

Idaho City Area Yurts

Winter Manual

INTRODUCTION

This manual provides important information about the Idaho City yurt system. It is essential that you and all members of your party read through this information before embarking on a tour to any of the yurts.

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 construction of the Banner Ridge Yurt. 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 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 and 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 skiing, and snowshoeing 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.

GENERAL YURT INFORMATION

Check in time is from 3:00 PM on your day of arrival. Check out time is 11:00 AM. The maximum length of stay is 14 days for any 30-day period. The maximum number of persons sleeping in a yurt is 6. The maximum number of persons using a yurt site is 12 with prior approval. For approval, call 208-514-2418.

To get the “Yurt Access Code”

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 have further questions you should contact your yurt coordinator, DeEtta Petersen, 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](#) at this link.
2. Check suggested equipment lists (below) prior to departing. Make sure everyone in your party is properly prepared, including for 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 concerning the yurts:

Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation: 208-514-2418 or 208-781-2296 or 208-514-2403

4. Yurt tours are not recommended during winter storm warnings or strong winds. Check the weather forecast [here](#). See the [Winter Safety Education link](#) on our website 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 can withstand cold winter temperature as low as -30° Fahrenheit. Snow chains, shovels and sandbags are strongly recommended.
6. **Remember, Park N' Ski permits are required November 15th to April 30th.** You can purchase permits online [here](#), in Boise at IDPR Headquarters 5657 Warm Springs Avenue, Boise ID 83716, 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 not allowed.**

DOGS AND SNOWMOBILES

Dogs are **not** allowed at Banner Ridge or Elkhorn Yurts nor on the groomed trails at the Banner Ridge Park N' Ski area from November 15th through April 15th. The trail system is reserved for Nordic skiers and snowshoers during that time. Please read our [Pet Policy](#) before you leave. Dogs are allowed at all other yurts.

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 later 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. We also recommend opening the map in the Avenza app, which allows you to track your location as you travel to and from the yurt. 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 of 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

Idaho Transportation Department employees become frustrated when they cannot completely clear a parking lot because someone parked improperly. 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 on the northeast side of the parking lot. 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.

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. 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 the winter.

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. 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 two bunk beds with covered foam mattresses, a futon and mattress (which converts to a double bed), a table, chairs, a kitchen cabinet, a two-burner propane stove, a solar panel and LED lights, a wood stove, a log rack, a tinder bucket, an ash bucket, assorted silverware, plates, bowls, 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, you should find an axe, a maul, a hatchet, a buck saw, a primitive toilet, a fire pit, a picnic table, and a woodpile. Because of the remote location, it may take us several weeks to replace/repair the item(s). Be prepared and adaptable enough to survive without these items.

STOVES

Each yurt is equipped with a solar panel and LED lights, a wood stove for heat, and a two-burner propane stove for cooking. Carefully read the directions for the cook-stove on the yurt wall. You need to bring a one-pound screw in bottle of propane for each night you plan to stay.

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. Remove snow from the yurt deck.
2. For sanitary reasons, always use the toilet for defecating. Use the marked grey water drainpipe near the yurt for dirty dishwater disposal. This process helps keep animals from being attracted to food smells.
3. 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 yurts are all nonsmoking. 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:
 - a. **Step 1:** Fill all three tubs with water. Add biodegradable soap to the first bucket and create a bleach rinse in the third bucket. To make a bleach rinse, add a teaspoon of liquid bleach (located in the cabinet) to cold water. Use the biodegradable soap provided to wash the dishes (first bucket), then rinse in clean water (second bucket), and lastly dip into the bleach rinse (third bucket).
 - b. **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.
 - c. **Step 3:** After washing and clean up, dump the tubs into the grey water pipe 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 $\frac{1}{4}$ 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.

WHEN YOU LEAVE:

1. Thoroughly clean the yurt, especially under the beds. Sweep out dirt and 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 must be carried out by volunteers.
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 the wood stove.
6. Restock the yurt with wood and kindling from the woodpile, so the next group will have dry wood when they enter.
7. Wipe down the toilet seat, close the seat cover, and sweep the outhouse floor.
8. Turn off the solar powered lights.
9. Make sure gas valves are turned off on the propane stove.
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 costs between \$550.00 and \$750.00.
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 the yurt door and make sure it is locked.

SAFETY

Everything you do on a backcountry tour should be done carefully. Use common sense and care when using the wood and propane stoves, 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 public telephone is in Lowman and the second closest is at the rest area in downtown Idaho City. Call the Boise County Sheriff at (208) 392-4411 or in a medical emergency call 911. There is cell phone coverage for most cell phone systems at the high point on the Elkhorn trail once you're on top of the Banner Ridge. There is also often coverage along the Stargaze trail near Highway 21.

You and your party must come prepared. There are many dangers, and the name of the game is to stay alert and constantly evaluate and minimize potential hazards. It is a good idea to have someone on the trip with good knowledge of backcountry first aid.

FOR QUESTIONS REGARDING THE YURTS

Call DeEtta Petersen, Backcountry Yurt Coordinator at 208-514-2418 or 208-781-2296 (cell)

Call Hailey Brookins, Non-Motorized Trails Program Coordinator at 208-514-2419

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT LIST

The [equipment listed](#) below is included as a guide to help you prepare for a yurt. Feel free to photocopy this equipment list and pass on to all members of the party. **Come prepared to spend the night outdoors.**

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.

PERSONAL:

- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Skis or snowshoes | <input type="checkbox"/> Pants |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poles | <input type="checkbox"/> Sun hat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Backpack | <input type="checkbox"/> Gloves or mittens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day or belt pack | <input type="checkbox"/> Wool, polar fleece, or synthetic hat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping bag and/or fitted sheet for bunk | <input type="checkbox"/> Polar fleece or jacket |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pillow - inflatable saves space | <input type="checkbox"/> Wool, polar fleece, or synthetic long sleeve shirt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses | <input type="checkbox"/> Wool, polar fleece, or synthetic long pants |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency whistle | <input type="checkbox"/> Windproof and waterproof shell jacket, hood, and pants |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High energy trail snacks | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large water bottle | <input type="checkbox"/> Knee-high gaiters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compass | <input type="checkbox"/> Shoes for exploring the area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boise National Forest map | <input type="checkbox"/> Headlamp or small flashlight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Idaho City Area Yurt and Trail System map | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra flashlight batteries and bulb |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specific yurt guide and location map | <input type="checkbox"/> Small cooler for ice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small knife | <input type="checkbox"/> Basic first aid kit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toothbrush and paste | <input type="checkbox"/> Avalanche shovel to dig emergency shelter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal medications | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic tarp to serve as emergency shelter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Underwear | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wool socks | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shirts | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shorts | |

GROUP:

- Park N' Ski Permit (Nov. 15 through Apr. 30). One per vehicle
- Yurt door lock combination
- 2 screw-in, one pound propane canisters for each day of your stay
- Paper towels
- Sunscreen lotion and Chapstick
- Food and drink enough for the duration of your stay
- Water filter or full water jug
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Lighter and fire starter
- First aid kit that includes:
 - First aid book
 - Moleskin gauze rolls
 - Chemical heat pack
 - Ace bandage
 - 2" first-aid tape
 - Assorted band aids including butterfly
 - Triangular bandages and sterile pads
 - Anti-acid tablets
 - Strong pain medication
 - Ibuprofen tablets
 - Antiseptic wound cleaner
 - Body thermometer
 - Latex gloves
 - Tweezer/scissor/nail clipper
 - Small mirror
- Emergency and repair kit that includes:
 - Small roll of duct or strapping tape
 - Stick-on nylon patches
 - Nylon cord/braided wire
 - Safety pins
- Satellite communication device

OPTIONAL:

- Camera
- Binoculars
- Set of ski poles
- Wax for skis and scraper
- Books