

YELLOWSTONE ASSOCIATION INSTITUTE
YOUTH GUIDE FOR GROUPS

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Yellowstone Association Institute (YAI). YAI strives to provide exceptional educational experiences. Chaperones play an important role in facilitating a rewarding experience for everyone, and have primary responsibility for the supervision, safety, and behavioral management of the students. Specific hazards exist in Yellowstone and at YAI facilities, which include the Lamar Valley Buffalo Ranch (the ranch). These hazards may be unfamiliar to youth program participants and chaperones. The following guide shares important insight and clarifies expectations and duties for chaperones. Following these protocols will be central to having a successful and safe experience.

[Some specific provisions in this document apply only to groups utilizing the ranch. These items are bracketed, like this paragraph, for clarity. If your group is not staying at the ranch, you may disregard these sections.]

Youth

Youth participants are typically under the age of 18. However, 18 year old students will be defined as youth for the purposes of this document.

Chaperones

Chaperones are adults provided by your group who are responsible for assisting with youth management, communication with YAI staff, and assisting with risk management. All chaperones must be 18 years of age or older, not a student, and be able to serve as strong leaders for the group. The ideal minimum ratio of chaperones to youth is 1:6, however, if this is not possible with your group, please let the YAI office know (406-848-2400). We suggest selecting chaperones who are parents, teachers, or others who already have an established leadership position with the youth participants.

YAI Staff

One or more YAI instructors will be designated to your group, and serve as the main contact for your group during the program. These instructors have the primary duty of providing instruction to your group. Additionally, one or more YAI volunteer program assistants may be assigned to your group to assist the instructors. Instructors and program assistants are trained in wilderness medical care, emergency response, and are familiar with the unique hazards of Yellowstone. During programming time, the instructor will provide coordination of risk management. However, while the group is not participating in coordinated programming, risk management duties fall back to chaperones. At no time during the program will instructors or program assistants hold responsibility for behavioral management of youth participants; that is the role of the chaperones.

Other staff present during your program may include a campus manager (responsible for the daily operations of the facility) and program managers. [Additionally, the ranch is the duty station for National Park Service law enforcement rangers, who may be present during your groups stay, but will most likely have little to no interaction with your group.] All YAI staff members present during programs with youth participants or staying at the ranch will have passed a national background check. For more information on background check procedures, please contact the YAI office.

Mail: YAI Registrar (Groups)

P.O. Box 117

Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190

Email: registrar@yellowstoneassociation.org

Primary Phone: 406-848-2400

Secondary Phone: 406-848-2167

GETTING STARTED

Before Your Program

A lead chaperone must be designated for your group before arrival. The lead chaperone will have overall responsibility for the group and facilitate communication between chaperones, youth participants, and YAI staff.

A YAI Assumption of Risk and Health Information Form (signed by a parent or guardian, for students) is required for participation in the program for all participants, including chaperones. These forms should be received by the YAI office two weeks prior to commencement of the program. These forms are required before the program can begin. Please note that some youth forms require a parent/guardian signature. Before mailing these forms, make copies for the lead chaperone to bring to the program. Ensure these signatures are obtained before traveling to the program. While not required, we recommend that you also obtain a Permission to Treat Authorization signed by a parent or guardian for each youth participant (YAI does not provide this form). Delays in return of these forms may result in exclusion of participants in programming.

[Included in this guide are Cabin Assignment, Shower Schedule, and Kitchen Duty sheets. These forms should be completed and returned with the above forms. A copy of the Cabin Assignment sheet should also be carried by each chaperone at the time of arrival, to assist with helping participants find their assigned cabins. When you are determining your cabin assignments, keep in mind that students must sleep in single-gender cabins and cannot share sleeping accommodations with adults (other than those who are related). Chaperones' cabins should be positioned to allow proper monitoring of behavior in the adjacent accommodations/areas occupied by youth participants. Cabin Assignment sheets should be carried by chaperones during the program to assist locating participants in the case of an emergency and to facilitate proper logistical flow of events.]

[When completing the Shower Schedule and Kitchen Duty sheets, please be sure to maintain balanced schedules. Two examples of Kitchen Duty sheets are provided in Appendices E and F. One covers a three-day program and one covers a five-day program. These may be modified if your group differs in length of stay, but we highly recommend this format.]

When You Arrive

[Immediately upon arrival at the ranch your group will be greeted by YAI staff. You will be introduced to the ranch facility and shown the cabins, bathhouse, and bunkhouse (classroom and kitchen facilities). At this time, we will cover the rules of staying at the ranch. Once familiar with the facility, you will be provided with time to unpack and settle in. YAI staff will communicate with the lead chaperone with regards to the schedule of events for the remaining part of the day. YAI staff will meet with all chaperones as a group to discuss chaperone responsibilities, YAI policies, and further details for the days to come.

An orientation program will be provided for the entire group, as soon as it is practicable. During orientation, YAI staff will introduce Yellowstone, program logistics, safety guidelines, and build excitement for the program. This will be a prime time to have any remaining questions answered.]

CHAPERONE RESPONSIBILITIES

Chaperones will supervise students at all times during the duration of the YAI program. This includes programming and non-programming times (see below for details). Exceptions are when youth are in their sleeping accommodations, utilizing restroom and shower facilities, and traveling between buildings.

Chaperone responsibilities can be summarized in the following way:

1. Set clear expectations and boundaries for youth participants
2. Ensure that the youth participants stay within sight (with the exceptions noted above)
3. Ensure that behavioral expectations, set by YAI staff, are met

At the Ranch

[Students may walk between buildings unsupervised. However, a specific recreation area should be designated by chaperones in which youth participants may congregate during free time. This recreation area must be supervised by chaperones while participants are present. Students are not allowed to “hang-out” in cabins during non-sleeping hours.]

Programming Times

While instructors are providing instruction, they will be filling the role of safety supervisor and overall leader for the group. However, chaperones are required to supervise participants and correct inappropriate behavior. As instructors cannot leave the group to attend to a disruptive or unsafe participant, these duties must be performed by chaperones. Additionally, chaperones will assist instructors and other YAI staff with logistics, risk mitigation, and other duties as necessary.

Non-Programming Times

During times when instructors are not providing programming instruction, YAI staff may or may not be present. Supervision and overall responsibility of youth participants remains with chaperones, including ensuring safety and facility rules are met. Some examples of non-programming times include free-times, evenings, and early mornings. We suggest having youth participants congregate in the designated recreation area during these times, to facilitate effective supervision. [As the ranch contains historic structures and is set in the heart of a national park, enhanced care must be taken while staying at this facility. Respect for the facility includes not only physical care of structures, but also minimized noise production and enhanced awareness of effects to the landscape and wildlife.]

Chaperones should remember to provide guidance, just as a parent would. In winter, pay attention to wetness of clothing, to ensure youth participants do not get to cold in snowy conditions. In summer, hydration is critical. Keep an eye on water consumption and be sure participants do not run out of water while away from facilities. Nutrition is also a consideration, especially for younger participants. Unhealthy people are not able to participate fully in programming activities and could become a safety risk for themselves and the group as a whole.

Prohibited Activities

YAI strives to provide an enjoyable and educational experience for all program participants. To allow this goal to be achieved, a few specific activities must be avoided by youth participants and chaperones, alike. Chaperones have responsibility for ensuring the following activities do not occur:

- Sexual activity
- Verbally abusive language

- Verbal threats
- Physical violence
- Dangerous behavior (putting self or others at risk)
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, or misuse of legal drugs
- Theft
- Causing unnecessary and/or intentional damage to the park environment, YAI facilities, vehicles, or equipment
- Running, throwing objects like rocks, gum chewing, snowball fights, graffiti, and other destructive behavior
- Possession, by youth, of knives or other weapons
- Swimming, when not specifically approved and supervised by YAI staff
- Violating any other applicable campus rule, local, state, park, or federal law or regulation, not mentioned above

To help ensure these activities do not occur, YAI maintains the right to correct individuals' behavior by such means as necessary up to, and including, removal from the program.

[In addition to this list, the National Park Service strictly prohibits idling of buses in excess of 10 minutes (e.g. warming) and spills of vehicular fluids. We also do not have the ability to provide a place to plug in vehicles for such purposes as recharging and engine heaters.]

Chaperone Strategies

We understand that some groups may have standard practices for supervising groups on trips. Feel free to use your system if you feel that it is effective. However, if you are looking for a strategy that you can use, we have found the following technique to be successful for programs in Yellowstone.

Divide your youth participants by the number of chaperones. For example, if you have 15 youth participants and three chaperones, you will have three mini-groups of five participants. Each chaperone should be assigned to a mini-group and maintain primary responsibility for the members of the mini-group for the extent of the program. [To ease supervision, use these mini-groups as a guide when determining cabin, shower, and kitchen duty schedule arrangements.] Younger groups may enjoy picking names for their mini-groups. Consider using names of animals (e.g. bison, wolf, bear, eagle, coyote, raven, elk, moose) or places (e.g. Norris, Mammoth, Canyon, Roosevelt, Madison, Lamar, Hayden, Grant) found in Yellowstone. Another fun option may be to use wolf pack names, and have the participants in each group learn about those packs during their programs: Druids, Agates, Slough Creeks, Mollies', and Leopolds'.

[LAMAR BUFFALO RANCH]

History and Layout

The Lamar Buffalo Ranch was built by the army to help recover the bison population in the early 1900s. Sitting in the middle of the Lamar Valley, this location is one of the best places to observe bison, wolves, and many other animals in Yellowstone. Several buildings are registered historic buildings and as such, are maintained very carefully.

While the ranch is officially park property, YAI operates the facility for most of the year. Adjacent to the historic buildings, YAI has built lodging for program participants, as well as a small YAI bookstore. Programs using the ranch include seminars, Lodging and Learning programs, and Private Tours. In fall and spring, the National Park Service uses the ranch to operate *Expedition: Yellowstone!*. This program introduces school kids to the joys of the Yellowstone region.

The bunkhouse has 2 restrooms, a large kitchen with food storage, dining space, 2 classrooms, and a phone/fax. The bathhouse has a men's side and a women's side. Each side has 3 showers, 3 toilets, and 2 sinks. The remaining buildings include 11 participant cabins (one room), 6 staff cabins, the bookstore, a barn, and National Park Service residential structures. The barn and residential structures are off-limits to YAI staff and program participants. See Appendix B for a map of the grounds.

Electricity

As a remote location, the ranch has limited electricity capabilities. The entire facility is powered by a combination of solar panels and generators. To keep power consumption low, we ask visitors to plan for non-electric or battery powered equipment, such as alarm clocks. Devices such as hair dryers, coffee pots, and laptops should not be brought to the ranch. Also, it should be noted that there is no cell phone reception at the ranch or in most places where activities will occur. Therefore, there is no need to bring cell phone chargers. Calling cards are required for those wishing to make long distance calls on the ranch phone.

To reduce power consumption, cabins do not have outlets, but do have propane heaters and a reading light. If you have specific electrical needs, such as those related to medical devices, please contact the YAI office before your program commences. Remember to practice conservation during your stay. This includes turning off lights and closing doors when leaving a room or building.

Special Rules

During your orientation, YAI staff will explain which areas are off limits. For the safety of the group and for respect for others staying or living at the ranch, these rules must be followed. During your stay, youth participants may not leave the ranch unless escorted by a YAI staff member or chaperone.

Bison, bears, wolves, and other wildlife may, on occasion, travel through the ranch area so we ask visitors to use a flashlight and caution when visiting other buildings during low light times. Whenever possible, walk in groups rather than alone. Camping is not allowed; all visitors must stay in a cabin. In winter, we require visitors to change shoes upon entering the bunkhouse. Be sure to bring a pair of closed toe shoes in addition to your outdoor shoes/boots to be stored in the bunkhouse during your program. All food must be stored and consumed in the bunkhouse. Food in cabins attracts unwanted wildlife. Please arrive prepared to store food properly.

MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS

On-site Capabilities

Most activities during programs will occur away from medical care facilities. For example, under ideal conditions (e.g. good weather, no traffic), the ranch is more than a 45 minute drive from the closest clinic. Under less-than-ideal conditions and in other parts of the park, time to clinical medical care may be several hours. For this reason, YAI staff members working with your group are trained in wilderness medical care through either Wilderness First Aid or Wilderness First Responder certifications. For more information about the level of care YAI staff members are qualified to provide, please contact the YAI office. There is a ranger station (Tower) 11 miles from the ranch, but this facility is very limited in terms of capabilities and is considered only an emergency resource.

Medication Management

For legal reasons, YAI will not take possession of medications for participants, nor provide requirements for how medications should be managed. However, we strongly suggest that the lead chaperone retain and dispense all youth medications (prescription and non-prescription), as well as make a medications chart for students, including type, dosage, location, and dispensing details. Exceptions to this suggestion include medications that must be immediately available, such as asthma inhalers and epinephrine auto-injectors (also known as epi pens) that the students may carry if they typically carry the medication and are judged by the chaperones to be responsible. Program participants, including chaperones, who normally have access to asthma inhalers or epi pens are urged to bring two. One should be carried on the participant's person while the other should be carried by a chaperone to be used as a backup in the case one is lost or a medical situation arises that requires more than one dosage. If your group has a different, predetermined policy, your policy may be used.

CODE OF ETHICS

The Yellowstone Association Institute is committed to demonstrating a high standard of appropriate and ethical behavior in Yellowstone. As a participant in an Institute program, we ask you to adhere to the following Code of Ethics. In addition to the ethics highlighted below, the Institute abides by all National Park Service (NPS) rules and regulations. We also practice Leave No Trace guidelines for traveling responsibly in the wilderness.

Observing Wildlife: We will do our best to have as little impact on wildlife as possible. Animals will be observed from a distance, using high powered spotting scopes to help keep our presence from affecting their behavior. Participants should not expect to get close-up photographs of wildlife. We will adhere to NPS regulations by keeping a minimum distance of 25 yards from bison, elk, bighorn sheep, deer, moose, coyotes, nesting birds, and 100 yards from bears and wolves. We will not entice wildlife with food, animal calls, or any actions that change their behavior.

Leave What You Find: It is illegal to remove natural or cultural artifacts (plants, animals, bones, rocks, etc.) from the park. Institute instructors have permission from the NPS to manipulate plants, rocks, bones, etc. for educational purposes, and will return them to their natural positions and locations.

General Etiquette: Institute groups will be considerate of other visitors and respect the quality of their experience. Voices and vehicle sounds carry great distances and affect both wildlife and people. Remaining silent or very quiet while watching wildlife lets the sounds of Yellowstone (including wolf howls) prevail.

Roads and Vehicles: Expect wildlife on the road, and drive at or below the posted park speed limits. When stopping to observe wildlife or other park features, the Institute will move vehicles entirely off the road. If there is no safe pullout available, we will drive to the next safe place and walk back to observe the wildlife. We will not stop in the middle of the road, and should a traffic jam develop as a result of our activities, we will cease the activity.

Properly Dispose of Waste: We will pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter. Your instructor will discuss techniques for properly disposing of human waste in the field.

Traveling Lightly: When hiking or walking in Yellowstone, we will use existing trails and boardwalks, and follow appropriate techniques when walking off-trail. Walking around muddy or wet places in the trail increases erosion and negatively affects the resource; proper equipment is essential to hiking ethically. Participants should come adequately prepared with the equipment listed for their course and should expect to walk through mud, snow, or puddles in the trail.

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST

Weather in Yellowstone is unpredictable; you will need to prepare for greater temperature and weather extremes. The elevation in the park interior is 5000 to 7000 feet. Conditions could range from a hot day to snow. Nights will likely be cold. When dressed properly, even the most challenging conditions can be encountered successfully. If you are adequately equipped with the right gear and clothing, you will have a more comfortable and enjoyable experience. If you have any questions about appropriate clothing or gear, please do not hesitate to contact the YAI office.

Clothing

The layered use of garments for protection against the wind, sun, and temperature extremes should guide your clothing choices. Loose fitting layers of synthetic or non-cotton material allow you to maintain a comfortable and dry body as outside temperatures change and as your own body's temperature and moisture output changes with different levels of exertion.

Insulating Underwear: Capilene, silk, polypropylene, or similar. Should have ability to wick moisture away from the body. A light or medium weight is adequate.

Lightweight Insulating Layer: A light 200-weight synthetic fleece shirt or wool garment is good.

Mid-Weight Sweater or Jacket: Can be wool, down, or 300-weight fleece for less active times.

Heavyweight Insulating Layer (fall, winter, spring): Can be wool, down or heavy-weight fleece jacket.

Wind/Rain Jacket and Pants: A layer that breaks the wind yet breathes is important. Gore-Tex shells do both, but are expensive. Coated nylon blocks wind and rain and is economical, but doesn't release sweat. If your rain jacket does not breathe, you might consider a separate wind jacket. A jacket with a hood is a plus. Wind pants should be wind/water resistant and loose fitting.

Shirts: Cotton t-shirts are OK, but synthetic shirts are ideal, because they wick moisture away from the body.

Pants: Synthetic hiking pants, lightweight pile/fleece pants or tights, or similar pants. Jeans are not recommended.

Hat: Bring two, a brimmed hat to protect you from the sun and an insulating hat for cool weather (fall, winter, spring).

Gloves: Lightweight silk/capilene/wool/polypro gloves liners and a pair of heavy wool/fleece gloves or mittens (fall, winter, spring).

Socks: Wool or synthetic. Cotton socks do not wick moisture and are not recommended

Hiking Boots or Shoes: If you do not already have a favorite pair (which is probably adequate), get a pair of boots that provide stability, traction, and comfort. Unless you've consistently hiked in athletic shoes, go with something that provides ankle support. Also, boots offer protection from frequently wet or muddy seasonal conditions. Snow boots should have water repellent layers outside, thick insulation inside, and be large enough to fit over thick socks (fall, winter, spring).

Off-duty Shoes: Athletic shoes or other leisure footwear.

Equipment

Your instructor will be carrying a first aid kit, bear spray, and emergency communication device.

Daypack: In addition to extra clothes, you'll be carrying water, lunch, and maybe a camera, binoculars, field guides, and other items during excursions away from the vehicle. Make sure your daypack is large enough to accommodate these items.

Water Bottle (reusable): Staying hydrated is very important. One quart/liter is the minimum recommended. Camelback or similar hydration systems work, as well. To reduce our impact, we do NOT provide disposable water bottles.

Sunglasses

Sunscreen/Lip Protector

Camera, Binoculars: If you have them, bring them. If you have a digital camera, you may be able to take close photos of surprising quality through the Institute spotting scopes.

Notebook/Pencil

Pocket Hand and Foot Warmers (fall, winter, spring)

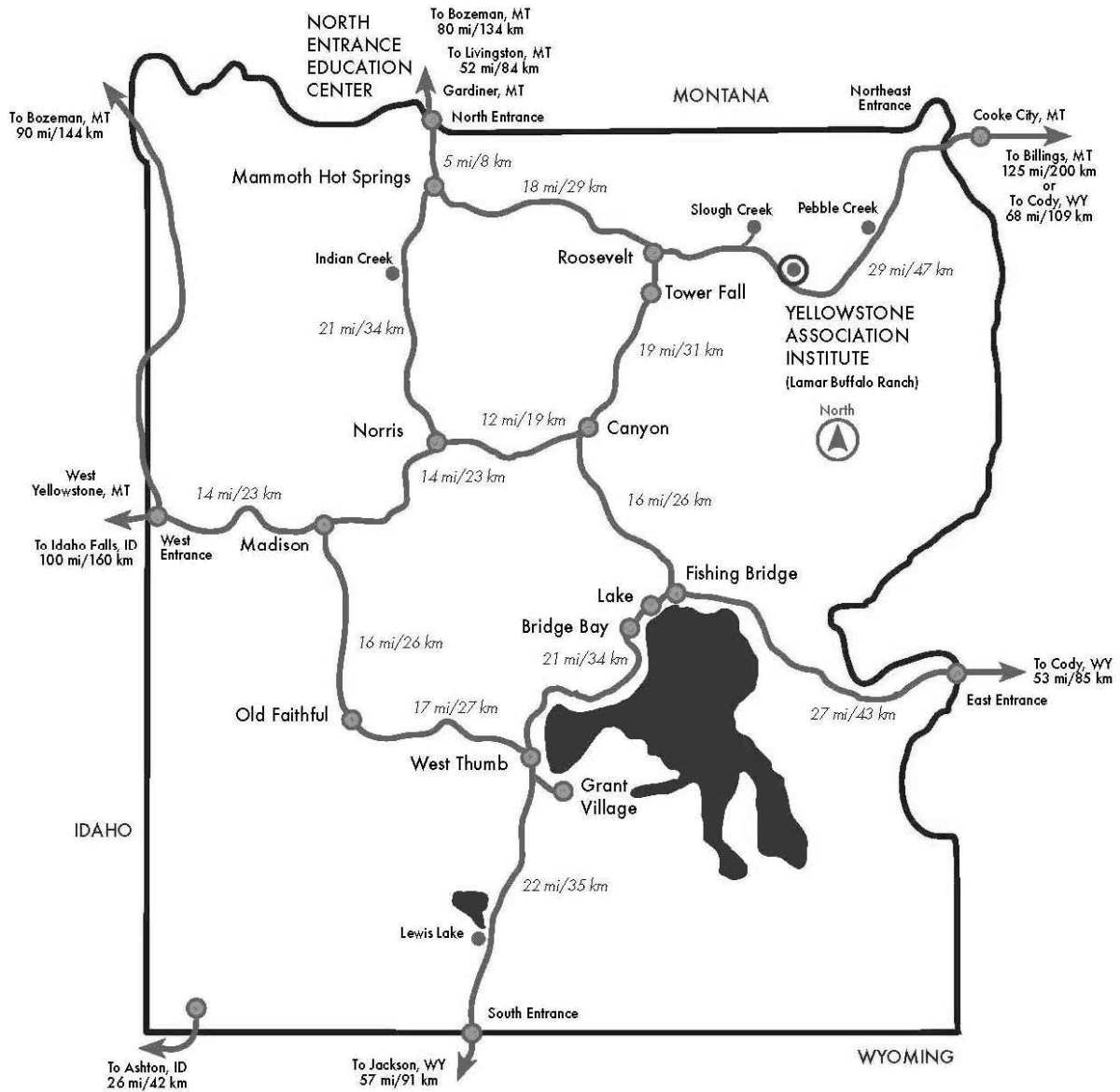
Personal First Aid Kit: Please bring any personal medications you require.

Alarm Clock: Make sure you're ready for early mornings! Cabins do not have alarm clocks. Also, remember that cabins do not have outlets, so clocks must be non-electric or battery powered.

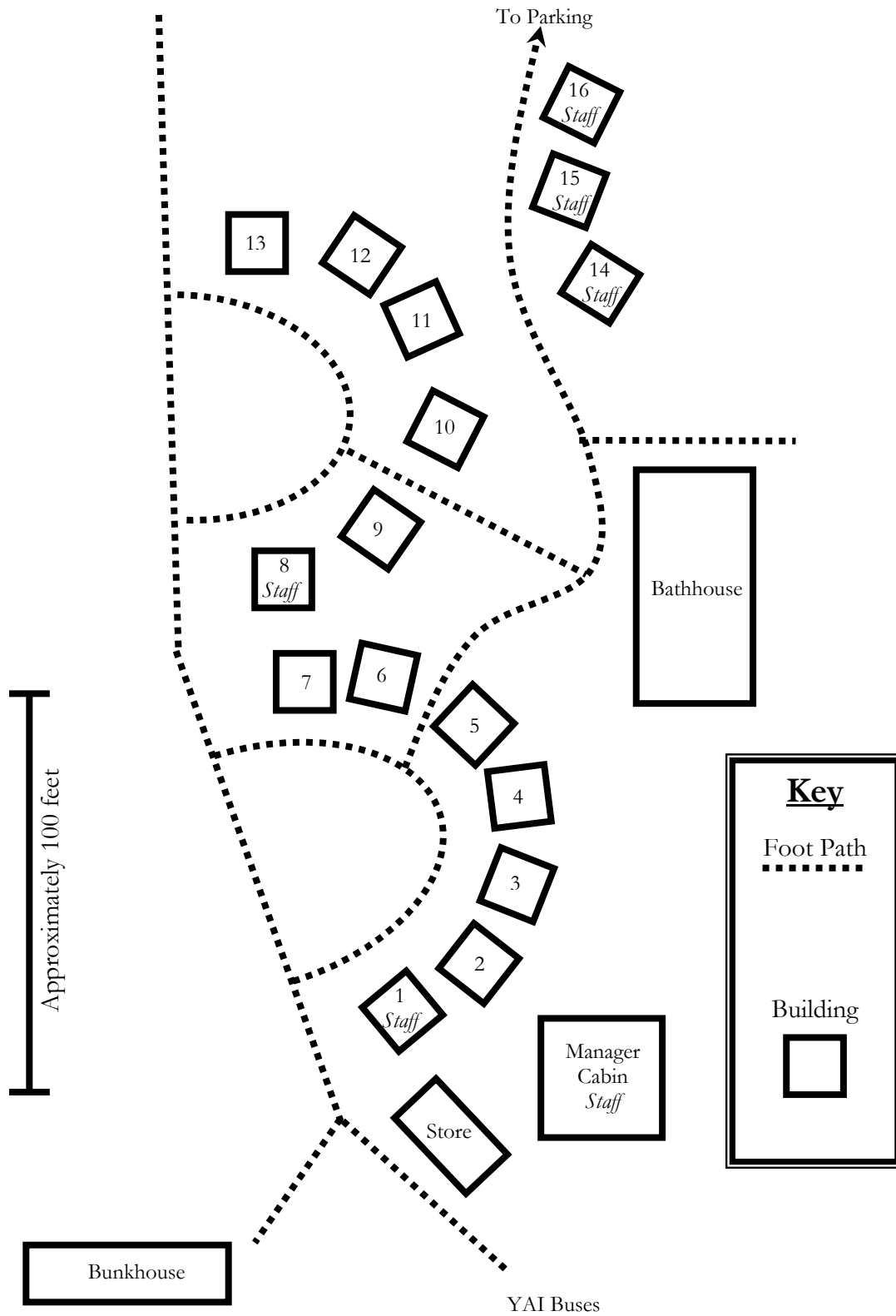
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Map of Yellowstone National Park

The following map illustrates Yellowstone National Park and includes driving distances from nearby cities. Note the Lamar Buffalo Ranch in the upper right region of the map.



Appendix B: Map of Lamar Buffalo Ranch



Appendix C: Cabin Assignment Sheet

Please use the following form to assign cabins. When possible, please limit the number of cabins being used. This will assist with energy conservation and cleanup.

Cabin #	Occupants	Cabin #	Occupants
2	_____	9	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
3	_____	10	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
4	_____	11	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
5	_____	12	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
6	_____	13	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
7	_____	Notes:	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____

Appendix D: Shower Schedule Sheet

As shower facilities at the ranch are limited and must be used by staff and participants, alike, we suggest using the following sheet to plan participant shower schedules. Keep in mind, that at any one time, only three men and three women can shower. This schedule should include chaperones, as well. Please try to keep the schedule balanced between number of people in a.m. and p.m. shifts. For large groups, with more of one gender than the other, we realize balance may be difficult. The format below is suggested, but if you have a different format that would work for your group, please use that.

Men – a.m.		Women – a.m.	
1	_____	1	_____
2	_____	2	_____
3	_____	3	_____
4	_____	4	_____
5	_____	5	_____
6	_____	6	_____
7	_____	7	_____
Men – p.m.		Women – p.m.	
1	_____	1	_____
2	_____	2	_____
3	_____	3	_____
4	_____	4	_____
5	_____	5	_____
6	_____	6	_____
7	_____	7	_____

Appendix E: Kitchen Duty Sheet (Three Days)

Depending on the number of participants, divide the duty assignments evenly for each section. Try to vary the tasks for each person over the course of your program. The format below is suggested, but if you have a different format that would work for your group, please use that.

		Cook Prepare meals and set-up buffets (when used)	KP Wash, dry, and put away dishes and left-over food	Clean-up Clear dirty pots and pans, wipe down tables and chairs, and sweep floors
Day 1	Dinner	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.
Day 2	Breakfast	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
	Lunch	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
	Dinner	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.
Day 3	Breakfast	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
	Lunch	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	Sweep floors, wipe down tables and clean out food 1. 2.
	Check-Out	Everyone cleans out their own cabin (empty garbage and sweep floor)	Sweep classroom 1. 2.	Shake-out rugs and sweep floor in mudroom 1. 2.

Appendix F: Kitchen Duty Sheet (Five Days)

Depending on the number of participants, divide the duty assignments evenly for each section. Try to vary the tasks for each person over the course of your program. The format below is suggested, but if you have a different format that would work for your group, please use that.

		Cook Prepare meals and set-up buffets (when used)	KP Wash, dry, and put away dishes and left-over food	Clean-up Clear dirty pots and pans, wipe down tables and chairs, and sweep floors
Day 1	Dinner	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.
Day 2	Breakfast	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
	Lunch	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
	Dinner	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.
Day 3	Breakfast	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
	Lunch	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
	Dinner	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.
Day 4	Breakfast	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
	Lunch	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

	Dinner	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.
Day 5	Breakfast	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
	Lunch	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	Sweep floors, wipe down tables and clean out food 1. 2.
	Check-Out	Everyone cleans out their own cabin (empty garbage and sweep floor)	Sweep classroom 1. 2.	Shake-out rugs and sweep floor in mudroom 1. 2.