



YELLOWSTONE FOREVER

YELLOWSTONE BACKCOUNTRY SKILLS

Itinerary & Details

FIELD SEMINAR - SUMMER 2023

INSTRUCTOR: Orville E. Bach, Jr. Ed.D; Debra Dirksen, Ph.D.; John Dirksen, M.S.

INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHIES: **Orville Bach** has worked for the National Park Service as a Seasonal Interpretive Ranger for 47 years, mostly in Yellowstone, and is currently serving as a backcountry volunteer in Yellowstone. He is the author of *Exploring the Yellowstone Backcountry*, *Tracking the Spirit of Yellowstone: Recollections of Thirty-One Years as a Seasonal Ranger*, and *Reflections from Yellowstone and Beyond*. He has traveled Yellowstone's backcountry during all seasons, including an 18-day wilderness ski trip through the park.

John and Debra Dirksen have spent almost every summer in Yellowstone's backcountry for the past 40+ years, often serving as volunteers. The two met at Old Faithful Inn in 1984 and married 8 months later. They have had many Yellowstone backcountry adventures in the following 38 summers in Yellowstone. Dr. Debra Dirksen is the Dean of Education at the University of Western New Mexico. She is well known for her backcountry cooking skills and style. John Dirksen has taught classes in backpacking and has spent 55 summers backpacking the trails of the Yellowstone ecosystem and many trails of surrounding forest lands. The summer of his 73rd birthday, he reached a total of 25,000 miles backpacking in Yellowstone! John and Debra have been volunteering for the Yellowstone Backcountry Office for the last 15 years as "Backcountry Cabin Specialists" and enjoy every moment they get to spend time in the park.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: This course is an activity **level 4** and students enrolled in this course are expected to be active participants. Be prepared to hike up to 8 miles per day, at a brisk pace, comfortably, with climbs up to 1500 feet on dirt trails. Loose rocks, uneven footing, and off-trail hiking are possible. Good coordination is recommended.*

*All field activities will be conducted as a group. If you cannot meet the activity level expectations during your program, you may be restricted from participation in daily outings. We will not alter program itineraries or activities to accommodate participants who cannot meet the expectations of the stated activity level.

LOCATION: Lamar Buffalo Ranch – Yellowstone National Park, WY

PROGRAM DATES & TIMES: The program begins at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 25, and ends on Tuesday, June 27, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.

LODGING CHECK-IN & CHECK-OUT: Lodging check-in begins at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 25, 2023, and lodging check-out is at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 28, 2023.

MEALS: You will need to bring your own food; lunch should be able to travel in the field with you.

For general information about the facilities, preparing for classes, what to expect, cancellation policies, and more, please see the [Lamar Buffalo Ranch - Summer General Information](#) document.

FROM THE INSTRUCTORS

Welcome! This Yellowstone Forever Institute program will introduce you to the skills necessary to explore and enjoy Yellowstone's backcountry. Your instructors together have about 150 years of experience backpacking in Yellowstone, both on and off trail. No, we didn't come in with the Hayden Expedition, but we weren't far behind. We intend to share our many years of hard-earned lessons and experience with you on the critical skills that will give you the best chance of safely enjoying traveling and navigating the wild Yellowstone backcountry. These include the proper gear and equipment, how to navigate by map and compass, hiking and camping in grizzly country, no-trace camping techniques, proper use of a campfire where permitted, cooking techniques, and an introduction to some delicious meals courtesy of your camp cook extraordinaire Dr. Dirksen.

On our first evening after introductions, we will have an orientation to the course, which will include map reading and use of a compass.

The next day we will put to use our map reading and compass skills by running some off trail courses to some beautiful and wild backcountry destinations. This will be our longest day as we travel about 8-10 miles and climb about 800 feet, weather permitting. Along the way your instructors will stop to interpret some of the fascinating human and natural history all around us. We hope to see wildlife but we most assuredly will see some incredible wildflower displays.

We will return to the Buffalo Ranch and after dinner gather at the firepit to spin some hair-raising tales of adventures and misadventures in the Yellowstone wilderness. Your instructors have had many but we will enjoy our participants sharing stories as well.

On our last day we will hike cross country to a small lake and on this site your instructors will demonstrate how to set up camp in bear country. We will discuss in detail topics such as proper gear—clothing, tents, backpacks, cook stoves, etc. Our camp cook Dr. Dirksen will demonstrate her exquisite skills and with luck, she will share some of her culinary delights with our group! We will discover some hidden gems on our hike on the way out and return to the Buffalo Ranch by 4:00 p.m.

Since all of our travels will be off-trail, good hiking boots are strongly recommended. Soft shoes, such as sneakers, are not suitable for off-trail travel. Be sure to bring a nice-sized daypack and warm layered clothing and rain gear. Yellowstone's weather is wonderfully unpredictable. Also plan to pack a lunch.

Our goals for this course include:

- To show you how to read and interpret a U.S. Geological Survey topographical map
- To teach you all the key features of a good compass
- To explain the desired features to look for in selecting a compass for purchase
- To show you how to set a compass bearing
- To demonstrate how to follow a compass bearing in the field
- To use our map and compass skills to locate several backcountry sites, such as lakes, streams, and viewpoints.
- To demonstrate proper clothing, tents, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, cook stoves and backpacks.
- To demonstrate how to properly hike and camp in bear country
- How to be a "leave no trace" hiker, backpacker and camper
- How to properly utilize a campfire where permitted
- How to prepare convenient meals

We look forward to seeing you for our adventure in Yellowstone's backcountry!

Orville "Butch" Bach
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PROGRAM EQUIPMENT

For a full list of recommended equipment for all courses see the [Lamar Buffalo Ranch - Summer General Information](#) document.

Required:

- 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 May.
- Flashlight/Headlamp**, a small light for walking to and from your cabin in the evenings and mornings.
- Alarm**, so you're on time for the day's activities.
- Summer Clothing:**
- Insulating underwear**, capilene, polypropylene, or similar wicking fabric.
- Midweight insulating layer**, light, 200-weight synthetic fleece or wool shirt/pullover.
- Heavyweight insulating layer**, wool, down, or heavy-weight fleece jacket, for less-active times.
- Waterproof and windproof outer layer**, lightweight and breathable. Jackets and pants are recommended.
- Short sleeved shirt**, cotton okay in summer, but synthetic wicking shirts are ideal.
- Pants**, synthetic hiking pants, lightweight pile/fleece pants or tights or similar. Jeans are not recommended.
- Hats**, both a brimmed sun hat and an insulating hat for cool weather.
- Gloves**, lightweight glove liners and a pair of wool/fleece gloves or mittens.
- Socks**, light wool or synthetic liner sock with heavier wool or synthetic outer sock. The inner-outer sock combination helps prevent blistering, wicks moisture and reduces friction. Cotton socks do not wick moisture and are not recommended.
- Hiking boots**, that provide stability, traction, and comfort. Unless you've consistently hiked in athletic shoes, bring boots that provide ankle support.
- Off-duty shoes**, sandals, athletic shoes, or other leisure footwear.

Optional:

- Magnifying glass or hand lens
- Camera
- Binoculars

WHOM TO CONTACT

For any questions, concerns, or additional information please contact the following:

- Program itinerary, health forms, payment, and activity questions please contact Yellowstone Forever at institute@yellowstone.org or 406-848-2400
- Road updates, park conditions, and general park information please contact Yellowstone National Park Service at <https://www.nps.gov/yell/contacts.htm>
- If running late for a program, please contact 406-848-2400