

What is special about Yellowstone?

The long-dormant Yellowstone super-volcano — more correctly a complex of volcanoes in the United States — has unique origins and an activation process that is completely different from that typically associated with volcanoes. The Yellowstone Caldera is a part of the Rocky Mountains and located mostly in Wyoming. As is typical, it was assumed to be powered by heat from the earth's core. However, reconstruction of an "image" of what the earth beneath Yellowstone looks like, using seismographic data, suggests that the Yellowstone volcanoes were produced by a gigantic ancient oceanic plate that dove under the western U.S. about 30 million years ago. This ancient oceanic plate broke into pieces, which resulted in perturbations of unusual rocks in the mantle. In turn, this led to volcanic eruptions in the past 16 million years. Thus, an ancient oceanic plate could be the cause of the hotspot. — Science Daily

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