



### When Hell Freezes Over

By: CJ Adams

*"Gas, vapor and smoke are continually escaping from a thousand openings; the noise at times resembles the steam let off by a boat. The hunters and the Indians speak of it with a superstitious fear, and consider it the abode of evil spirits, that is to say, a kind of hell." ~John Colter*

The scenes of hell John Colter found in Yellowstone National Park were reduced to mockery when first published. Today three million people visit the Park each year most during the summer months, packing the parking lots and filling the wooden walkways with tourists from around the world. But now, in the winter months, just over 200 people a day are allowed in the Park. The sparse trips that are allowed are guided by companies such as the Three Bear Lodge in West Yellowstone who recently provided us



of snowmobiles that raced down the street, headed for the entrance to Yellowstone National Park. After watching one of these parties tear by us, I joined the other guests in following our guide Sherri across the street to board our Snowcoach.

We paid our fees at the Park entrance and, after a very short distance, we stopped for a herd of elk on the roadway. Sherri explained to us how important it is not to disturb the wildlife in the winter given how difficult it is for them to merely exist during this brutal time. "Besides" she continued, "this is their home and we are their guests." As we watched elk eat bark from the trees, I appreciated the peacefulness so rare to find in the Park. We continued on seeing numerous additional elk, the occasional bison and another surprisingly entertaining performer. As we filed out of the Snowcoach at a rest stop, I noticed a flock of ravens hopping from parked snowmobile to parked snowmobile. Having always been intrigued with the paramount trickster from Native American Mythology, I went for a closer look. As I neared the ravens, obviously un-phased by my presence, I realized I was witness to a crime. The satchels on the back of each snowmobile were filled with snacks for the guests and these ravens were manipulating the zippers with their beaks to rob the snowmobile riders. Fortunately we had chosen Old Faithful as our destination, it was only a short drive ahead and I was assured there would be a number of restaurants open so I needn't partake in this ravenous larceny.

After the short jaunt in to Old Faithful, we emptied the Snowcoach and headed for the Gift Shop and Restaurants. After a

deliciously spicy bowl of Bison Chili and a chat with a father and son from a ranch in Florida, we headed for the boardwalk to grab a seat for the big show.

We sat down as Old Faithful began to intermittently spew blasts of water into the air as it built pressure. The water heated below the surface, as if in a teapot, erupting further and further into the air until it reached its peak. As it began its slow decent back underground, we packed our things and headed for the Snowcoach and our return to West Yellowstone.

Shortly after sunset we reached Three Bear Lodge, thankful for a glimpse of Yellowstone National Park that few see, eager for our steak dinner. The wonders of Yellowstone National Park, aka. "Colter's Hell", needn't be inaccessible during the winter. In fact, the animals and scenery of the Park are right in our backyard via guided services like those provided by Three Bears Lodge, making the truly unique experience of Winter in Yellowstone National Park readily available. So sign up for one of these exciting adventures before Spring sets in and, if your Valentines date hit you with the old standby "I will go out with you when Hell freezes over", remember you can see Hell on ice just down the road.



with their complete Yellowstone Adventure Package; Full Breakfast, Snowcoach tour in to Old Faithful, a savory steak dinner and concluding the day in the recently renovated King Bed/Jacuzzi Suite.

The morning we left the temperature was 5 degrees Fahrenheit so I was thankful we opted for the Snowcoach, a comfortable van atop customized snow tracks. The alternate to this was taking part in the packs

