

## **Fly Ranch Nature Walks**

### A Facilitator's Guide



“Walking is the great adventure, the first meditation, a practice of heartiness and soul primary to humankind.  
Walking is the exact balance between spirit and humility.” - Gary Snyder

Welcome. What follows is a guide to prepare you for facilitating groups during walks at Fly Ranch. We are developing this initiative so that in the future folks who are passionate about the project may sign up and become trained as a Nature Walk Guide.

Fly Ranch Nature Walks are offered as a collaboration between Friends of Black Rock-High Rock and Burning Man Project, both of which are nonprofit organizations.

Friends of Black Rock-High Rock inspires legacies of public land stewardship in the entrancing Black Rock Desert region through conservation and education.

Burning Man is a network of people inspired by the values reflected in their Ten Principles and united in the pursuit of a more creative and connected existence in the world.

Together we wish to create awe-inspiring experiences that will create connections to the beauty and wonder of Fly Ranch and the surrounding areas.

So what is a Guide? We are members of the community passionate about the Fly Ranch project who want to help others engage with this special place. More specifically, we:

- Facilitate an educational and informative experience for participants

- Manage logistics: headcounts, waivers, access, parking, route, and departure
- Establish the energetic tone for the experience and represent the values of the project
- Make sure the group remains safe and practices Leave No Trace values
- Answer questions and provide locations of resources for further information

Just as important as understanding what we are is knowing what we are not. We are not tour guides. We are not sherpas. We are not there to lead, but to facilitate. As a group we are walking together. Our role is primarily to make sure people have a safe experience and to set the tone of the experience. There are three main times to provide information (twice at the beginning and once at the end of the walks) and aside from that we are there to support people's experience and engage their curiosity. We encourage them to lean into what excites them, as long as it can be done safely and in a nondisruptive way. If someone feels like meditating, encourage them to meditate. If someone wants to ask a bunch of questions, be kind and answer them. If someone wants to swim in the pools, well... don't let them do that. More on that, later.

This document contains four sections: **Spirit, Mind, Walk, and Talk**. Let them be your guides.

### **Spirit:**

Embracing the Power of Place and the Unknown

The high desert of Nevada, with its dramatic landscapes and otherworldly features, is a special place. And Fly Ranch may be one of the most unique and mysterious locations in this place. Our role is to embody the spirit of this place and project in a way that allows people to feel included but also have their own kind of experience. These trips are one part exploration, one part social outing, and one part walking meditation.

We should stay curious in our own right. We want to stay in the question of what exists on this property and what the future contains for this project. We don't want to attempt to be, or give the impression, that we are the sole experts in either of these matters.

We want to engage the spirits of both reflection and engagement. Each trip will have its own energy and there is something to be gained from states of movement, stillness, conversation, and silence.

### **Mind:**

Planning and Logistics of an Adventure

- Walks meet at the Friends of High Rock-Black Rock office. Check in attendees as they arrive. Provide 15 minutes of leeway to accommodate stragglers. Take a headcount of people and vehicles at this time, and make sure everyone has signed Friends of Black Rock-High Rock's and Burning Man's liability waivers.
- Inform the group that this time is a great time to use the restroom and make sure they have water, sunscreen, hats, appropriate shoes, etc.

- The opportunities to use the restroom are prior to departure in Gerlach and at the parking location at Fly Ranch. Please share this information with participants at the beginning of the walk so they know what to expect.
- Each walk should have no fewer than two trained Guides, three is strongly recommended, one of whom should be certified in Wilderness First Aid. One guide will be available to assist if there are persons unable to make the walk because of disability or other condition.
- There is an opportunity for participants to receive a refund of their deposit or make additional donations to support Friends of Black Rock-High Rock or the Fly Ranch project at the end of the trip once returned to Gerlach.
- Drive time to Fly Ranch is 25 minutes. Trips should be taken in as few cars as possible. Guides should be in two separate cars, one in the lead and one in the rear.
- The Guide in the lead car unlocks the main gate and leads the caravan to the parking location. The Guide in the last car locks the gate behind the caravan.
- Following the entry route below, park vehicles side by side in the playa lot. The lead vehicle with a Guide should park furthest north, with others parking progressively further south.

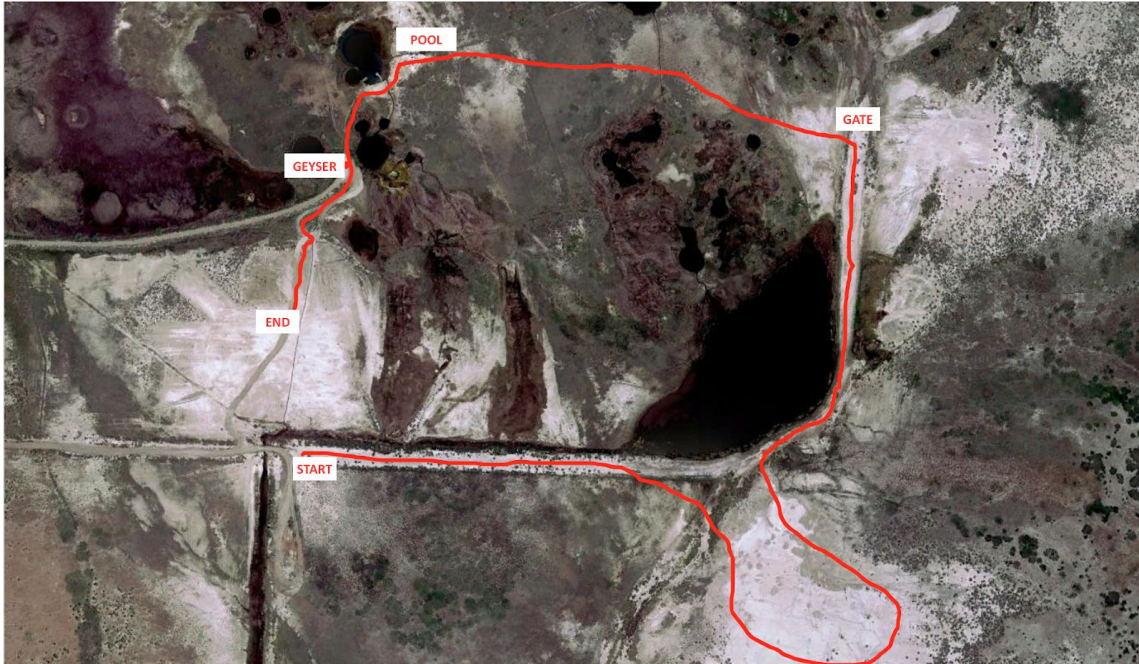


- Upon exiting the cars, confirm the headcount. Let the group know that the walk will take up to an hour and will conclude back at the cars. Direct the group quickly towards the starting location of the walk to prevent people from dispersing.
- Ask everyone to gather in a circle. Do a safety/LNT/go over the **Grounding Rules** covered in the talk section. Ask everyone to introduce themselves by first name and what they are there for.
- If someone is unable to make the walk, have the third guide accompany them directly to the geyser or pool area at this time, where the group will meet up with them shortly.
- A detailed description of the route and logistics is contained below in the **Walk** section.
- Once returned to Gerlach, thank people graciously for their time, and offer them the gift of Fly Ranch postcards and Friends of Black Rock-High Rock stickers. Let them know that if they want

to further support the Fly Ranch project (Fly Ranch is entirely donation funded) they can make a donation at this time, and/or they can sign up to become a member of Friends of Black Rock-High Rock.

## **Walk:**

### Finding Our Way



- Upon exiting the vehicles at the parking area, give the **Grounding Rules!** information found in the **Talk** section below.
- The current route is highlighted above in red. Some portions of the route, including the lower desert loop may become impacted by weather. Keep note of any current or suspected future issues and report them back after the conclusion of the tour.
- In the future we may have several routes available ranging from this hour long walk to a day-long trek. For now we are starting with this route to refine our systems.
- One Guide should remain near the front of the group, while the other should accompany the last participants. **Do not leave anyone behind and do not rush participants it's okay to move slowly.**
- The starting point is the westernmost portion of the lower dam. The walk from this point to lower desert loop is the time to give people a general orientation and provide some basic information about the trip.
- When you reach the point to cut down to the lower desert loop, pause and let the group gather for a moment. Use this time to explain a bit about the surrounding area (this is the high land point) and the route we will be taking. Let folks know that we will be taking a **10 minute** dispersed walk through the lower desert area and will be meeting up back on the dam.
- Lead participants down a side "road" to access to the lower desert loop and encourage them the explore a bit. **At this point, your job as a presenter is complete for this segment of the**

**experience, but you are welcome to engage with participants who have more questions or are seeking more interaction.**

- Keep an eye on the crowd and the clock. Do not let anyone stay out of eyesight, earshot, or deep into brush. If needed, encourage the group to return to the upper dam once they've been exploring for about 10 minutes. We find most groups do this kind of naturally once the Guide moves that way.
- Once the group has reformed, begin moving along the the bend of the dam at a sauntering pace. You do not need to say anything, but feel free to take moments to answer questions or enjoy the sights of the pond on your left. There is often wildlife there.
- Once you reach a gate, the lead Guide will open it. Leave the gate open for the rear Guide to close. **Always close this gate.** This gate keeps cows out of the sensitive wetlands habitat area.
- Shortly after this gate, the lead Guide will turn left into the grass and use the space between the Fly Geyser and Wizard Geyser as a guiding point. Move slowly as the terrain can be uneven. Seek out and use high ground.
- The walk features one small step over of a creek and two fences. The fence points should be clearly marked and can be an opportunity for temporary regroupings. The second fence is electric, but disabled.
- After the second fence crossing, navigate the group to the benches on the East side of the pool with the docks. Remain here until the entire group has gathered. Do a headcount. Go through the **Closing Conversation** points listed below in the **Talk** section. Conclude with letting people know they will have 15 minutes to explore the nearby area a bit, and let them know which areas can be explored.
- At this point, people are welcome to remain at the benches discussing their experiences or exploring the immediate area a little bit, including the Fly Geyser, Wizard Geyser, or Will's Geyser (must stay on road and not walk to this geyser). One guide should remain in the pool area while the other goes to the geyser area.
- Allow the group 15 - 20 minutes of exploration in this area before calling them back to the cars. Make sure to do this at least 40 minutes before the stated ending time of the trip. **Do a headcount at the cars.**
- When people are ready, a lead car with one Guide should drive up to the dam and wait for all cars to get in line behind them. The Guide in the rear car will let the lead Guide know when everyone is off site. Use the same process for unlocking and relocking the main gate.

### **Talk:**

#### Communicating About Fly Ranch

It is important to represent your role honestly and accurately. When introducing yourself to the group, please make it clear that you are a volunteer Guide and not a Burning Man, Fly Ranch, or Friends of Black Rock-High Rock staff member. Also feel encouraged to share what you are passionate about that brought you to volunteer.

#### **Grounding Rules!**

Don't think of them as ground rules so much as a promotion of the idea of staying present is an awesome thing to do. ("Grounding rules!" ... get it?!) We want to encourage folks to have a direct experience with the landscape and inhabitants of this space. To that end, we communicate the following to every guest:

- **We agree with you that Fly Ranch is a beautiful place, enjoy it directly.** We want to encourage you to experience Fly Ranch through your senses and not through a device. Please refrain from taking pictures, but if you must, please do it discreetly. If you feel as though your experience would somehow be incomplete without a picture, there will be a time for that as the end of the walk.
- **This is a Leave No Trace experience.** Here are some key principles to highlight.
  - **Plan ahead and be prepared** - We will be walking outside. If participants need water, sunscreen, bug spray, etc. there is opportunity at the FBRHR Visitor Center Store to stock up. Opportunities to use the restroom will be at the FBRHR Visitor Center Store and parking area at Fly Ranch.
  - **Travel and camp on durable surfaces** - Please watch your footing. We are starting out on a dam that has already been impacted. We will be traversing a grassland area, but the footing is not level, so be careful where you step. We are near wetlands, so please stay with the leader and follow the group to avoid impacting sensitive habitat areas.
  - **Leave what you find** - Artifacts in the area, please leave in place.
  - **Dispose of waste properly** - "Pack it in, pack it out". Should you find anything on your walk that is made by humans and less than 50 years old that you can carry, please pick it up and bring it with you. Guides will be collecting this MOOP (matter out of place) at the end of the walk to add to the collection of items we've found on Fly Ranch.
  - **Respect wildlife** - We are outdoors near a lot of water, so there are many animals we are likely to encounter - waterfowl, raptors, jackrabbits, horses, etc. You can explain the rule of thumb - if the animal can't fit inside your thumb, you are too close - or if your actions change the behavior of the animal, you are too close.
- **Safety Points**
  - Trip leaders will have a first aid kit, and there will be a first aid kit in the truck.
  - Trip leaders will have Ham radios and/or DeLorme satellite text devices to contact the outside world in case of an emergency.
  - At least one trip leader will be Wilderness First Aid Certified.
  - Make sure the group knows who to contact in case of emergency or medical assistance.
  - If there is anyone with mobility issues, they can take a shorter alternate route to Fly Geyser and Will's Geyser.
  - In hotter months, water will be stationed at the end of the nature walk near Fly Geyser. Pop-up shade might be necessary to set up before nature walks as well.
- **Stay within eyesight and earshot of the group.** Some people walk faster, some people walk slower. Some people want to walk alone. This is fine, just make sure to stay within range of visual and auditory contact.
- **The Guide is a facilitator, not a tour guide.** We are here for a collective experience not to tell you where to go and every fact that we know. Are you curious about something? Ask!

## Closing Conversation

As the walk concludes, it is helpful to give people some direction on how to get involved or learn more about the project. After the group has regrouped at the poolside benches, we give them the following information:

- A ton of information can be found at [flyranch.burningman.org](http://flyranch.burningman.org), where content is updated regularly.
- This project is just in its beginning stages. 2018 is being spent completing an environmental assessment and providing access to the land through walking tours like this
- If you have ideas or questions, there is a vibrant community conversation platform on the website you can engage in directly with the Fly Ranch community (coming January 2018). More information about, and how to get involved with or become a member of Friends of Black Rock-High Rock at [blackrockdesert.org](http://blackrockdesert.org).

## Facts & Figures

Some helpful info for you to know that can help answer any questions that may come up.

### Basic Info:

- 3,800 acres.
- 53 separate parcels
- Zoned General Rural
- 21 miles from Gerlach, 125 miles from Reno
- Home of 1997 Burning Man event, 10,000 person event

### History:

- Property was first homesteaded in the late 1800s by Fred Gerlach, son of Louis Gerlach, for whom the town of Gerlach was named.
- 1866-1867 was home to Spring City Post Office and Hot Springs Post Office.
- From 1866 - 1964 the property was named as "Ward's Hot Spring".
- Fly Ranch was a part of the John Casey estate, until it was sold to Todd Jaksick (Bright Holland Corporation) in 1998.
- Multiple rumors about the origin of the name, including that the site was once home to a flight school. There is an old airstrip near the farmhouse.

### Geysers:

- There are 3 geysers on the property: The Wizard, Fly Geyser, and Will's Geyser
- The Wizard: Well-drilling attempt in 1917; over time has created a pillar of travertine (calcium carbonate) about 12 feet (3.7 m) tall. The flow reduces dramatically when the Fly Geyser began releasing water in 1964.
- Fly Geyser: In 1964, a well was drilled by Western Geothermal, geyser is formed by growth of travertine deposits from the water. The red and green colors represent two different species of algae and serve as a kind of heat map. The orange color indicates presence of iron.
- Will's Geyser: Discovered 12 years ago, naturally occurring. Growing about 6 inches a year, named for Will Roger when he found it during scouting

### Hot Springs:

- The springs are the largest in northwestern Nevada.

- Recorded subsurface temperatures up to 250°.
- 150 pools ranging from dinner plate sized to 40 feet across
- Pool temps ranging from 70° to 158°F

#### Plants & Animals:

- 107+ identified types of plants
- 67+ identified types of birds
- 4 invasive plants including Russian Knapweed & Chokeweed

#### Public Lands Information:

- Black Rock Desert High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area was designated in 2000 by an act of Congress. This designation includes 10 wilderness areas encompassing 1.2 million acres.
- Wilderness areas visible from Fly Ranch (west to east): High Rock Lake, Calico Mountains, North Jackson Mountains, South Jackson Mountains.
- Wilderness areas not quite visible from Fly Ranch (west to east): Little High Rock Canyon, Pahute Peak, Black Rock Desert
- National Conservation Areas restrict new development and mining claims, but other uses are allowed such as hunting, camping, hiking, OHVs on designated routes and trails (over 900 miles in the NCA alone), grazing, rockhounding, hot springs, star gazing, and many other uses.
- Notable Mountains:
  - Granite Peak 9,056' – Granite Range
  - Selenite Peak 7,115' – Selenite Range
  - Old Razorback Mountain 5,500'
  - Sheephead Mountains (might be able to see – southeast of Razorback)
  - Kamma Mountains (just south of Hycroft Mine) – Rosebud Peak 6,514'
  - King Lear Peak 8,923' – Jackson Mountains
  - Black Rock Point 4,552' – Black Rock Range
  - Steamboat Rock 4,269'
  - South Donnelly Peak 7,719' & Donnelly Peak 8,533' – Calico Mountains
  - Unnamed Peak 7,660' – High Rock Lake Wilderness Area, Calico Mountains
  - Division Peak 7,261'
  - Hog Ranch Mountain 7,671' – adjacent to Leadville ghost town
  - Fox Mountain 8,222' (not visible from Fly Ranch)

#### **Commonly Asked and Anticipated Questions**

Below are some of the more difficult question we get regularly. What should you do if something comes up you don't know how to answer? It's totally fine to say you don't know. Most of the time, directing people to the website if the best course of action.

#### **What is the purpose of Fly Ranch?**

The Fly Ranch project is an opportunity to take the power and creativity of the annual experiment of Black Rock City and give it a place to thrive year-round. It is an opportunity to create a platform for Burning Man Projects nonprofit programs and to engage individuals from across the Burning Man community as well as new groups inspired by the principles of Burning Man.



The site will eventually become a platform for cultural growth and social impact upon which our people can take their creativity and experiment with new ideas that could inspire culture, business, technology, and humanity .

Burning Man Project's role in this is not to build an awesome thing at Fly Ranch, but to build a context for many different people to create their awesome things, and share them with others. Part of Burning Man Project mission includes the creation of "rural centers and spaces that incubate and showcase collaborative and interactive arts, culture, and community participation". Fly Ranch is a huge step toward making this happen.

### **What is being done right now?**

These walks are really the most important step as it is important that there is an opportunity for immediate interaction at Fly Ranch – nothing takes the place of an immersive experience. People can find information and make a reservation on our website.

Aside from the walks, the focus now is on learning as much as Burning Man can about the property and developing the tools for meaningful community engagement, including these walks. In order to get a strong understanding of the current state of the property, the Burning Man Fellowship program has appointed its first ever land fellow to complete a baseline environmental analysis of things like plants, animals, temperature and water changes. They're also building online and in-person resources for large scale dialogue and decision making for a community as diverse and Burning Man and as vast as the potential for Fly Ranch.

### **What is taking so long?**

Getting to this point has been 20 years in the making and the purchase was just one of many steps on a very long journey. A proper environmental baseline study takes a minimum of one year to do right, so we can see all the seasons. One of the great advantages of Fly Ranch is that we can move slowly with intentionality and make sure that we're building something that can truly last.

This is all part of the greater evolution of Burning Man, from an ephemeral experiment into a global cultural movement having a profound impact on social, economic and artistic systems globally. That takes time.

### **Where did the money come from? How is Fly Ranch funded?**

Currently, the Fly Ranch project is entirely donation funded. While 13 donors helped us raise the \$6.5 million necessary to purchase the property, hundreds of people have made donations at every level since the acquisition.

All of these donations are in the true spirit of the gifting principle of Burning Man; there is no quid pro quo, and these gifts are towards a project intended to support the entire community. No money is coming from BRC ticket, vehicle pass or ice sales, and ongoing community support is critical for our

continued operation. People who want to help Fly Ranch turn into something incredible can help support the mission on our website [flyranch.burningman.org](http://flyranch.burningman.org).

**How is the project “inclusive”? Will this just be a playground for the rich? How can people get involved now?**

Fly Ranch has opportunities for engagement of every kind. Some contributions will be financial but many are gifts of time, energy, and ideas. In order for Fly Ranch to be as inclusive as possible, we want to involve as many interested parties at each step of the way as we can. This is why the first offering of the project is an open invitation for those interested to join us in small groups to walk the property on weekends.

The walks will be done in partnership with the local conservation group, Friends of Black Rock-High Rock, and they will be donation based. If someone can make a reservation online and get themselves to Gerlach, they can come experience the property first hand. Folks can find more information on our website.

Tickets to Black Rock City sold out for the first time in 2011, and each year the overwhelming demand for tickets far outpaces supply, leaving many Burners without a ticket ‘home’. Black Rock City has essentially reached its current capacity. Fly Ranch, on the other hand, presents the future possibility of year-round and ongoing engagement with Burning Man. It has the long-term potential to provide even more people with opportunities to participate than are currently possible in the container of Black Rock City.

**Is Burning Man interested in purchasing more land in the area?**

Right now our focus is on understanding the incredible and dynamic property that we already own, and on building the means and tools for people to get involved. Burning Man has purchased several pieces of property in the area over the past 15 years and it would be foolish not to look into all kinds of ideas for the future, but we're not committing to any particular course of action until we've really investigated and it and decided it's viable and makes sense in the long term.

**How does this benefit citizens of Gerlach and Empire?**

Burning Man has owned land in the area since 2001 and is used to being a neighbor and a participating member of the local community. We have staff members contributing regularly to local groups including the citizens advisory board, the Gerlach economic development meetings, and the volunteer fire department, and we look forward to deepening our relationships with Empire, Gerlach, the Paiute Tribe and local property owners.

Additionally, Black Rock City has an enormous economic benefit in Northern Nevada, and Fly Ranch is an opportunity to create an even greater impact spread more sustainably throughout the year. We hope to provide opportunities for folks to come to the area and appreciate the stunning landscape and wonderful community outside of the annual Burning Man event.