



What to Know Before You Go

Pre-Trip Checklist

- o DATE_____: 50% trip balance paid
- o DATE_____: Liability waiver signed and returned

Guests using the self-service yurt rental should be savvy backcountry travelers with good route finding and snow assessment skills earned through avalanche courses and experience skiing and traveling in avalanche terrain. Montana Alpine Adventures requires a team leader for each group with at least First Aid and AVY 1 certification.

Essential items include:

- Beacon (modern digital, three-antennae beacon strongly recommended), extra batteries, shovel, probe, snow study kit.
- AT, splitboard, or tele bindings, and climbing skins. (No Alpine Trekkers or snowshoes on avy courses please).
- Climbing skin wax.
- Sleeping bag (20-30 degree bag recommended).
- Large daypack or light overnight pack (42 liter approximately).
- Water bottle (Nalgene—bladders freeze)
- Repair kit/tools.
- Cell phone and/or Personal Locator Beacon for emergencies (texts go out at the yurt, full cell service at the lake).
- The yurt has maps, but you should bring your own topos for the approach and pre-trip study. (Potosi Peak and Noble Peak Quads).
- Moleskin and a 1st aid kit; the yurt has a First-Aid kit as well.
- Headlamp +batteries.
- Bring clothing that keeps you warm and dry. We recommend wicking base layers top and bottom, two or three pairs of socks, a fleece or midlayer, a down or synthetic jacket or sweater, a thick down jacket for hanging out on the hill or back at camp, GoreTex or similar pants and

shell, and yurt loungewear (fleece pants and booties). Don't bring too much clothing—the yurt stove will dry your gear.

- I-Pod and 4 AA bats for the I-Pod player.
- Firestarter (matches, lighter, firestarter brick, newspaper, etc)
- At least one roll of paper towels for dishes and cleanup.
- Toilet paper.
- Garbage bags
- **No dogs please.**
- Food--think light and clean. Meals prepared with less mess require less water for dishes, and less time spent cleaning. Pre-pack and prepare your meals to minimize weight and space in your pack.

Getting There:

- The Bell Lake Yurt is located near Bell Lake in the Tobacco Root Mountain Range:

Approximate Coordinates

Latitude; 45°32'19.46"N

Longitude; 111°59'48.14"W

Elevation; 8,482'

- **NOTE:** The last few miles of road are unpaved and can be slick and snowy, particularly during storms. A high-clearance AWD vehicle is highly recommended. If you have chains, bring them—just in case.
- **From Bozeman:** about an hour West – take Interstate 90 to exit 274 (see below) or take Norris Road, Highway 84 from Four Corners to Norris, then right on Route 287 to Harrison, left at Pony Rd.
- **From Helena:** about 90 minutes south via Hwy 287 (see below).
- **From Missoula:** about 2.5 hours, traveling east on Interstate 90 to exit 274 (see below).
- **From Exit 274 off Interstate 90** - travel south on Hwy 287 for approximately 11 miles to Harrison, where you'll turn right on Pony Rd., heading west at the town of Harrison.
- **From Island Park, Ashton, I-15, and Points South:** travel north I-15, North on Hwy ID-87/ MT-87; turn left at Henry's Lake just past Island Park onto Hwy 287; travel 40mi North on 287 to Harrison and turn left (west) onto Pony Rd.
- **From Harrison:** Head west on the Pony Rd for 7 miles and turn left just before you enter the town of Pony onto Potosi Rd. (it's a maintained dirt road). Follow the signs 9 miles toward the Potosi Creek campground. Around the 7-mile mark, you will turn right and the road will turn into Willow Creek Rd. Continue past the Potosi census sign to a left turn at the USFS sign for Potosi Campground. In mid-winter months, this is

where you will begin your adventure to the Bell Lake Yurt.

IMPORTANT: The road above this point is drifted, rutted and very icy, with poor places to turn around. There have been many vehicular shenanigans involving people who wanted to save a small bit of hiking. Don't be THAT guy.

The Hike:

- Total distance from the Potosi Campground parking lot to the yurt is roughly five miles.
- The road from the parking lot to the summer trailhead (2.5 miles) is pretty flat, and affords an easy hike to the Bell Lake trailhead.
- Snowmobile shuttles from the campground to the trailhead are available for guided groups or additional charge. **No snowmobiles past the summer trailhead.**
- From the Trailhead, the skintrack climbs next to Bell Creek and is moderately steep for 2.5 miles to the yurt (gains almost 1,700 vertical feet).
- The approach is pretty straight forward, but please study the Noble Peak and Potosi Peak Quad topos before departing to familiarize yourself with the area.

A Word on Snowmobiles:

- **The entire Bell Lake Basin is closed to motorized winter traffic; if you see a snowmobile, try to get a picture of the registration tag, and report to us and to Gordon Ash at the Madison District of the Beaverhead Deerlodge Forest at 406-682-4253.**
- Unguided groups may bring their own sled to shuttle up the road, but must park it at the Bell Lake Trailhead for these reasons:
 - You can't legally take it all the way to the yurt. There is a gate that marks the motorized boundary on the way in.
 - The Bell Lake trail is narrow, sidehilly, steep, and wind loaded and is not conducive to machine travel.
 - Other groups will be skiing out and an encounter with a machine on the narrow trail could be very dangerous.
 - The sight of snowmobile tracks inevitably invites more recreational sled traffic, which we don't want.
 - It's in the best interest for you, other skiers and riders, and MAA, to keep the snowmobiles below the Bell Lake Trailhead.
- **You cannot, legally or logistically, make it to the yurt by snowmobile.**

Getting Into the Yurt:

- Bell Lake Yurt is locked with a key that lives in the combination lockbox on the door. The combination changes every week or so. PLEASE place the key back in the box and spin the combo immediately upon unlocking the door. **DO NOT LOSE THE KEY!**
- **Your combination is _____.**

(Combo provided via email prior to your trip, once signed liability releases from each traveler and trip agreement is provided)

At the Yurt: IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- **Pee Tree:** Please consolidate the yellow snow! The tree straight outside the front door with the sign is the place to pee. Be sure to take in the view of Branham Peak!
- **Lavatory** A short walk from the yurt—follow the sign. Close the lid and put the hinged wood cover over it when you are done. Hand sanitizer is provided in the yurt
- **Shovel:** Do some shoveling around the yurt and make a path to the lavatory.
- **Gas Stove/Grill:** To light, turn on the propane at the tank, set the stove to LOW, and use a long-stemmed lighter (provided) to light the stove through the holes at burner level. It's a powerful flame so turn it on LOW. Please don't go crazy with the propane—those bottles weight nearly 40 lbs full and are tough to carry up mid-season. Cook whatever you can on the woodstove. Do not use the propane stove to melt snow. Turn the propane off at the tank after every use to prevent a leak or explosion. There is a fire extinguisher next to the kitchen counter.
- **Water:** We're lucky to have a free-flowing stream year-round at Bell Lake—it's much more efficient and quick to use liquid water than melt snow on the woodstove. Collect water with the water bucket at the end of the ribboned trail. You may also scoop snow for melting in the woodstove saddle tank. Snow melts best when you start with a small amount and let it turn to liquid, then add more snow slowly. Do not use the propane stove for melting or heating water.
- **Wood Stove & Fuel:** There are matches, a maul and hatchet for splitting rounds and making kindling. We want you to be as comfortable as possible, but the yurt isn't a sauna—if you are too hot and feel the need to open the door, you are abusing our wood supply. Cutting down additional trees in the dead of winter is dangerous and unpleasant, so please don't burn for the sake of burning. Thank you!
- **Kitchen:** We have tried to anticipate everything you might need and provide quality cookware, cutlery and dinnerware. There are pots and pans, plates, mugs, a coffee percolator, silverware, a full knife set,

- spatulas, etc. Please respect our investment and keep things clean and organized.
- **Dishes:** Use the plastic dish tubs (one for washing, one for rinse), hot soapy water, and a capful of bleach in the rinsewater. Soap and bleach are provided. Strain the wastewater into the Mank Bucket and burn the solid particles in the woodstove. Dump the Mank Bucket (sans food particles—we don't need to attract wolverine or grizzlies) at the Pee Tree. Stack everything neatly in the drying rack when you are done. Don't leave dirty dishes overnight. Wipe down the counters and cook stove with bleach-water.
 - **Food Storage:** Use the cooler and the dry box for food storage. Leave no food out (it'll attract rodents, pine martens, and other unwanted guests).
 - **Emergency Kit:** There is a full First-Aid kit, SAM splint, portable rescue sled and SPOT GPS receiver in the yurt. See the Emergency Response Plan in the yurt binder for specific emergency protocols.
 - **Solar LED Lights:** The switch is on the side of the control box. Please turn the lights off when you go to bed or leave the yurt! In the darker months, we don't get a lot of direct light at the yurt, so try to conserve battery power.
 - **iPod player:** Bring 4 AA bats.
 - **Maps:** There are several in the binder, and a big one that hangs on the yurt wall.
 - **Library:** There is a pretty cool selection of books, games and puzzles for après entertainment. Enjoy!
 - **Trash:** There are trash bags in the kitchen area for packing out your garbage.

Before you leave:

- Checkout is at noon. That means the yurt is completely clean, you are completely packed, and the next group can move in at noon. Leave it better than you found it!
- Don't leave anything—food, magazines, trinkets, the last swig in your huge whiskey bottle—NOTHING. It is not a favor to pass on your leftovers for the next group to pack out!
- Sweep the floor.
- Make a small wood stack with kindling for the next group.
- Please sign the guestbook (black journal on the shelf). We'd love to hear about your adventures and experiences!
- Empty all of the water containers. Blocks of ice aren't useful for new yurt guests.
- Make sure the lights are off.
- Make sure the propane is off at the tank.

- Lock the door.
- **Any self-guided group that leaves the yurt a mess will be assessed a \$100 cleaning/damage fee.** This is a special place. Please respect it so the next group can enjoy it too.

Once you get back:

- Let us know you made it home safe--we do get calls from worried parents/spouses!
- Please inform us of any damage, missing equipment, or stuff that needs refilling.
- Please report accidents, avalanches, and your snowpack evaluations and observations to us. More information is always better.
- Send us sick photos of gnar shredded and pow ripped. We'll make ya' famous in our blog.

Should I tip my guides?

While this is largely a personal decision, many guests do offer a gratuity to their guide for a job well done. Tips are always appreciated. Keep in mind that it is your guide's job, first and foremost, to provide for your well being and bring you back safely. On many trips, this is no small task. At MAA, we also strive for an exceptional guest experience in all aspects of our service. On average, many clients tip between \$30 – 50/ day when they feel the guide has provided them with a safe and enjoyable experience.

THANK YOU for choosing Bell Lake Yurt! We appreciate your patronage and hope you have the time of your life at our little slice of paradise. –*Montana Alpine Adventures*

