lake and String Lake hikes or taking the shuttle across Jenny lake and hiking back for some more gorgeous views. On especially hot days, we like renting inflatable paddle boards in town and taking them to String Lake for a relaxing afternoon. I also recommend visiting Oxbow Bend, Mormon Row barns, and the Snake River Overlook to really get a taste of the beauty of the Tetons. If you're more of a thrill-seeker, nearby Snow King Resort has a fun alpine slide and cowboy coaster that you can ride down the mountain. If you're looking for a unique experience, take the Jackson Tram up to Corbet's cabin for some delicious hot chocolate and waffles. If you have a mountain bike, bring it along for some awesome downhill trails. (Teton Visitors Center and roads open May 1.)

Tith over 3 million visitors a year, Yellowstone is a pretty obvious choice. In this massive park you can find 500 active geysers, 10,000 hydrothermal features, 290 waterfalls, 67 species of mammals, 285 species of birds and 1000 miles of hiking trails. There are not many places in this world where you can drive down the road and see bison, grizzly bears, wolves, moose and elk all in one day. If you take advantage of being a local and visit during their shoulder seasons (April, September, and October) you can avoid the crowds and inevitable traffic jams. For those looking for unique features, Grand Prismatic Spring is the largest hot spring in the United States and the third largest in the world. You can get a better view of this colorful hot spring by taking a short hike along the Fairy Falls trail.

For those looking for unique features, Grand Prismatic Spring is the largest hot spring in the United States and the third largest in the world. You can get a better view of this colorful hot spring by taking a short hike along the Fairy Falls trail. Obviously there is the famous Old Faithful, which got its name from its reliable eruptions. The average eruption

I fyou haven't made a trip to this volcanic field, it is a must see! Walking around the vast black landscape with its lack of vegetation and dormant cinder cones almost makes me feel like I'm on another planet. If you or your kids have any interest in rocks, volcanoes, caving, and/or photography this is such a fun location to explore.

The visitors center has a great video on the types of lava found in the park and there are a lot of easy hikes and interesting features like the Spatter Cones (they look like mini volcanoes), Inferno cone (beautiful views from the top of this cinder cone), and lava tubes like dewdrop cave and Indian Tunnel. If you want to explore the caves, you must check in to the visitors center for a free cave permit to prevent the spread of white-nose syndrome, a disease that kills bats. Cell service and food are not easily found here, so we like to grab dinner from Pickles Place in Arco on the way home. The preserve is always



is every 92 minutes, but you can go to the national park website for predicted eruptions. Be sure to do your research before you go because there is hardly any service in the park.

If you're a fan of waterfalls, make sure you visit the Lower Falls in the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone. It is twice as tall as Niagara Falls and in the spring 63,500 gallons a second flow over the falls. We love seeing this beauty from Artist's

Point but you can also see it up close by visiting the platform at the Brink of the Lower Falls. If you're looking for wildlife like wolves and bears, bring a spotting scope and drive around Lamar valley. If you're not lucky enough to see a wolf or grizzly in the park, stop by The Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center in Yellowstone to see them up close. (The West Yellowstone entrance opens for the season April 19th.)

open, but Loop Road is usually closed due to snow until mid April.

If you're looking for closer volcanoes to hike, the 10,000 year old Menan buttes

are two of the world's largest tuff cones. The North Menan Butte Trail is commonly known as "R Mountain" and is open to the public to hike.





Just 40 minutes north of Idaho Falls you can find 10,000 acres of sand dunes and hours of entertainment for adults and children alike. These dunes are a hotspot for ATVs and dirt bikes, summer sledding, and thanks to the lack of light pollution–amazing stargazing. Our kids love to play in the sand and the shallow water of Egin lake, and end the day with a marshmallow roast while looking for shooting stars. (Pro tip, avoid this area on windy days.) The dunes are closed Jan 1-April 1st to protect wintering elk.

tarting at Big Springs in Island Park, the Henry's Fork provides all sorts of water recreation. About 120 million gallons of water flow out of Big Springs every day, making it one of the largest springs in the country. There is a bridge near the spring that you can watch and feed the protected trout. (no fishing in this area) and visit the historic John Sack cabin. A short drive from the springs is Big Springs Boat Launch where you can start a 3-hour float to Macks Inn via canoe, kayak, tube or paddle board. Keep an eye out for wildlife that frequent the area like moose, bald eagles, cranes, elk, and even grizzly bears. Starting around Macks Inn and continuing down the tributary, you can find some of the best fishing in the nation.

Continuing further south, Henry's Fork meanders through Harriman State Park, which is a fun place to spend a day hiking, horseback riding and fly fishing.

Following Henry's Fork South East of Harriman, you'll find Mesa Falls, an incredible 10-story high waterfall very easily accessible thanks to the walking paths and boardwalk. You can walk right up to the Upper Falls and experience its power and beauty up close. The Lower Falls can be seen from a second location a short drive down the road. The road to Mesa Falls (Idaho Scenic Byway 47) is closed at Bear Gulch in the wintertime for snowmobiling and Nordic skiing and opens around May.

Henry's Fork of the Snake River



One of my absolute favorite things about our area in late spring and summer are finding wildflowers Starting in late May and continuing through June and July, if you do a little exploring you can find fields of them, especially Wyethias (or Mule's Ears).

If you are visiting the Tetons, there are thousands of these bright yellow flowers off of Antelope Flats road, in the Northern part of the park by Jackson Lake near the Colter Bay visitors center, and on top of Signal Mountain. In Yellowstone we have seen a lot of flowers in the open fields and hills in the NorthEast side of the park, and they are easy to find off the road just North of Island Park. For closer flowers that you can actually pick, just down the road at Wild Adventure Corn Maze you can find 9 acres of some not so wild Sunflowers and zinnias. Their flower fields and activities open in August and are a fun place to spend a summer afternoon.