

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Four Seasons embraces eco-tourism with wildlife observance offering

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*Four Seasons is celebrating the gray wolf pack of Yellowstone, highlighting their fight to exist in peace. Image courtesy of Four Seasons*

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

Luxury hospitality group **Four Seasons** is bringing travelers closer to nature via an exclusive gray wolf encounter, 'A Day with the Wolves,' in the famed American preserve, Yellowstone National Park.

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The brand's resort in Jackson Hole, Wyoming is offering guests a chance to experience the park during the winter a chance few get to have. Having responsible wildlife etiquette in mind, wolf viewing is done from a distance with the guidance of expert naturalists.

"This past November, we launched this experience with a sold-out event at Four Seasons with National Geographic fellow and photographer, Ronan Donovan," said Cory Carlson, regional director of marketing at Four Seasons, Jackson Hole.

"Ronan is one of the top experts in the world on the wolves of Yellowstone, having dedicated his life studying the wolves in their natural environment and teaching about the importance of their conservation," Mr. Carlson said. "With his direction, a portion of the proceeds of each trip are donated to both the Yellowstone Wolf Project and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), in an effort to preserve and protect the gray wolf population of Yellowstone and the local environment."

### Going wild

Four Seasons is working to ensure that the experience is ethical on all fronts, all while crafting a once in a lifetime opportunity to see the wildest side of Yellowstone.

Experts from Jackson Hole Wildlife Safaris and Yellowstone Safari Company will take Four Seasons guests across the wild expanses of the park, pointing out the natural treasures around them.

### A Day With The Wolves by Four Seasons Resort and Residences Jackson Hole

The resort is charging 16 thousand dollars per all-inclusive trip, allowing for up to eight travelers. The charge covers transfer from the hotel, transportation via private plane, a luxury vehicle for transportation within the park, naturalist guides and cuisine.

Also covered in the charge is a donation to local conservation groups and carbon offsets. This ensures a circular ecotourism model is utilized, and the natural space being explored is nurtured through interaction, rather than exploitation.



*Offering the luxury of exclusive dining in the wild alongside the exhilaration of winter expeditions, Four Seasons is giving travelers a new taste of Yellowstone. Image courtesy of Four Seasons*

While on the day-long trip, travelers can take in views of wild gray wolves, elk, moose, bison, golden eagles, pronghorn, bald eagles and bighorn sheep all from a respectful distance, using scopes to see closer. The highlight of the trip is set to be the wolves.

Yellowstone's gray wolf population is especially elusive, as the pack has overcome immense challenges.

Back in 1926, the last native wolf was killed in the park due to the current perceptions of the time concerning predator animals. In 1933, the government ended sanctioned predator killings, but it was not until 1973 that the Endangered Species Act was signed and the wolves were protected.

It has been a long journey for the animals since then, as conservationists worked to reintroduce the apex predators back into the park's ecosystem. Since the late 1990s, it has been a project with both ups and downs.



*The wolves were completely wiped out in the last century, when people had yet to understand the importance of apex animals. Image courtesy of Four Seasons*

Yellowstone remains one of the few places in the world where wolves run wild.

Wolf encounters such as these offer awareness of the animals' place in the habitat, taking away the mysterious scare factor that so often dominates narratives concerning the species.

"Yellowstone Wolf Project's mission is to oversee research and monitoring of wolves in Yellowstone," Mr. Carlson said.

"Funds to EDF will act as a carbon-neutral initiative, providing solutions for reducing the effects of pollution and climate change on the planet," he said. "Additionally, EDF supported the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone, which has been called 'the greatest conservation success story of the past decade.'"

Nature of travel

Ecotourism is an increasingly popular mode of travel right now, as more people begin to realize the benefits of seeing nature up close.

Four Seasons' approach to the travel style is intersectional, including conservation, carbon mindfulness and slow travel in the offering. Recently, the company explored immersive, nature-centered experiences in Mexico ([see story](#)).

The Naviva luxury tent stay weaves the surrounding natural landscape into the accommodations, bringing together wildness and the human world.

Cruise line Seabourn is also toying with the idea of ecotourism, using a more intentional version of safaris to bring travelers close to nature ([see story](#)).

Utilizing zodiac boats, scuba trips, submarines and kayaks, the company gets guests immersed in the frozen and remote landscapes being traveled to. Conservation experts are also tapped, infusing education into the model.



*Yellowstone remains one of the last wildernesses of the country, and Four Seasons is venturing deep into it. Image courtesy of Four Seasons*

While not all animal encounters are good for wildlife or offer enough education to excuse the intrusion, Four Seasons is approaching the form of ecotourism with distance something that ensures that the wild animals are respected, and that humans do not interfere with the natural balance of the untamed wilderness.

To fully offer ethical, environmentally friendly tourism, more companies need to center expert voices, a prioritization of distanced viewing, off-season timing and green transportation. Four Seasons seems to be pioneering in that regard.

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