

178 • Fishing Bridge/Canyon

This 1.6-mile (2.6 km) road, **South Rim Drive**, takes you to two viewpoints for the canyon and opportunities for hiking. There are also five viewpoints on the north rim.

The road first crosses the Yellowstone River on **Chittenden Bridge**. Hiram Chittenden was the captain in the Corps of Engineers who built the first bridge in this locale. He planned and directed the construction of many of Yellowstone's roads between 1891 and 1906 and followed a parallel career as a historian, writing *The Yellowstone National Park: Historical and Descriptive* (1895) and three other histories of the American west.

Incidentally, this canyon was often called Grand Canyon, until Grand Canyon National Park was set aside in Arizona in 1919. Now people simply call the area Canyon or sometimes

Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.

Here's what naturalist John Muir wrote in 1898 about Hayden Valley, the Yellowstone River, and its falls:

For the first twenty miles its course is in a level, sunny valley lightly fringed with trees, through which it flows in silvery reaches stirred into spangles here and there by ducks and leaping trout, making no sound save a low whispering among the pebbles and the dipping willows and the sedges of its banks. Then suddenly, as if preparing for hard work, it rushes eagerly, impetuously forward rejoicing in its strength, breaks into foam-bloom, and goes thundering down into the Grand Cañon in two magnificent falls, one hundred and three hundred feet high.

The Canyon and Falls of the Yellowstone

Don't be confused by the names of the two famous falls of the Yellowstone River [GEO.18]. Upper Falls is upstream from Lower Falls, but Lower Falls is nearly three times taller than Upper Falls.

- Upper Falls: 109 feet (33 m)
- Lower Falls: 308 feet (93 m)
- Canyon depth: 800–1200 feet (240–360 m)
- Canyon width: 1500–4000 feet (450–1200 m) in the area of the overlooks
- Canyon length: about 20 miles (32 km) from the Upper Falls to Tower Junction.

You might wonder why you've never seen a photo showing both the Upper and Lower falls, since they're quite close together. When you look at a detailed map or wander along the canyon rim, you can understand why. The Yellowstone River makes a big bend about two-thirds of the distance downstream to the Lower Falls from the Upper Falls. There the river turns east before it cascades over the Lower Falls.