



# YELLOWSTONE ASSOCIATION INSTITUTE

P.O. Box 117 Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190 \* 406-848-2400 \* [www.YellowstoneAssociation.org](http://www.YellowstoneAssociation.org)

## YELLOWSTONE'S WINTER SERENGETI: 306

Start: March 22 at 9 a.m.  
End: March 24 at 4 p.m.  
Location: Lamar Buffalo Ranch

Welcome to Yellowstone National Park. If you are a newcomer to the Institute you will be amazed at what awaits you during each day of exploration. If you are a veteran of Institute courses you will know the many perspectives from which learning can take place in this diverse place. Since its inception in 1976, the Institute has evolved into a respected educational program that offers diverse and in-depth study of the Yellowstone area, bringing back instructors and students year after year. We are glad that you are able to join us. Our goal is to provide you with an enjoyable, high-quality educational experience and a safe and memorable time in Yellowstone.

The following information is provided to help you prepare for your course. Please read it thoroughly and call us if you have any questions. We can be reached at 406-848-2400 or [registrar@yellowstoneassociation.org](mailto:registrar@yellowstoneassociation.org). We recommend all first time visitors seek general park information through the National Park Service at 307-344-2107 or [www.nps.gov/yell](http://www.nps.gov/yell).

If you are staying at the Lamar Buffalo Ranch and need to be reached during your class, the number is 307-344-7749. Please make sure to review the last section of this letter for special information on preparing for your stay.

### FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

Technically it is called the Yellowstone Northern Winter Range. Around here that is generally shortened to the Northern Range. But to those who have seen it in the winter and spring, it is at times referred to as Yellowstone's Serengeti. Here, between Round Prairie and Dome Mountain, winter snow depths are not more than two feet and the lower end is often snow free. So it is here the grazing animals ~ elk, bison, deer, bighorns, and pronghorn ~ come. And where the herbivores go the carnivores are sure to follow.

In March winter is starting to wear away. So are the animals. From now until green-up is when winter kill happens. So now the wolves, coyotes, and mountain lions hunt the winter weak. The first bears are up and beginning to stir about. Eagles are seeing to their nests. Even the ground squirrels, underground since August, begin to poke their heads out at lower elevations.

In other words, now is a great time to see critters and to begin to learn the wonders and the intricacies of the Northern Range.

Looking forward to seeing you, I remain...

Y'r af't & ob't ser't

*Jim Garry*

### WHAT TO BRING

1. **Clothing:** It is still winter and we will be out early and late, so bring warm clothing and remember that layering works best; What's comfortable at sunup may be too much at noon.

2. Yes, it is still winter but there isn't much atmosphere between Yellowstone and the sun. i.e. bring sunscreen.
3. The Institute has some spotting scopes but if you have one please bring it. Binoculars and cameras are always appropriate. If you don't have binocs, I'll have a couple of extra pairs.
4. You'll probably want a daypack for all the above gear plus your water bottle.
5. **Footwear:** Boots: something warm enough for standing around but also something to walk in. I trust you to decide if that means one or two pairs. Slippers or the like to wear in the bunkhouse both to keep your feet from getting to hot and to keep the floors dry. Gaiters for outside use are optional.
6. **Notebook:** It is, after all, a class. Have something in which to take notes.

## ITINERARY

### Day 1

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 9 a.m.      | Class begins                                   |
|             | Introductions and class goals                  |
| 9:30 a.m.   | Defining the Northern Range                    |
| 10:30 a.m.  | Break  |
| 10:45 a.m.  | The resident herbivores                        |
| 12 noon     | Lunch  |
| 1 p.m.      | The resident predators                         |
| 2 p.m.      | Break  |
| 2:15 p.m.   | Q & A and break for field preparations         |
| 3 p.m.      | Into the field                                 |
| 6:30–7 p.m. | Back from the field for supper and discussion. |

### Day 2

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 0dark:30    | Early morning critter watch   |
| 8 a.m.      | Back for breakfast  |
| 9 a.m.      | Two possibilities for the day; either we head to the desert, looking for bighorn and pronghorn, or we work the Lamar and Yellowstone. The decision will be based on weather and likely spotting conditions. |
| 6:30–7 p.m. | Back for supper, discussions, and/or stories.   |

### Day 3

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 0dark:30 | Critter watch   |
| 8 a.m.   | Back for breakfast  |
| 9 a.m.   | Out of the Northern Range to look for goats and moose and back into it for whatever we can find.<br>Lunch as Day 2 (but in Cooke City). |
| 4 p.m.   | Back to the Buffalo Ranch and class ends.   |

**All scheduling is subject to change based on the critters, the weather, and the whims of the instructor.**

## 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 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. The Institute will adhere to National Park Service 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 National Park Service 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.

*Thank you for helping us set a good example in Yellowstone!*

### IMPORTANT HEALTH INFORMATION

Most of Yellowstone is above 7000 feet. Environmental conditions can be extreme and can affect any medical conditions you may have, as well as your general health. If you are coming from a much lower elevation, it's smart to allow yourself an easy day to "adjust" rather than risk altitude sickness by beginning with a full, active day immediately. Please refer to our website and the enclosed health questionnaire for detailed information on how specific medical conditions can be affected by Yellowstone's environment and our activities:

[www.yellowstoneassociation.org/institute/visitingGuide/health.aspx](http://www.yellowstoneassociation.org/institute/visitingGuide/health.aspx)

### PARK STORE

Our Park Store features more than 600 books, maps and videos to help you plan your visit, along with a wide selection of shirts, hats, and other logo items to remind you of your time in Yellowstone. Members of the Yellowstone Association receive a 15% discount. Proceeds help support education and research in the park. Visit:

[www.yellowstoneassociation.org/store](http://www.yellowstoneassociation.org/store)

### GENERAL CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST

Much of your time will be spent outdoors and all programs are held rain, snow or shine. You should be prepared for a variety of mountain weather conditions and temperatures. Appropriate clothing, equipment, and footwear are very important. Winter temperatures can range from below zero in the mornings to 35 degrees Fahrenheit in the early afternoons. Summer temperatures can range from below freezing in the mornings to 85 degrees in the early afternoons. The layered use of garments for protection against the wind, sun, and temperature extremes should guide your clothing choices. Loose fitting layers 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.

#### Equipment:

- Daypack.** with enough capacity to carry extra clothes, water, lunch, camera, binoculars, field guides, etc.
- Water bottle.** One quart is the minimum recommended. Camelback or similar hydration systems work well in summer but can freeze in winter.
- Sunglasses**
- Sunscreen/lip protector.** Sun at high altitude can burn unprotected skin quickly.
- Camera, binoculars**
- Notebook/pencil**

- ☐ **Pocket hand and foot warmers** – recommended November through March.

### **Winter Clothing:**

- ☐ **Insulating underwear.** Capilene, polypropylene, or similar. Should have ability to wick moisture away from the body.
- ☐ **Midweight insulating layer.** A light 200-weight synthetic fleece or wool shirt/pullover.
- ☐ **Heavyweight insulating layer.** Can be wool, down, heavy-weight fleece, or other synthetic fabric. A heavy winter coat with a water resistant shell will suffice for less active courses.
- ☐ **Waterproof and windproof outer layer.** Should be breathable if possible. Both jacket and pants are recommended.
- ☐ **Pants.** Wool or fleece pants or tights. Absolutely NO cotton.
- ☐ **Hat.** Insulated hat that covers your ears.
- ☐ **Gloves.** Lightweight glove liners, and a pair of heavy wool/fleece gloves or mittens. A water and windproof outer layer is recommended. Consider also **hand and foot warmers.**
- ☐ **Synthetic or wool neck warmer** or neck gaiter.
- ☐ **Socks.** A lightweight liner with heavyweight synthetic or wool socks.
- ☐ **Gaiters** Knee-high ones to keep the snow out of your boots and to keep your socks and pants dry.
- ☐ **Insulated boots.** Must have water repellent layers outside, thick insulation inside, and be large enough to fit over thick socks. (Tight boots are the surest way to get painfully cold feet.) ***General hiking boots will not provide adequate insulation in most cases.***
- ☐ **Off-duty shoes.** Slippers or moccasins for the Lamar Valley Buffalo Ranch. Other comfortable footwear to wear inside and out when not in the field.

## **LIFE AT THE LAMAR BUFFALO RANCH**

### **What you need to bring:**

Cabin: Sleeping bag, pillow, extra blanket (if you like), non-electric alarm clock, flashlight.

Bathroom: The facility includes a heated bathhouse with showers and restrooms. Please bring a towel and washcloth, toiletries.

Food: Meals should be kept fairly simple since space is limited and participants share cooking facilities. The kitchen is equipped with two gas stoves, a microwave, and toaster. Basic cooking and eating utensils (plates, silverware, etc. are provided. Spices, coffee, sugar, and creamer are also provided.

Phone: There is NO cell phone reception in Lamar Valley. Please bring a calling card to use with the phone in the bunkhouse.

**What you don't need to bring:** Salt and pepper, dish and hand soap, dish towel, coffee, sugar, creamer, and basic cooking and eating utensils.

**What you should not bring to Lamar:** Because of the isolated locale, the back-to-basics life style, the lack of electrical outlets in cabins, and the ambience of the park environment, the following items are impractical or inappropriate: tape players, radios, TV's, or other electrical appliances such as crock pots, pancake griddles, or hair dryers. The entire facility operates on solar power and a generator system. We ask that you do not use high-load electrical appliances like hair dryers or curling irons.

**Volunteer Program Assistants:** Institute courses and facilities benefit from the hard work and generosity of a team of seasonal volunteer program assistants. You'll likely meet one or more of our program assistants hosting your program. Our program assistants receive professional training in Wilderness First Aid, emergency response and procedures, and bus driving. They help with course logistics, cleaning and maintenance of facilities. If you need anything, just ask. Our program assistants are happy to help!

**Arrival and Check-in:** Come to the main building with the Institute sign on it. We call this building the "Bunkhouse", and it includes two classrooms, a self-service kitchen area, and bathroom facilities. There is a bulletin board in the kitchen where course rosters and cabin assignment sheets are posted. A staff person will be available to

greet and orient you to the facility. Check-in is between **4 and 8 p.m.** the day of your arrival. **Note:** We recommend that you plan your arrival at the facility before dark so that you can orient yourself to the facility. If you must arrive after 8 p.m., please call the bunkhouse at 307-344-7749 and let us know when we can expect you. After 8 p.m. there may not be a program assistant available to check you in. If no one is there to greet you, please find your cabin assignment on the bulletin board in the kitchen, and we'll be happy to greet you the following morning. ***Check-out is by 9 a.m. the day of your departure.***

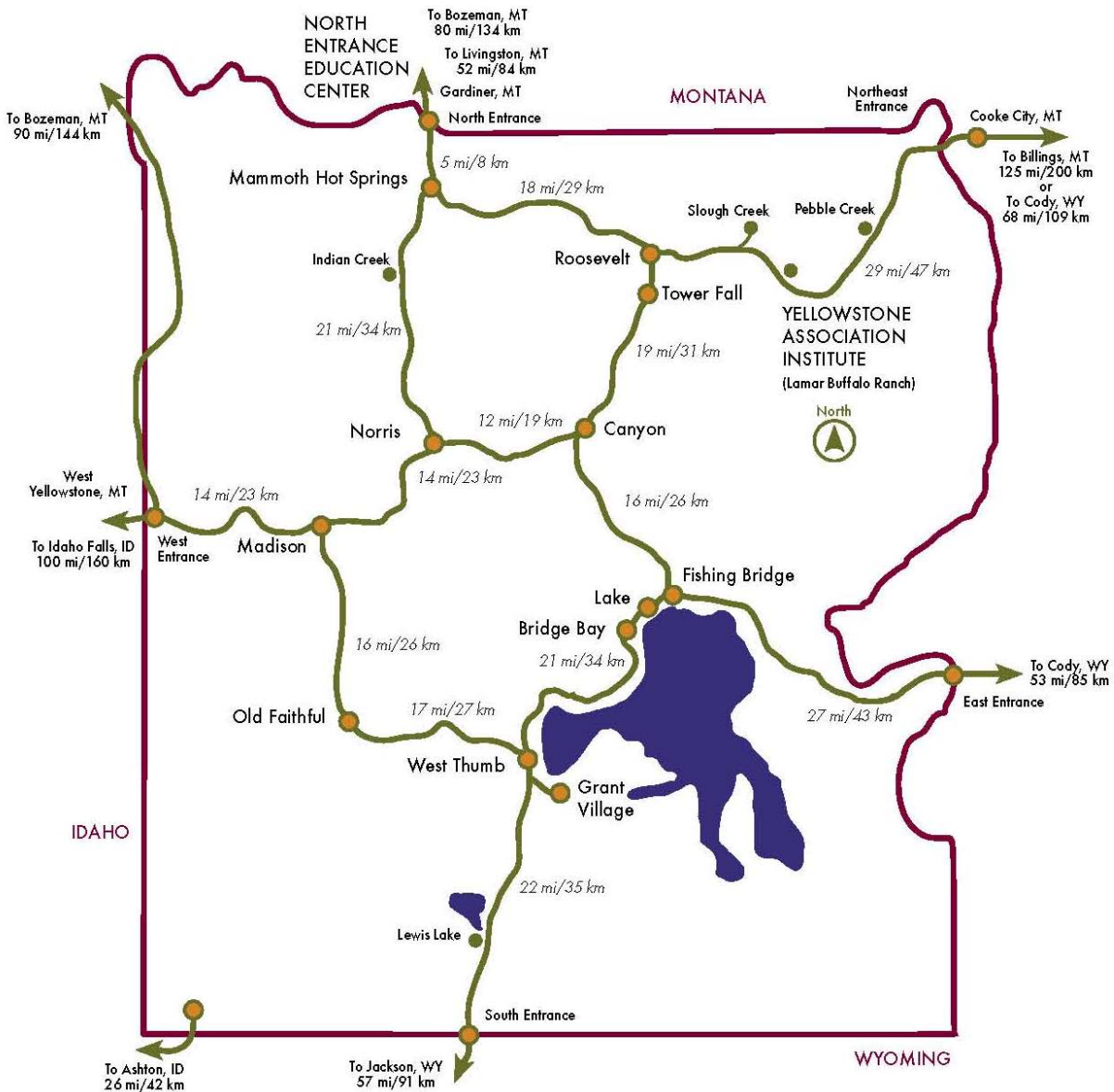
**Cabins:** We hope you find the sleeping cabins rustic, yet comfortable and adequate. Please do not eat or leave food in the cabins. It attracts mice, ground squirrels, and maybe bigger wildlife. Stoves, lanterns, or heaters cannot be used in or around the cabins. Cabins have lights for reading and are heated as necessary, but there are no outlets for appliances. Cabins contain three beds. Participants may be sharing cabins with others.

**The “Bunkhouse”:** This historic building is the center of activity, housing two classrooms, the kitchen area, and two bathrooms. The kitchen is a community area where every one does their own cooking and pitches in to help with dishes and clean up. Due to congestion in the refrigerators, it is especially important that you minimize the amount of food and beverage being stored at any given time and that you remove all your food upon departure. The bunkhouse is open at all times for phone and restroom use, or a midnight snack. We encourage you to make yourself at home in the bunkhouse, meet new people, and, most of all, enjoy your experience. In the winter, the first classroom is used as a mudroom. There are coat racks so that coats and boots can be left by the door. Be sure to bring a pair of slippers or moccasins to wear in the bunkhouse.

Camping is not allowed: the National Park Service strictly forbids camping or RV use at the Lamar facility. Two NPS campgrounds are within a short drive from the Institute.

**Pets are not allowed:** Due to health and safety considerations, students are not allowed to bring pets to the Lamar. Kennels are available in neighboring towns. <http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/pets.htm>

## TRAVEL INFORMATION



**NOTE:** The only road open in the winter (early November to mid-April) is the road from the North Entrance to the Northeast Entrance. All other roads are closed to wheeled vehicles. The road from Cooke City to Billings, MT is also closed. You must enter the park through Gardiner, MT.

### Airports Distances/Travel Times To Lamar Buffalo Ranch Field Campus

From Billings, MT	via Red Lodge	143 miles, 3.5 hours
	via Livingston	207 miles, 3.75 hours
From Bozeman, MT	via Livingston	118 miles, 2.5 hours
From Cody, WY	via East Entrance	126 miles, 3 hours
	via Northeast Entrance	84 miles, 2.25 hours
From Idaho Falls, ID	via West Entrance	240 miles, 4.5 hours
From Jackson, WY	via South Entrance	146 miles, 3.5 hours
From West Yellowstone, MT	via West Entrance	70 miles, 2 hours

Plan on extra driving time in the park. The speed limit is 45 mph or lower. There may also be construction delays. Visit [www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/hours.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/hours.htm), call the National Park Service at 307-344-2107, or check in at a visitor center for up-to-date travel information.