



**YMCA
OF THE
ROCKIES**



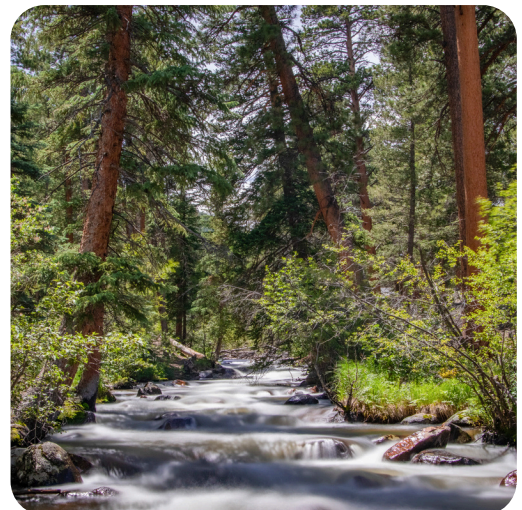
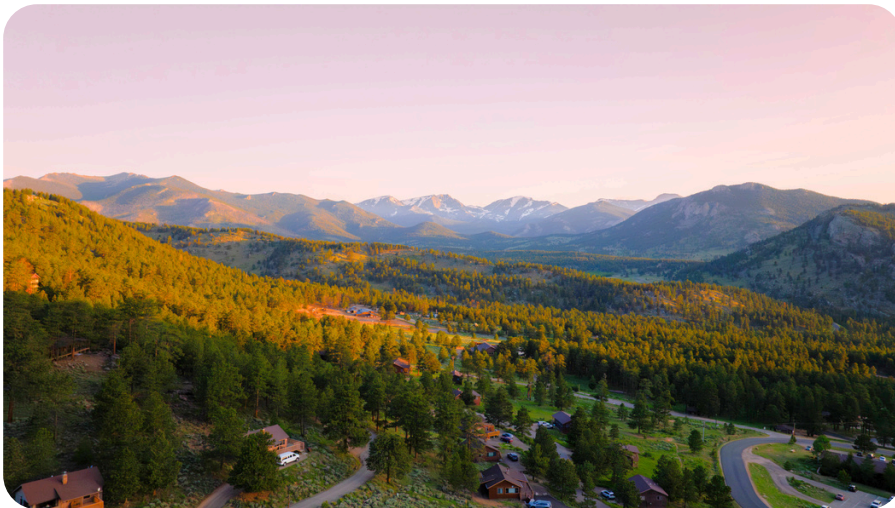
**YMCA OF THE ROCKIES
ESTES PARK CENTER
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
TEACHER PLANNING GUIDE
2026-2027**

ymcarockies.org



DISCOVER THE Y

The YMCA of the Rockies boasts 860 acres of educational playground. The property sits at an elevation of 8,010 feet with montane forests, riparian zones, active wildlife, and access to Rocky Mountain National Park!



MAKING A RESERVATION



- 1) Contact The Group Sales Department to reserve your lodging and issue a contract for the agreed upon dates.
****A deposit is required to reserve your booking dates****
- 2) Pay deposit, sign and return contract to the Group Sales Department.
- 3) After the deposit has been paid and contract signed, Group Sales will turn the contract over to the Conference Department who will work with the Group Leader on lodging, meal packages, meeting room assignments, and any other special requests.
- 4) Contact EE Department to choose classes and recreation activities.
- 5) The Environmental Education Department will issue a program confirmation listing your itinerary and programming charges (you will receive a separate contract from the Conference Department for meals and lodging charges).
- 6) Review ALL the details of the program permit to ensure that it works for your school's schedule.

CONTACT INFORMATION

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

For class and programs itinerary & general questions:

Ethan Reed

Environmental Education Director
e.reed@ymcarockies.org | 970-586-3341 x1106

CONFERENCE DEPARTMENT

For meals, lodging information, and payment:

Sandra Torres

storres@ymcarockies.org | 970-586-3341 x1073

GROUP SALES DEPARTMENT

For initial lodge booking:

Olivia Divish

odivish@ymcarockies.org | 970-586-3341 x1067

LODGING INFORMATION

EASTSIDE LODGES

Each room includes 1 queen bed, 2 sets of bunk beds, private 3/4 bath, and a landline phone. Towels and linens are provided. Most school groups will assign 5 people per room. Schools can reserve a meeting room in or near their lodge to store luggage and other supplies. The Conference Department will send you a room roster which is due before you arrive. Please do this well ahead of time to ensure the Conference Department has time to give you the room assignments you want.



It is important to keep chaperone assignments in mind – some schools prefer to place chaperones in rooms with students, while others will have chaperone rooms placed in between other student rooms. Quiet hours are between 11 PM and 7 AM; we ask that chaperones help ensure that students respect those hours.

NURSE AND MEDICATION NEEDS

YMCA of the Rockies does not have a nurse on property. If your school is bringing a nurse, let the Conference Department know and if needed, we can provide a mini-fridge to store medications in a desired room. Environmental Education staff are not permitted to issue medication for any students.

ROOM KEYS

Each room will have two keys. It's suggested that a chaperone carry one key for designated rooms, while the Group Leader carry the other copy in case of emergencies.

MEALS



ASPEN DINING HALL

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served every day in an all-you-can-eat buffet-style dining hall. Morning meals include fresh fruit and hot breakfast options, while lunch and dinner offer a fresh salad bar with healthy toppings and a wide variety of great entrees. While in the dining hall, students must be supervised at all times. Please be courteous and respectful of other guests staying on property. Schools are not assigned specific meal times. You are free to visit the dining hall during the following times:

BREAKFAST 7AM-9AM

LUNCH 11AM-1PM

DINNER 5PM-7:30PM



FOOD AND BEVERAGES

Chaperones are responsible for monitoring food lines and drink stations. Students may not be accustomed to the high elevation and increased levels of activity during classes, so we strongly encourage students to drink water, eat balanced meals, and appropriate portion sizes. We recognize times of transitions for students can be difficult for group management. By facilitating the food and drink lines, you can help to create a smoother dining experience.

DIETARY RESTRICTIONS

Our dining hall is not an allergy-free facility. We cannot guarantee no cross-contamination, and our food is served buffet style. If you have students with severe food allergies, we recommend having them bring their own food.

GROUP LEADER CHECKLIST

AS FAR AHEAD OF TIME AS POSSIBLE

- Be sure you are booked! Contact Group Sales to ensure your lodging is confirmed, the Conference Office to set up meals & room assignments, and the Environmental Education team to set up your class & program schedule!
- Begin to recruit chaperones. **We require one chaperone per group of 15 students.** While we welcome as many adults as can attend, we find that more than 3 chaperones per group of 15 students can be counterproductive to the learning environment during lesson times.
- Reach out to the Environmental Education Director to schedule classes and activities.

AT LEAST 4 WEEKS PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

- Check that all students have signed waivers.
- Inform EE Director (Ethan) & Conference Office (Sandra) of any change in student numbers, and any students with special needs.
- Send Sandra the Room Roster.
- Contact Sandra for any questions about lodging, meals, and meeting room details.
- Optional (but recommended): Have a student/parent/chaperone orientation and informational meeting at your school. We are happy to provide any information you need ahead of time to assist with this.

DAY OF ARRIVAL

Group Leader must check in at the Administration Building to check into rooms. If rooms are not ready students and chaperones will go to their designated meeting room to drop off luggage until lodge rooms are ready. Before class begins, make sure students have eaten lunch and are prepared for their class with a backpack, appropriate clothing, a full water bottle, and have gone to the bathroom.

Meet at the Boone Family Mountain Center at 1:00 PM for orientation with the Environmental Education team and your first class.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION TEAM



The mission of the YMCA of the Rockies Environmental Education program is to provide high quality, standards-based educational programs that promote an appreciation of the outdoors, provide hands-on learning activities, and give students the skills and knowledge to continue learning after they leave our program.

ECOLOGY & SCIENCE

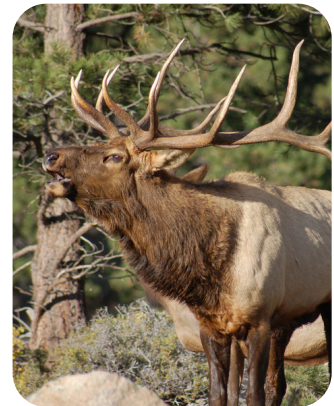
COST IS \$110 PER GROUP OF 15 STUDENTS PER CLASS

All classes are three hours long and meet Colorado State and Next Generation Science Standards. Colorado state middle school standards have been listed. More details about classes and standards are available from the Environmental Education Director upon request! All classes involve plenty of walking, but can be adapted to accommodate your needs.

ELK ECOLOGY (FALL ONLY)

Explore the world of Rocky Mountain elk! Students will participate in several hands-on activities to learn about elk biology, herding dynamics, habitat requirements for survival, and seasonal behavior changes. Students will observe elk in their natural environment, discuss predator/prey interactions, and witness a population's impact on the ecosystem. While Elk are common here in the fall, we cannot guarantee Elk sightings.

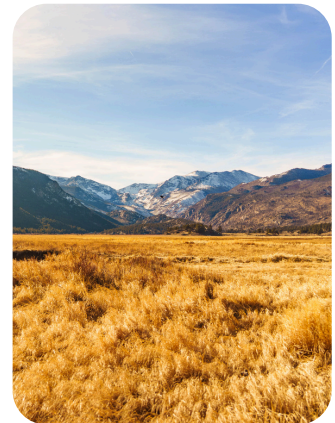
CO Middle School Standards: SC.MS.2.4, 2.5, & 2.7



GLACIOLOGY

Students will learn about the geologic forces that created the Rocky Mountains, including tectonic plate movement, weathering and erosion, and glaciation. Students will be able to learn firsthand about glacier activity and climate change, as they hike a 3.5 mile trail to see how the glaciers that carved the Rocky Mountains left their mark, and evidence left over from the most recent ice age 16,000 years ago!

CO Middle School Standards: SC.MS.3.6 & 3.11



ANIMAL TRACKING (SPRING ONLY)

Students in this lesson will learn about the forest ecosystem surrounding YMCA of the Rockies, and how animals interact with their environment. On a short hike, students will learn how to identify animal gait patterns, scat, marks, footprints, and measure the animal's stride and straddle. Students participate in several hands-on activities that utilize their senses and field observation skills.

CO Middle School Standards: SC.MS.2.5, 2.7, & 2.12



WATER ECOLOGY

Students will discover the elements that make for a healthy watershed by conducting water sample tests and collecting macro-invertebrates. Instructors will facilitate discussion of the human role in our water system and the importance of a healthy aquatic ecosystem. Students are given the opportunity to get in the water, depending on river flow at that time in the season (the rivers run high in May). Waterproof rubber boots are supplied.



CO Middle School Standards: SC.MS.3.10, 3.6

FIRE ECOLOGY

Students will learn how fire moves through a forest by using fire boards to demonstrate how different kinds of fires burn, as well as fire mitigation strategies to keep themselves and their communities safe. Then, students will be able to investigate fires that have happened in and around YMCA grounds by making observations, and studying tree cookies.



CO Middle School Standards: SC.MS.3.4

PEOPLE AND EARTH

Through throwing Atlatls and panning for gold, students will learn about the sustainability of communities past and present, and how they interact with the Earth's environment. By studying how our relationship to nature has changed over time, from the earliest days of human settlement in North America to modern times, students will be able to identify problems and solutions to overcoming challenges related to natural resource and community sustainability.

CO Standards: SS.6.1.2 & SS.6.2.2.

TEAM BUILDING & ADVENTURE RECREATION

COST IS \$110 PER GROUP OF 15 STUDENTS PER CLASS

OUTDOOR LIVING SKILLS

Students will learn the importance of survival skills that will keep them safe in case of an emergency in the wilderness, such as how to prevent getting lost, what to do in the event that they do become lost, and crucial skills for surviving an unexpected night in the woods. In addition, students will have the opportunity to practice building awesome survival shelters! Please note that this is not an overnight camping class.

CO Standards: PE.6.1.2, 3.2, & 4.1.

LOW ROPES TEAM BUILDING COURSE

Team building is a class designed for students to encounter several physical and cognitive challenges that foster growth in each individual through working with others. Elements may involve balancing on wires or swinging on ropes, and ground initiative activities. These activities are designed with safety in mind and require students and teachers to learn and implement proper spotting techniques. After completing each element, students participate in group discussion about the core competencies of team building, including communication, cooperation, goal-setting, problem solving and trust. **Closed toe shoes are required.**

CO Standards: PE.6.1.2, 1.3, 3.2, 3.3, & 4.1.

AERIAL CHALLENGE COURSE

MUST BE 4'10", FALL ONLY
\$350 PER GROUP OF 15 STUDENTS

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION AND CHALLENGE BY CHOICE

Guided by our course facilitators, students will learn problem-solving techniques and build self-confidence while securely locked in to our course 30+ feet above the ground in the canopy of a Ponderosa forest.

Closed toed shoes are required. Weather-dependent. Refunds issued in case of cancellation. Check with Environmental Education Director for availability.



EVENING PROGRAMS

Guided evening programs are offered on one night of your stay between 7–9pm. Program costs are:

Evening Hike (1 hour): \$75 per group of 15 students

Guided Campfire (1 hour): \$75 per group of 15 students

Evening Hike and Campfire (2 hours): \$110 per group of 15 students

Programs are subject to cancellation due to weather, fire bans, red flag warnings, etc.

EVENING HIKE

In this one-hour evening class, students will learn that not all animals go to sleep when the sun goes down. Students will participate in engaging sensory activities and learn about the amazing adaptations that allow creatures of the night to survive. If students are lucky (and quiet!), they may even be able to see an animal in its natural nighttime habitat. Hikes are well supervised and safety precautions are strictly enforced. Hiking routes are chosen carefully so as to be easily navigated by our target age groups and typically cover no more than one mile of ground.

Closed-toed shoes are required.



GUIDED CAMPFIRE

Led by our energetic and creative staff, the campfire sessions at the YMCA are a chance for your kids to celebrate, laugh, act, sing, and have a blast!

Our instructors lead students in sing-a-longs, performs skits, and spin some great campfire tales! This is a great opportunity for teachers and chaperones to make s'mores. Please note, however, that the YMCA does not provide s'more supplies. Unguided campfires are available at a reduced price if you would like to have a campfire without YMCA Staff. Campfires may be cancelled due to high wind, fire restrictions, or inclement weather.



RECREATION ACTIVITIES

In addition to our Environmental Education classes, we invite you to explore all the advantages of the YMCA's 860 acres of land! Our large open space on the Administration Field provides endless opportunities to play games like kickball, tag, volleyball, outdoor basketball, mini-golf, gaga ball and more. Schedule time for students to roller skate, or swim in our indoor pool. See below for a complete list of our recreation programming.

ADMINISTRATION FIELD

Take advantage of our views and beautiful weather by playing on our main Administration Field, where you may find:

- Basketball Courts
- Kickball/Softball Field
- Mini-Golf
- Sand Volleyball
- Gaga Ball
- Horseshoes & Cornhole
- Pickleball & Tennis



*The Kickball field is a reservable space – please inquire about reservation with EE Director.

ROLLERSKATING

Roller skating is offered in the South end of Longhouse Gym. Roller skates and fun dance music provided; bring your own smiles! The skating rink, complete with sound system and disco ball, can even be reserved for a dance or other special occasion. Skating can be booked privately up to one hour per 80 students– roller skates provided. Reservations are \$110 per hour.

SWIMMING POOL

Our heated indoor swimming pool can be reserved for an hour for up to 80 students at a time. Please arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled pool time begins to go over rules and regulations with lifeguards before entering the pool. Please make sure all students come prepared with proper swim wear – towels are provided. Reservations are \$110 per hour.

***During lightning storms, the pool must close.** If this occurs, we cannot guarantee rescheduled private swim time. Please understand that on busy evenings you may be asked to exit the water to allow time to dress and exit the pool building at the end of your scheduled hour.

RECREATION ACTIVITIES

FIRE RING

For only \$35, reserve one of our campfire rings to lead your own campfire, reflection time, or s'mores! Each fire ring can be reserved for up to 2 hours. Firewood and fire starter can be purchased at the front desk, or at the Sweet Memorial Building.



LONGHOUSE GYM

The longhouse gym has indoor basketball and volleyball courts for guests at the YMCA to use. It is reservable by schools on most evenings – inquire with EE Director about availability. Reservations are \$110 per hour.



ARCHERY

Archery sessions are 1 hour long and may be available upon request. Inquire with EE Director about availability and pricing.



ROCK CLIMBING

Rock Climbing sessions are 1 hour long and may be available upon request. Inquire with EE Director about availability and pricing.



DISC GOLF

Enjoy a nice stroll around the property while playing our scenic 18-hole disc golf course. This is a wonderful activity for small groups. Discs and maps can be found at Sweet Memorial Building. A cash deposit is required for discs.

MINI-GOLF

When the weather is nice, a round of mini golf is just what your group may need! We offer a traditional 18-hole course and one 9-hole course for younger golfers. Mini golf is open to all guests until 9:00 p.m. Golf supplies may need to be picked up at Sweet Memorial or the golf shack, depending on the season. Contact EE Director for more info.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE



Below is an example of what your activity schedule might look like. For a two-night stay, we'll schedule four of our 3-hour classes, an evening recreation activity such as roller skating, swimming, or the gym, and an evening program typically consisting of a hike and campfire.

Classes are always from 9AM-12 PM and 1-4 PM, and evening programs from 7-9 PM, typically on Tuesday or Thursday.

Meal times are up to you, with the exception of lunch in between classes – dining hall hours typically are breakfast from 7-9 AM, lunch from 11 AM to 1 PM, and dinner from 5 to 7:30 PM, but are subject to change.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23	1-4PM	LOW ROPES	(MOUNTAIN CENTER)
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23	6:30-7:30PM	ROLLER SKATING	(LONGHOUSE RINK)
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24	9AM-12PM	OUTDOOR LIVING SKILLS	(MOUNTAIN CENTER)
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24	1-4PM	FIRE ECOLOGY	(MOUNTAIN CENTER)
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24	7-8PM	EVENING HIKE	(MEET AT THE LODGE)
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24	8-9PM	CAMPFIRE	(MAIN CAMPFIRE RING)
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25	9AM-12PM	WATER ECOLOGY	(MOUNTAIN CENTER)

Remember that the total cost of programs for your trip will depend on the amount of student groups of 15. The pricing is per group of 15 students. A school with the schedule shown above, with 60 students, would have a total programming cost of \$2310.

Class 1 (Low Ropes): \$110 x 4 groups

Class 2 (Outdoor Living Skills): \$110 x 4 groups

Class 3 (Fire Ecology): \$110 x 4 groups

Class 4 (Water Ecology): \$110 x 4 groups

Evening Program (Hike and Campfire): \$110 x 4 groups

Skating Rink Reservation: \$110

*Pricing subject to change

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRIP

SCHOOL GOALS

It's important to know what you'd like your students to get out of your trip. Depending whether you visit at the beginning or the end of the school year, you may have different goals in mind. All of our core classes meet state standards and can supplement what you're learning in the classroom! Whatever the focus, our aim is always to provide an ideal environment for student-led exploration with a foundation of learning and community. Please let us know how we can support your goals!

TIME OF ARRIVAL

Schools should arrive with sufficient time to check in, drop off luggage, and ensure students are prepared for their first class. Be sure to factor in walking time from place to place. It can be helpful for the Group Leader to arrive before the students to check in at the Administration Building, pick up keys, and be ready to greet students off the bus. We can adjust the schedule to match your needs.

GROUPS

Ensure that approximately 15 students are assigned to each group, and at least one chaperone in each group. Students and chaperones should know the name of the group they belong to prior to their first class, based on the group names on the activity schedule the EE Director has provided. We encourage schools to assign students together who may not always interact with each other in the classroom, as well as to mix genders and ability levels. This trip can give students a chance to interact with their peers in a new environment, and can be a great opportunity to develop new friendships and build trust among a larger set of peers.

CHAPERONES

The role of chaperones during class times is to help YMCA staff manage behaviors and supervise students. We want you to learn with us and be part of the group! Jump in and be an active participant in our program – your students will love it. While we welcome all chaperones, we find that there can be too much of a good thing – more than 3 per group can be counterproductive to the learning experience during class times.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Students, chaperones and teachers all need to be prepared for the high elevation and variable weather. Classes will run rain or shine, as long as it is safe to do so. Students should bring a backpack, water, rain jacket, and extra clothing for every class. We do everything we can to stay outside as long as possible, but we will bring classes inside in cases of nearby lightning or other severe weather.

PACKING LIST



At an elevation of 8,010 feet, the weather can be extremely unpredictable. Our classes are conducted outdoors in the rain or shine, and it is essential that each student comes prepared for all types of weather. We do have a limited amount of coats, ponchos, and snow boots that you can check out and return during your time here.

ESSENTIALS:

- Day pack or book bag
- Warm coat or jacket
- Gloves or mittens
- Warm winter hat
- Shade hat
- Sweater or sweatshirts
- Sturdy shoes or hiking boots (recommend water proof for rain or snow)
- Extra pair of shoes–athletic, etc.
- Rainwear–jacket or poncho
- Extra socks
- Change of clothes
- Sleeping attire
- Long underwear
- Water bottle
- Personal toiletries
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Pencil and notebook

Optional:

- Swimsuit (if swimming)

SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY

The YMCA of the Rockies requires any youth groups to adhere to a strict 1:20 adult to child ratio at all times. This ratio does not include Environmental Education staff – our staff are not allowed to be left alone with students.

All staff must pass a background check and go through child abuse prevention training through Praesidium. We encourage you to bring responsible chaperones and ensure that they have passed a background check as well – all chaperones must be adults (not high school leaders) and are responsible for students in their group.

If you have students with special needs, please let us know ahead of time. We will do our best to modify our program to accommodate any special needs your students have, including visual or hearing impairment, or neurodivergent students. For students with mobility issues, we can utilize the Enger Family Nature Trail to do our lessons in a wheelchair-accessible natural environment. We also have a Grit Freedom Chair that is available for students to use – please check with the Environmental Education Director about its availability during your stay!



It is important that all students and chaperones understand that this program is designed to be challenging! We will walk, talk, and learn a lot in the great outdoors during our time together. Being prepared to be outside is essential to having a great experience! Let us know if there is anything we can do to help make this trip a valuable educational experience for you and your students. We hope that students are able to leave our program with a new passion and inspiration to continue learning and making connections to nature in their communities and beyond!