

ELKHORN WINTER YURT GUIDE

The Elkhorn yurt is conveniently located off the Elkhorn Loop trail for use by Nordic skiers and snowshoers. This yurt is the most remote of all the Idaho City yurts. You have direct access to over 27 miles of groomed and 50 miles of marked ski trails. The 270° view to the east, south and west is spectacular, especially in the evening. From the yurt you can see Jackson Peak, Wolf Mountain, Steele Mountain, the Trinity range, Sunset Peak, and Pilot Peak. The open, rolling terrain below the yurt provides off-trail skiers a chance to polish their skills. The nearby ungroomed Cougar trail provides access to a prime intermediate/advanced telemark area. This secluded telemark area is about .5 miles away and has 500 foot slopes facing all directions. Snow is usually available early December to mid April.

PLEASE READ THE WINTER YURT MANUAL FOR MORE DETAILS

The yurt door lock has been removed during the winter season. You will find the door closed but not locked and no key code is necessary

Difficulty:

Intermediate to advanced. The difficulty of touring trails can increase in poor snow conditions and weather. The beginning of the route to Elkhorn yurt includes a long steep section. Snowshoeing is the recommended way to access this yurt. If you ski in, you may be required you to remove your skis and walk up. Later on, skiers can expect short, steep sections of trail that you will have to herringbone up. Climbing skins are recommended for those with heavy packs. Individuals should be thoroughly prepared and travel with someone who has been to the yurt and can readily find it. The Elkhorn Loop trail is generally groomed on Thursday or Friday from December 1 to March 15. You should not count on the trail being groomed, but a freshly groomed trail will substantially reduce the amount of energy necessary to get to the yurt.

How to Get to the Yurt:

The trails are marked with blue or yellow diamond shapes, called blazes, attached to trees. The recommended approach to the yurt is to take the Elkhorn Loop trail clockwise to the yurt turnoff point. At the first intersection of the Elkhorn Loop trail, just .2 miles from the parking lot, continue straight up the Elkhorn Loop trail. This will take you past the Banner trail intersection and up onto the scenic Banner Ridge. Stay on the blue blazed Elkhorn Loop. At 2.2 miles you will the 2-foot yellow blaze that marks the Banner Ridge Yurt access off to your left, at that point you will stay right following the sign that reads Elkhorn Loop. About 50 yds further, you will see a map board on the left side of the trail. This will show you that you are at the intersection of the Cougar and Elkhorn Loop trail. Follow the Elkhorn loop trail that is marked by blue blazes on the trees. Follow the Elkhorn Loop trails' blue blazes through rolling terrain for one mile. At this point you will be at the second Elkhorn/Cougar trails' intersection at the base of a short steep climb. Stay on the Elkhorn Loop trail and climb to the top of the hill. You will see a 4x4 wood post with 2-foot yellow blazes that reads "Cougar Crossing". Go left into the trees, follow the 5" yellow blazes generally south and east (left) for 50 yards. At the high point in this area you will find the Elkhorn yurt. **You cannot see the Elkhorn yurt from the Elkhorn Loop trail.**

Where to Park:

The Banner Ridge Park N' Ski parking lot is about 23.5 miles north of Idaho City on Highway 21, just past mile marker 61. An Idaho Park N' Ski permit is required to park here Nov 15th to Apr 30th. Please park vehicles close together on the high end of the parking lot next to the highway. The Department of Transportation snowplow operators become frustrated when they cannot plow a lot because cars are parked in the middle. You should also **bring a shovel** because you might have to dig your car out or in case of heavy snow. Do not park on Highway 21. You can be fined for parking on the highway or for not displaying a Park N' Ski Pass.

Elevation Change and Distance:

About 850 feet climbing over 3.0 miles (one-way). There are many steep sections. You will climb and descend several times on your way to the yurt.

Dogs:

From Dec 1st through April 15th dogs are not allowed at the Elkhorn Yurt.

Solar Power:

This yurt has a solar panel with four LED lights. Should it be necessary, a brush is provided to remove snow from the panel. Please do not change the panel location. Use the lights when needed, turn them off when not in use and at the end of your stay.

Wood Pile:

Wood for the stove is located under the deck

Water:

The nearest creek water is about 1/3 mile away and is not easily accessible in the winter. Your best bet for water is to use the large pots provided to melt snow on the wood stove. We recommend boiling the water before drinking.

Special Equipment Needed:

Several members of the party should carry portable snow shovels. Bring two (2) one-pound propane bottles per each night of your stay; a roll of paper towels; and keep a snow shovel in each vehicle. A list of recommended items for your yurt trip is at the back of the winter yurt manual.

Avalanche and Whiteout Hazard:

Chances of an avalanche are low as long as the Elkhorn Loop trail is used. Avalanches can occur on nearby slopes. We do not recommend you travel to the yurt in high wind, heavy snow conditions, or at night because the trail section on the Banner Ridge, which is a high, treeless, exposed ridge, can quickly develop whiteout conditions.

Maps Needed:

Idaho City Area Park N' Ski Location Map, Banner Ridge Winter Trail Route to Elkhorn Yurt. (on website)

Global Positioning System Locations

UTM (in NAD 83): Note UTM's are rounded to nearest 10 meters

Banner Ridge Parking Lot: 11T0611730E 4875470N

Elkhorn Yurt: 11T0613250E 4875400N

Elevations:

Banner Ridge Parking Lot: 5,764 feet

Elkhorn Yurt: 6,441 feet

WARNING:

Winter travel and use of the yurt can be dangerous. Do not undertake yurt trips without careful preparation and a serious discussion of the dangers with ALL members of your group.

Safety: The nearest land line is in Lowman. For emergencies call Boise County Sheriff: **1-208-392-4411** or in a medical emergency: **911**. There is cell phone coverage for Verizon Wireless at the high point on the Elkhorn trail once you're on top of the Banner Ridge and Stargaze trail.

REPORT YURT DAMAGE OR MISSING ITEMS TO 208-514-2418 or 208-514-2419

PLEASE, DO NOT FEED ANY WILD ANIMALS. IT CAN LEAD TO THE ANIMALS CHEWING OR TEARING THE YURT SKIN.