

Idaho City Area Yurts

Winter Manual

INTRODUCTION

This manual will provide you with important information concerning the Idaho City yurt system. It is essential that you and all members of your party read through this information before embarking on a yurt tour.

After reading this material, make a careful and honest evaluation of your party's abilities. If you have any doubts of your ability to undertake a yurt tour, we recommend that you wait and go on a summer yurt tour before you try a winter tour. Be aware that backcountry travel by ski, snowshoe, or foot is dangerous. Travel to and from and use of the yurts is done at your own risk.

BACKGROUND

The Idaho City yurt system started in the fall of 1996 with the first one placed at the Banner Ridge location. From its inception, the yurt system was intended as a means for outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy the beauty of Idaho's mountains year-round. To accomplish this, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho City Ranger District, and dedicated volunteers worked cooperatively together, providing material, labor, and expertise to make the system a reality.

Funding to build the yurts came from a variety of sources: a National Recreation Trails Program grant; Park N' Ski monies; and volunteer labor/donations. Monies generated from yurt rentals are first used to maintain the existing yurts. Any additional income generated is used to operate, maintain, and improve the surrounding trail network. This network includes mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding, Nordic ski, and snowshoe trails.

RESERVATION INFORMATION

Reservations for stays in IDPR Idaho City Backcountry Yurts can be made online at www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov or by calling 1-888-922-6743. Reservations are accepted 9-months in advance of your intended stay and no later than 48-hours prior to your intended arrival. For reservations less than 48 hours prior to arrival, call 208/334-4199. A nonrefundable fee of \$10 is assessed at the time your reservation is made. All fees must be paid in advance of your stay.

Questions about the yurts call your:

Yurt Coordinator @ 208.514.2418 or 208.781.2296 (cell) or

Non Motorized Trails Manager @ 208.514.2419 or 208.781.0055 (cell)

- The maximum length of stay is 14 days in any given 30-day period
- Maximum number of persons sleeping in yurts is 6
- Maximum number of persons using a yurt site is 9 with prior approval.
 - ✓ **Call 208.514.2418 for permission**

Reservations are from 3:00 pm check-in with a 11:00 am check-out

To get the “Yurt Access Code”

E-mail: You will receive your yurt code with your reservation confirmation email prior to your reservation date. If you have not received this confirmation email or you have further questions you may contact your yurt coordinator at deetta.petersen@idpr.idaho.gov or by phone at 208.781.2296.

TRIP PLANNING

Carefully read this material and evaluate yourself and your party. If you feel confident that you have the skills and knowledge to undertake a yurt tour safely, follow these steps:

1. Watch the Yurt Orientation Video online at [Idaho City Backcountry Yurts | Department of Parks and Recreation](#) (**scroll to the bottom of the page and click on Idaho City Backcountry Yurts. Your video will be at the bottom of the page**).
2. Check suggested equipment lists (**below**) prior to departing. Make sure everyone in your party is properly prepared, including the possibility of spending the night outdoors.
3. Before leaving, always tell a friend or relative about where you are going, your route to the yurt, and when you plan to return. If for some reason they are concerned about your return, the following numbers are for reporting any problems or emergencies concerning the yurts:
 - Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation: 208.514.2403
 - Non-Motorized Trails Manager: 208.514.2419 or (cell) 208.781.0055
 - Yurt Coordinator: 208.514.2418 or (cell) 208.781.2296
4. Yurt tours are not recommended during winter storm warnings or strong winds. Check the weather forecast [7-Day Forecast 43.94N 115.68W \(weather.gov\)](#). See the “**Winter Safety Education**” link on our website www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov (bottom of page) which includes snow depth and the 511 road conditions website. Call the Idaho City Park N’ Ski Area Snowline (208-514-2423) for snow conditions and grooming status.
5. Before departing, make sure your vehicle is in good condition, and can withstand cold winter temperatures as low as -30° Fahrenheit. High clearance, 4-wheel drive vehicles, snow chains, shovels and sandbags are strongly recommended.
6. **Remember, Park N’ Ski permits are required November 15th to April 30th.** Permits can be purchased online at <https://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov>, in Boise at IDPR Headquarters (5657 Warm Springs Avenue, Boise ID 83716 [208-334-4199]) or at any vendor listed on our website. You could be fined if you do not have a Park N’ Ski Pass. **Parking on Highway 21 is prohibited.**

DOGS AND SNOWMOBILES

Dogs are allowed at all yurts with the exception of November 15th through April 15th, when dogs are not allowed at Banner Ridge or Elkhorn Yurts or on the groomed trails at the Banner Ridge Park N' Ski area. The trail system is reserved for Nordic skiers and snowshoers during that time. Please read our Pet Policy before you leave. [PET-POLICY.20.pdf \(idaho.gov\)](#)

Also, **It is illegal to operate a snowmobile on the Idaho City Nordic Ski Trail system. The Boise National Forest map outlines the area as no snowmobiling.** However, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation reserves the right to have a snowmobile at a yurt site for administrative or maintenance reasons.

ROUTES TO YURTS

A detailed description of yurt routes is found in each specific yurt guide. An Avenza Map is also provided for your travels. In addition, we recommend you take a yurt day trip prior to your reservation to locate your yurt. There have been cases where an individual had been to a yurt on several occasions yet was not able to locate it at a later date because of poor visibility from fog or blowing snow. It is for this reason that we strongly advise against undertaking yurt tours in extreme weather or poor visibility.

Routes to the yurts may not be marked well because of the difficulty of maintaining backcountry winter trails. Some sections of the trails go through large open areas where no features exist on which to attach markers. The yurts themselves are located on decks but snowpacks can exceed the height of the decks, leaving them hidden behind piles of snow and making it hard to see them from a distance. They are also located in trees, which help provide necessary wind protection but also increase the difficulty in locating them.

Before your first yurt tour, we recommend:

- Print a copy of the yurt location map sent to you via email prior to your tour. These maps are also available on our web site: www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov. Everyone in your group should have a copy of this map.
- Go on a day trip to familiarize yourself with surrounding landmarks and learn route finding tricks that will help you locate the yurt again. If you have any doubt about your route-finding skills, do not go.
- Before attempting any yurt tour on your own, you should be experienced in the use of a map and compass or the Global Positioning System (GPS) and carry one with you on the tour. Workshops and classes are offered periodically by Boise State University and Boise Community Education to help you learn map and compass skills.
- Use common sense and err on the safe side. Keep your party together. Turn back if the weather closes in or visibility becomes difficult. The yurt will be there for you to visit another day.
- Always be prepared. If for some reason you don't find the yurt, carry the equipment and clothing necessary to spend the night outdoors.

PARKING

Please adhere to the attached Parking guide, Idaho Transportation Department employees become frustrated when they cannot completely clear a parking lot because someone parked improperly. In some cases, they do not have the opportunity to come back to plow it for a week, leaving upset skiers. In order to help the snowplow operators efficiently clear the parking lots, we ask that overnight and weekday users park close together at the high end of the Banner Ridge lot, close to the highway. At the Gold Fork lot, park close together and parallel to the highway. At the Whoop-Um-Up lot park close together and parallel to the toilet. Keep a shovel in your vehicle to dig it out in case it gets plowed or snowed in. Parking maps are available on our website for your convenience. [PowerPoint Presentation \(idaho.gov\)](#)

START EARLY

Travel to the yurts involves a significant rise in elevation from where you leave your vehicle. The elevation rise combined with the distance to the yurts and possible slow snow conditions (deep snow, breakable crust, heavy wet snow, etc.); can make your trip an all-day affair. It is highly recommended that you be on the trail no later than 10:00am. Daylight is short in the winter; sunset can be at 5:00pm. Once you arrive at the yurt, you may have to dig out the yurt and toilet.

ON THE TRAIL

Whether skiing or snowshoeing to the yurt, **keep your party together**. All adult trip participants should have an Idaho City Area Yurt and Trail System map and the yurt specific map. You can download and print the yurt maps from: www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov . At the opening screen click on “Find an Activity” and then on “yurts”. Scroll down until you see Idaho City Back country Yurts and click on the link. **Download a trail map**. This is extremely important in bad weather or poor visibility. Stay together and stay safe. Travel at a pace which is comfortable for the slowest member of the party. If one member becomes exhausted, your entire party is weakened as a result. A slow, steady pace is a time-tested safe way of traveling in a group. Also, please adhere to the Trail etiquette and stay in your lane. (See attached trail etiquette sign).

CONDITION OF YURT UPON ARRIVAL

It is possible that a yurt can be damaged by extreme weather conditions, which are common in Idaho’s mountains. High winds, heavy snowstorms, falling branches from trees, and accumulation of snow on the yurt walls could cause rips, tears and/or partial or total collapse. It is also possible that the yurt can be vandalized, or items stolen. These possibilities point out the need to be well prepared. In particular, be prepared to spend the night outdoors if necessary. **Please report any damage or problems to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation: 208-514-2418 or 208-514-2419.**

DIGGING OUT YURTS

It is important to keep the yurt decks clear of snow, especially to the yurt door. If snow is allowed to build up people may not be able to get into the yurt. We ask that everyone using the yurts pitch in and help keep them snow free. Snow Shovels are normally hanging on the chimney support, under the deck or in the woodshed. Be extremely careful when using the shovel. The shovel can easily tear the outer covering of the yurt.

Do not climb on the chimney structure; it was not designed to handle a person's weight.

Important: At the completion of your stay, replace the snow shovels on their hooks. If you leave them in the yurt, the next party may not be able to dig out the yurt door.

ITEMS AT THE YURT

In each yurt, you should find 2 bunk beds with covered foam mattresses, a futon and mattress (which converts to a double bed), a table, chairs and kitchen cabinet, a two-burner propane stove, Solar panel and LED lights, a wood stove, a log rack, a tinder bucket, an ash bucket, assorted silverware, plates bowls, and cups, a plastic food storage container, assorted cooking pots and pans, miscellaneous kitchen equipment, a mop, a broom, a dust pan, a dome opener, and a fire extinguisher. Located outside: an axe, maul, hatchet and buck saw, a primitive toilet, a fire pit, a picnic table, and a woodpile.

We cannot guarantee all the items listed will be in the yurt. Because of the remote location, it may take us a week or two to replace/repair the item(s). Be prepared and adaptable enough to survive without these items.

STOVES

Each yurt has a wood stove and a two-burner propane stove for cooking **You need to bring a one-pound bottle of propane for each night you plan to stay**. The standard screw-in propane disposable fuel bottle is used in the cooking stove. Carefully read the directions for the stove. Leaving the propane valve on and not lighting immediately will form a large invisible cloud which, when lit, may cause a dangerous fireball which could singe hair and cause serious injury.

PROPANE STOVE DIRECTIONS:

Make sure all connections from the propane bottle to stove are hand tight. To light, hold lighted match near burner and open burner valve. To turn off, close burner valve firmly. Before you leave, please clean the stove and tray area thoroughly.

Warnings on Propane Use:

Always make sure valves for the stove and lanterns are turned off when not in use. If not, the wood-burning stove could ignite the gas. Attach or detach cylinders away from ignition sources and only when stove or lanterns are cool to touch. Propane is heavier than air and will accumulate in low places. If you smell gas, leave immediately and ventilate area. Never store propane near the wood stove or where temperature exceeds 120 degrees.

WOOD STOVE DIRECTIONS:

Clean stove window with window cleaner that is provided. Use newspaper or paper towels to wipe the window clean. To prevent smoke from filling the yurt, it is important to start a large flash fire immediately to preheat the chimney. Place 5 or more sheets of loosely crumpled newspaper (located in the cabinet) in the stove and cover with thumb-size dry kindling. Open the draft control by pulling the handle forward to the high position.

Light the newspaper and leave the door slightly ajar (1/8 inch) until all kindling is burning and a hot coal bed is established. Slowly add larger wood (2x4 size pieces). Lay pieces lengthwise from side-to-side in the hot coal bed with a shallow trench between so that the air can flow directly into the trench and ignite the fuel above. When the fire seems to be at its peak, medium-size logs may be added. Once these logs catch fire and the temperature gauge on the stovepipe reaches 320 degrees, slowly close the door. (Closing the door before the fire has a nice bed of hot coals can reduce the fire box temperature, resulting in an inefficient fire, smoke, and dirty glass.)

Achieving the proper draft is important. The draft can be adjusted for a low-burn rate with the handle fully in or to a fast-burn rate with the handle fully out. In the evening before bed, load the stove at least a half hour before bed to ensure a good fire, hot enough to lower the draft control for an overnight burn. For an overnight burn, set the draft control on a low setting. The ashes in the firebox tend to burn themselves up. IDPR staff will clean out ashes as necessary. If however, you need to remove them, use the marked ash bucket and dump the ashes at least 200' from the yurt. **DO NOT DUMP ASHES OVER THE SIDE OF THE DECK OR IN THE PIT TOILETS.** Don't burn garbage or plastics because they leave a toxic, sticky residue in the chimney, which can cause a chimney fire. Don't hang anything above the wood stove or place anything combustible within 36 inches of the stove (boots, clothing, wood, or paper). Don't burn at continually low settings. If the glass door is constantly blackened it means that the firebox temperature is too low.

OPENING, CLOSING AND DAILY PROCEDURES

It is very important to follow the daily to-do task located on the wall of the yurt for your convenience. There is minimal staff to operate and maintain the yurts, so we trust that your group will assist us in keeping the yurts in good condition.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE:

1. Plastic winter windows will be on the windows, roll the storm flaps up. The window storm flaps should be secured down when you arrive. If it is warm inside the yurt or if you prefer a view, roll up the storm flaps.
2. Open the clear plastic dome with the dome opener located on the wall behind the wood stove. By opening the dome, you can quickly cool the interior of the yurt. We ask that you close the window flaps and dome any time you leave for more than a couple of hours or when a storm is pending. A strong storm could arise while you are out and cause damage to the dome, flaps, or yurt.
3. For sanitary reasons, always use the toilet for defecating. The marked grey water drainpipe near the yurt must be used for dirty dishwater disposal. This helps keep animals from being attracted to food smells.

4. If needed clean the wood stove window before you start a fire. Please use the directions noted on the yurt wall to prevent smoke from filling the yurt.

DAILY PROCEDURES:

1. The yurt is a no smoking building. Please do not drop cigarette butts over the side of the deck.
2. Please wipe up any excess moisture on the floors with towels or mop provided. Water from boots, clothes, and wood will penetrate the wood floor, causing it to swell and hastening its replacement.
3. To prevent the transmission of germs between persons and groups, please wash dishes using the three-step (tub) method noted below:
 - **Step 1:** Fill all three tubs with water. Use the biodegradable soap provided to wash the dishes, then rinse in clean water and dip into the final bleach rinse. To make a bleach water rinse, add a teaspoon of liquid bleach (located on the cabinet) to cold rinse water.
 - **Step 2:** Shake excess water off the dishes and place on the wood dish drying rack provided. Do not wipe dry with a cloth. Use a clean paper towel to wipe down the cabinet and tabletop.
 - **Step 3:** After washing and clean up, dump the tubs at the grey water pole outside.
4. Dogs and pets are not allowed on yurt furniture. Dogs and pets are allowed at the yurt site when the trails are not groomed for cross-country skiing, generally April 15th through November 15th. Dogs are allowed at the Rocky Ridge yurt year-round.
5. Equestrians and other pack- stock should follow standard low-impact backcountry camping procedures to minimize damage to the site.
6. We ask that hunters using the yurt use common sense. Do not discharge any firearm within ¼ mile of the yurt.
7. Do not put mattresses on the floor.
8. Please do not chop wood on the stone hearth.
9. Please make a journal entry in the yurt logbook during your stay.

PROCEDURES WHEN YOU LEAVE:

1. Thoroughly clean the yurt, especially under the beds. Sweep out dirt, wood chips with the broom. Even crumbs may attract rodents, ants, or bears. Carry out all garbage and food to prevent rodent infestations or animals eating through the yurt walls.
2. Wipe down the table, and kitchen cabinet. Place all cooking pots/pans/bowls upside down in cabinet so mice do not dance, and water does not sit in them.
3. Pack out what you packed in. **All food must be carried out April 30th through November 15th.** This will discourage wild animals from trying to break into the yurt. You may leave extra propane bottles but carry out the empty ones. Anything left in the yurt has to be carried out by IDPR staff.
4. Empty water from the pots and coffee pot so they do not freeze.
5. Move any flammable materials such as paper and kindling away from wood stove.
6. Restock the yurt with wood and kindling from woodpile, so the next group will have dry wood when they enter.

7. Wipe down the toilet seat and close seat cover and sweep the outhouse floor.
8. Turn off solar powered light switches.
9. Make sure gas valves are turned off on the propane stove and lanterns.
10. Return hanging items to their proper location (broom, dome opener, buck saw, fire poker, axe, and dustpan).
11. Make sure plastic dome is securely shut and window storm flaps are rolled down. Be sure not to over tighten the plastic dome because it may crack, allowing water to seep in. A new dome is expensive.
12. Make sure the fire is out in the fire pit. The coals should be cool to the touch. Drown the fire with plenty of water, stir and drown it again. **Do not use soil to smother the fire.** Pack out any tin foil or non-burnable garbage.
13. Securely shut yurt door and make sure it is locked.

SAFETY

Everything you do on a backcountry tour should be done carefully. Conducting yourself safely while using yurts is equally important. Use common sense and care when using the wood stove, propane stove and lanterns, starting the fire, chopping wood, etc. There is no ski patrol in the yurt area and it's about three-hours to the nearest hospital. The closest telephone to the Idaho City Park N' Ski areas is in Lowman and the second closest is in Idaho City. Call the Boise County Sheriff at **1-208-392-4411** or in a medical emergency: **911**.

You and your party must come prepared. Backcountry travel in the winter requires a great personal responsibility from everyone to do all they can to be safe. There are many dangers, and the name of the game is to stay alert, constantly evaluate and minimize potential hazards. It would be a good idea to have someone on the trip with good knowledge of backcountry first aid.

There is cell phone coverage for Verizon phone systems at the high point on the Elkhorn trail once you're on top of the Banner Ridge. There is also coverage on the Stargaze trail near Beaver Creek Summit on Highway 21.

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT LIST

An online equipment list is provided as a guide to help you prepare for a yurt trip.

Print your suggested equipment checklist for winter: [What-to-Pack-Winter-1.0-002.pdf \(idaho.gov\)](#)

Remember:

Come prepared to spend the night outdoors.

If, for some reason, you do not make it to the yurt, or the yurt is damaged or collapsed.

Dressing in layers is the best choice.

As you get warm you can take off layers, and as you cool down during breaks you can put them back on.

- The term “synthetics” on the clothing list refers to materials such as pile, polar fleece, synthetic clothing, Lycra, or polypropylene. Because you will likely sweat carrying a heavy pack to the yurt, we highly recommend synthetics next to the skin that wick moisture away. Synthetic/polypropylene undergarments will wick away sweat keeping you feeling dry and warm. Cotton socks, tee shirts, underwear and blue jeans should not be worn because they hold moisture against your skin hastening hypothermia.

Please photocopy this equipment list and pass on to all members of the party.