

Spectacular scenes



Visitors to Yellowstone National Park stroll down a boardwalk at the Lower Geyser Basin on Wednesday as smoke from the North Fork fire rises nearby. STEVE DOWELL/CHRONICLE

Park fires delight tourists, photographers

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YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — The North Fork fire burning near Madison Campground created spectacular views Wednesday for park visitors and amateur photographers, while firefighters worked to keep the 34,120-acre blaze from crossing a road or nearing the campground.

The North Fork fire burned 3,000 new acres from around 1 p.m. Wednesday to sundown.

Tourists appeared to be nonchalant about the possibility that

officials might close roads or the 288-space Madison Campground, and seemed to be enjoying the ample photo opportunities caused by the fire's light and smoke, which was tinged red and pink from the flames.

Smoke from the fire turned the sun red-orange and occasionally eclipsed it totally, to the delight of a handful of campers at the Madison Campground, around three miles north of the head of the fire.

"This is stunning — this could be Mars, not Yellowstone," Marge Andriano, a visitor from Minot, N.D., said as she snapped pictures

of the sun with her Instamatic camera.

Andriano said rangers had warned her family that the campground would be evacuated if the fire got too close, and had asked her to call the campground throughout the day as she traveled around the park to make sure that the fire had not advanced. She said she wasn't nervous about being at Madison.

"I think the park rangers are over-cautious," she said. "The fire's a long way off and the teams are fighting it. It's making this trip more exciting."

Dozens of firefighters in bright yellow flame-retardant shirts

stood at the north flank of the fire, as they prepared to defend the Grand Loop Road. The fire was less than one-quarter mile from the road's intersection with the scenic Firehole Canyon Drive, and smoke curled and dipped around the trees and over the Firehole River near where it enters the canyon.

Greater Yellowstone Area Command plans officer Dick Hodge said this morning that it is unlikely that the fire will threaten Madison Campground, but there is a possibility that it could cross the Grand Loop Road today near the inter-

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