



Spruce Knob Mountain Center Guest Information

The Spruce Knob Mountain Center (SKMC) is located 4,000' above sea level in Pendleton County, WV. Spruce Knob, the state's highest point at 4,863', is a mile to the east. The local landscape is a rolling, high altitude plateau known since pre-colonial times as the "Hunting Ground."

The forests, fields, and buildings that comprise the SKMC are a base for mountain education, applied research, demonstration, and training initiatives. The property is part of The Mountain Institute, a global non-profit that works to conserve mountain ecosystems and empower the people in mountain communities. A unifying theme of respect for mountain environments, wildlife, resources, ourselves, and each other permeates all programming at the SKMC.

The SKMC borders the Monongahela National Forest to the north, east, and west and private land to the southeast. We encourage guests to explore the property and the adjacent National Forest, but we ask that you respect our neighbors by not trespassing onto their property. Private property is fenced and marked as such. A TMI staff member will be "on-call" for the duration of your time at the SKMC. This person is here to answer any and all questions you may have, including those about property boundaries. Do not hesitate to speak with them.

While you are enjoying SKMC and pitching in, you have the unique opportunity to separate yourself from the constraints and distractions of modern technology that often consume much of our day-to-day lives. During your stay we encourage you to immerse yourself in the natural world and to take time to notice the things that are going on in the woods and fields that surround you.

Things to Know Before you Arrive

- Facilities include two compost toilets, a bathhouse with hot showers and flush toilets, and two large yurts which house a kitchen, dining facilities, a library, and a large meeting space. Housing is in two four-room dormitories that accommodate four to five people per room in bunk beds.
- We do not allow smoking in any of our buildings.
- All buildings have electricity and are within a short walking distance of each other. Lighted paths connect the buildings, but you should bring a good flashlight as well.
- Each dormitory room contains two bunk beds and sometimes one more bed. You may wish to bring earplugs if you are not accustomed to sharing a room with other sleepers. Camping space is available and you are also welcome to bring your own tent.
- We have found that the smaller species of wildlife (especially mice) will stay outside as long as food is not stored in the dorms. If you have snacks or other special food with you, please leave them in your car. We can also provide critter-proof storage in the dining area of the main yurt.

- SKMC is not just a rental facility – it is a community. Nearly all of our staff lives on site. We will be happy to assist you in any way we can but we ask that you be respectful of this reality.
- **There is no cell phone service here.** We share a single phone line (304-567-2644), so we appreciate it if calls are kept fairly brief. The best time for family and friends to reach you is often during meals, since the phone is adjacent to the dining area.
- Ethernet ports for wired internet access are available in the yurts.
- Mail is picked up and dropped off at our mail box at our front entrance.
- The nearest gas station is in Circleville, 12 miles away. If you are coming from points north (traveling south on Route 28) this is the last gas station you will pass. If traveling from the south, your last gas station will be in Bartow on Route 28, approximately 45 minutes from the SKMC.
- The nearest hospitals are Grant Memorial in Petersburg and Davis Memorial in Elkins, 1 and 1.5 hours away, respectively.
- The last few miles of the road up to the SKMC are narrow and unpaved. Depending on the weather and the road maintenance schedule, it may contain potholes or rough sections. You do not need 4-wheel drive, but we recommend driving cautiously.
- Our cooks would greatly appreciate your help in washing your own personal dishes after meals.
- **Pets are not allowed on the campus grounds.** Animal lovers are very likely to see deer, upland birds (including ruffed grouse and wild turkey), and salamanders. Those with keen eyes will see abundant signs of fox, bobcat, coyote, and an occasional bear.
- Campfires are permitted only in designated fire rings.
- Please leave glass containers at home. Due to suboptimal waste disposal opportunities in this area, we are unable to recycle glass. **If you must bring food and beverages in glass containers, please bring the empty containers home with you.** In a further effort to minimize waste, all of our paper and cardboard waste is re-used as heating fuel. To learn more about our refuse-derived fuel program, please ask one of our staff members.

Nut-Free Policy

Many visitors to the SKMC have severe and potentially life-threatening allergies to nuts. The SKMC is a completely nut-free facility in order to minimize the risk of exposure for these visitors. We do not knowingly purchase products containing nuts or nut by-products (nut-based flours, oils, etc.). We also do our best to ensure that all kitchen surfaces, cookware, and dishes are clean and free of allergens through routine and thorough cleaning procedures¹. While we make every effort to maintain a nut-free facility, we cannot be responsible for others' adherence to our policy. **As a visitor to SKMC, we respectfully request that you and your guests not bring nuts or any products containing nuts to the SKMC.**

If you or one of your guests does possess a potentially life-threatening nut allergy, please feel free to supply your own snacks and pre-prepared foods as a safety precaution.

¹ According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, studies published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* have shown that nut-based allergens can be effectively removed from surfaces with all-purpose cleaner.

Things to Do Before you Leave

In everything that we do at the Spruce Knob Mountain Center (SKMC), we challenge people to leave their world better than they found it. This includes things as simple as turning off the lights when you leave a room and sweeping out your dorm room before you leave for the week. We have also made a philosophical commitment to the concept of “Bread Labor.” Bread Labor, as popularized by Yuri Bondarev and adopted by Ghandi, Scott Nearing, William Copperthwaite, and others has been used to exemplify the concept that everyone should do enough physical labor to provide for their basic human needs. The thinking is that even this basic amount of physical work is an equalizer among people, a hedge against exploitation, physically and mentally healthy, life enhancing, and ultimately gratifying. It is this fundamental belief that encourages us to work with our hands as well as with our heads and our hearts. In light of this commitment, we do not hire people to do the basic tasks that we can all do for ourselves.

In this spirit, we have created this checklist to help you leave SKMC better than you found it. These are some of the tasks that need to be done to prepare for an incoming group. Your contract should specify a time by which your group needs to have them completed. If it does not, please go by the times below. When these tasks cannot be done by our guests, it is labor that our staff team shares. If you have any questions, please ask the On-Call Staff. Thank you for your help, and as the old saying goes, many hands make light work.

Dorms

- **Please complete by 8:30am on the day of your departure**
- Strip sheets and pillowcases and leave them in the laundry baskets outside of the dorms or near the washing machine.
- Fold blankets and leave them in the room.
- Sweep floors.
- Make sure all lights and space heaters are turned off.

Yurts

- **Please complete by 11am on the day of your departure**
- Sweep & mop kitchen.
- Put away folding chairs and tables used by your group.
- Wash all dishes and utensils.
- Clean up all food items. Leftovers should be taken with you or stored appropriately.
- Clean kitchen counters and tables in the outer ring.
- Make sure all appliances are turned off.
- Sweep all floor and porch areas.

Shower Shack

- **Please complete by 11am on the day of your departure**
- Sweep & mop floors.
- Wipe down countertops.
- Make sure that no toilets are left running.

Other

- **Please complete by 11am on the day of your departure**
- Make sure all participants have entered their names, emails, and physical addresses on an electronic participant roster.
- Make sure that participants take all empty glass containers home with them to recycle.
- Check with staff to see if there are any other recyclables that you can take with you – recycling opportunities are slim in this area.

If you have any questions prior to your arrival, please contact us at (304) 567-2632.