

BECHLER

Tucked into Yellowstone's far southwest corner, "Bechler" is one of the park's least visited yet most breathtaking sections. Named after Gustavus R. Bechler, the chief surveyor and mapmaker for the 1872 Hayden Geological Survey, Bechler is often referred to as "Cascade Corner," a nickname given to the area in 1921 by park superintendent Horace Albright because of its high number of waterfalls.

In fact, since Bechler is one of the lowest areas of the park and therefore generally receives more precipitation than other places in Yellowstone, water is the key component of the landscape. Countless waterways can be found in this area, including the Fall River, which flows east to west, and Bechler River, flowing north to south. These rivers, along with other streams such as Boundary and Ouzel creeks, drop off the Pitchstone Plateau to create many stunning waterfalls that drop over 100 feet, including the 250-foot Union Falls.

Despite its secluded location, these beautiful sights, plus an array of relatively flat hiking trails, a high number of campsites, and prime fishing for cutthroat and rainbow trout have made Bechler an increasingly popular destination for overnight trips into Yellowstone's backcountry.

From within, the only way to get to Bechler is by foot. That means hiking in by means of the South Boundary or Pitchstone Plateau trails if you are coming from the south or the Shoshone Lake or Summit Lake trails if you are starting from the north.

From outside the park you can reach Bechler via two routes. It's about 26 miles if you start from Ashton, Idaho and take Highway 20 to Route 47, follow the signs for Marysville and then Cave Falls Road, which is a dirt road that takes you to the Bechler Ranger Station. Built in 1911 by the US Army, this small collection of buildings is the only developed area in Bechler. From there the road continues another 3 miles to a trailhead and parking area at Cave Falls, one of the park's widest waterfalls.

Bechler is also accessible by taking the rugged Grassy Lake Road either from Ashton or, more commonly, from the turnoff just north of Flagg Ranch, which is located about 2 miles south of Yellowstone's South Entrance on U.S. 89.

However you choose to get there, once you experience the wonder of Bechler, you are sure to want to come back.

