



## *LITTLE FOOT YURTS* *FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS*

### **WHO MAKES YOUR YURTS ?**

We (Alex and Selene Cole) have been building yurts since 2003 and are co-owners of Little Foot Yurts, which started in 2005. Silas Hanavan, our yurt building apprentice started working with Little Foot Yurts full time in 2013.

Our yurt building days stemmed from an interest in natural building when we moved to an eco arts centre called Coed Hills Rural Artspace in Wales. The centre inspired us to start Little Foot Yurts and provided a knowledge and understanding of permaculture and coppicing, which provide the basis for our sustainable business ethics and practices.

### **WHAT IS COPPICE –THE METHOD OF FORESTRY YOU USE?**

Anyone who has cut down a Christmas tree knows that the stump will die. Do the same thing to many hardwoods such as ash, maple, and oak, and they will throw up new shoots. Given the right light these shoots will grow up straight with few branches. This technique is referred to as coppicing.

Coppice is the rotational harvesting of the regrowth of hardwood stumps. It has been used in Europe for thousands of years providing renewable short rotation wood products such as firewood, fencing, furniture and yurt poles! It is a technique that leaves the tree alive and encourages its regrowth with minimal disturbance to the soil bacteria and habitats.

Coppice also prolongs the life of the tree and enhances the local fauna and flora of the woodland. For more information on this topic, a great book to read is Coppiced Woodlands, Their Management for Wildlife by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee of England.

Coppice woodland development is a great way to bring health back to any woodlot that has been high graded or clear cut. The harvesting method of coppice creates very little erosion. The crop is removed by hand and foot allowing the hardwood trees to live on providing strength and stability for the soil.

We have been harvesting and preparing a woodland in Paradise, NS for 12 years. (We started in 2009). We proudly revisit the trees we harvested from a decade ago to acquire new yurt poles taking care to promote the health of the tree ensuring a even greater yield from the tree 10 years from now.

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## **WHY ARE YOUR YURTS GENERALLY MORE EXPENSIVE COMPARED TO MODERN YURT COMPANIES?**

Our production methods and techniques are very different from modern style yurts, which may use sawn wood for the entire frame, aircraft cable for the tension band and laminated components. Traditional style yurts have an organic look and in the building processes do require a lot more labour, which reflects the higher price we charge compared to modern style yurts. Each roof pole is cut by hand, carved, tapered, dried, sanded and finished with a hard wax oil. Each yurt wheel is hand cut, hand split with a froe, steam bent, and using a forge we burn the mortises to create a hand crafted yurt every time. Our textiles are done in house and custom sewn by Selene. Our sales prices are comparable to traditional yurt companies in England and Wales.

## **WHAT SIZE OF YURT IS IDEAL FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR OR SMALL GUESTHOUSE?**

The best sizes to use as accommodation are the 12ft yurt (113 sq ft), 17ft yurt (215 sq ft), or the 20ft yurt (315 sq ft). The smaller sizes of yurts are easier to heat because of the low roof, shorter wall and single doorway. This design helps to keep the heat in and the manageable size makes the maintenance easier. We would not recommend a yurt bigger than 20ft yurt for winterized use as anything bigger will be harder to heat.

## **CAN YOUR YURTS BE USED YEAR-ROUND?**

The yurt is designed as a nomadic shelter and is by nature temporary. We urge all of our clients to think of a Little Foot Yurt in this way because our yurts are designed in a traditional fashion that use natural materials such as wood and cotton and do not fair well when left unattended for long periods of time.

Our style of yurt is best kept as a temporary (non-permanent) structure and should be taken down when not in use. This reduces unnecessary wear and tear. When a yurt is not occupied, animals can move in (bats, wasps etc) and there is also a greater likelihood that damp will set in without regular heating that can then degrade the organic components of the yurt (wood and canvas).

You can leave your yurt up all year as long as your living in it and following the recommended maintenance scheduled. General maintenance such as brushing the canvas down weekly to prevent dirt and mold growth (mold spores can grow on debris that lands on the yurt) and wiping the frame with vinegar twice a year will also help to prevent mold growth and keep the frame looking healthy.

We recommend a portable sectional deck built to have its surface less than 18" from the ground. This enables the user to relocate the yurt at any time and the platform sections could be stacked for storage out of season. A raised deck is important to have when you want to use the yurt in a more semi permanent situation. A wooden platform is a good

idea to keep your yurt high and dry which will greatly benefit the overall health of your yurt. You should place the yurt on a site with good windbreaks near buildings or a sheltered area to mitigate the storm season.

### **WHAT DO I NEED TO WINTERIZE MY YURT?**

To make your yurt a four season shelter and provide complete protection in heavy rain and snow we recommend using the extra roof cover, a wood stove, felt panels and setting the yurt on a deck.

### **HOW DO YOU RECOMMEND INSULATING THE YURTS?**

We provide locally made felt panels which are the traditional felt covering of yurts in Central Asia. Our felt panels are made by Belfast Mini Mills in PEI. Each panel is hemmed with jute edging. Extremely durable and hardwearing they provide an natural and breathable insulation. The felt panels are enclosed by the cotton canvas to protect it from the weather.

Another option is to layer up wool blankets between the trellis and the canvas. This will make an affordable, natural, breathable insulation that is easy to acquire from second hand shops.

### **HOW DO YOU SUGGEST STORING THE YURT WHEN NOT IN USE?**

We recommend that our clients keep a 10ft \* 6 shed near the yurt which is an invaluable additional shelter for storage and could also make room for your composting outhouse. Furthermore the shed can be used as a convenient space to pack the yurt and other equipment in the off season.

A 17ft yurt frame will pack down into a 4ft wide by 8ft long and 3ft high and the canvas into two 114lt boxes (large Rubbermaid bins).

The Humanure Handbook by Joseph Jenkins is an excellent book for anyone wanting to learn more about compost toilets. <http://humanurehandbook.com/contents.html>

### **WHICH WOOD STOVES DO YOU RECOMMEND?**

We have used and are happy with the two companies listed below.

Woodstoves [www.jotul.com](http://www.jotul.com) The Jotul 602 is an ideal CSA approved wood stove and would be recommended for more permanent use.

Excel Chimney [www.icc-rsf.com](http://www.icc-rsf.com) Insulated Stainless steel chimney and parts. Two inches thinner than regular Selkirk chimney. Quebec based company.

## HOW CAN A WOOD STOVE BE INSTALLED AND USED SAFELY?

We make a wood stove fitting for the chimney on the side of the yurt or provide you with a second roof hat with a chimney flange, which would be for a central chimney. Using a wood stove in a yurt is safe as long as you follow the safe distances for combustibles regarding your chimney and stove. This means utilizing steel insulated chimneys (Excel) and non combustible fibre board on your floor and behind the stove. We provide a non combustible flange with a flap cover to allow your insulated chimney to pass through the wall.

If you would like a stove on the side of the yurt, you will need to use a through the wall kit chimney made by Excel in Canada. It is important to get the Excel chimney which only has one inch insulation so the outside diameter is approximately 8". Other brands like Supervent, Sentinal, and Selkirk are 10/11" and will be too wide to fit through the yurt frame.

You will need to drive a 4ft post into the ground and connect the wall kit brackets 180 degrees so it is supported from your post and not to the yurt. All clearances should be adhered to. You will need stove board to go behind the stove and underneath.

We also provide a non combustible flange with flap cover to allow your insulated chimney to pass through the wall. A high temperature silicone flange is riveted into our S109 coded Sunforger canvas.

## HOW DO YOUR YURTS PERFORM IN STORMS?

Our 17ft & 20ft yurts have been up in very strong winds (80 km winds) and have performed very well. If a storm is coming the addition of tying down the wheel and supporting the bottom of the wall from the inside of the yurt will ensure the yurt keeps its shape to enhance aerodynamic performance.

However, the yurt is a temporary structure, and if you have prior warning of a hurricane, it would be prudent to take it down. We would never recommend taking a yurt down during a storm or in high winds. We do offer extra tie down kits that can easily be fitted onto your constructed yurt. For all clients in doubt of what to do in this situation, please contact us.

## HOW LONG DOES A YURT LAST?

The wooden frame of our yurts will last a lifetime if maintained with treatments annually.

The canvas components degrade over time and you should plan to purchase a new roof cover between 5-10 years and new walls around 7-10 years. We always recommend having two roof covers for year round use. Using a double layered breathable membrane allows condensation and moisture to pass outward without letting in any drips in.

We use the best quality cotton canvas on the market today. However because of the fall out, acid rain, debris and UV will eventually destroy the cotton and the threads over a period of time depending on the location and how long it is set up every year. The traditional simplicity of our design allows our yurt components to be easily replaced as needed.

Deprecation example of a 17ft yurt cover:

Plan to set aside \$500 for the depreciation of the canvas each year and when the covers need replacing at 7-10 years you will have accrued enough money to cover that cost. A 17ft yurt that is used all year round you may expect to replace one of the roof covers at 5 years, the walls at 8 years and the second roof cover at 12 years.

### WHAT KIND OF COVERINGS DO YOU USE?

We use an Egyptian double weave cotton canvas called Sungorger FR (10.5oz). It is tested to Canadian fire codes CPAI 84 and S109 ULC. It is a treated canvas, which is rot, mildew, water, fire, and UV resistant. The treatments are very necessary in damp and cold climates like we have in Nova Scotia.

This canvas provides an excellent weather resistant covering that is both natural and breathable, allowing condensation to escape whilst keeping the harshest of weathers out. The canvas gives a beautiful light inside the yurt and is both cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

We always recommend having two roof covers for year round use. Using a double layered breathable membrane allows condensation and moisture to pass outward without letting in any drips in. This canvas provides an excellent weather resistant covering that is both natural and breathable, allowing condensation to escape whilst keeping the harshest of weathers out. The benefits of a breathable natural membrane such as canvas instead of vinyl plastic are as follows: significantly less condensation, no off gassing, more aesthetically pleasing, lighter, and easier to repair.

To protect both the frame and the canvas we tailor in a foot of Top Gun (heavy duty vinyl-coated canvas) at the bottom of the wall, which gets tucked under the frame so that the wood and canvas never touch the ground.

If you require our fire test results for large and small flame tests please contact us and we can email this document to you.

### HOW CAN I BEST CARE FOR MY YURT?

Keeping the canvas clean by brushing debris off the yurt and cleaning the canvas in any areas that get affected by dirt food or grease, will prevent mold as will putting your yurt in at least partial sun. The coverings will thin and grey over time and you can expect to replace some of the covers at 5 to 10 years depending on how often you use the yurt. It is

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also important to remove snow on the roof cover so it doesn't build up after heavy wet snowfall.

Keeping the yurt in a sunny location and brushing the canvas of debris (leaves) will maintain the appearance and longevity of the fabric. Having a yurt in a very wooded and shaded environment may result in mold growth. Refer to our Maintenance & Cleaning Guide on our sales page for more details on how to properly care for your yurt.

### **DO YOU OFFER A MAINTENANCE PACKAGE?**

Yes! LFY can provide set up and take down services and additional cleaning or wood treatment for \$65 per hour/per LFY staff. The full cost will depend on your location.

### **WHAT'S INVOLVED IN DOING YOUR OWN MAINTENANCE?**

Taking an active part in maintaining your yurt will help you become more familiar with your yurt and is an important part of preserving and lengthening the life of your yurt. Taking your yurt down and retreating the frame where needed once a year would be part of maintaining your yurt. It would cost \$50/60 in wax oil treatment. We use Fiddes USA hard wax oil. It is up to our clients to purchase the treatment if you are doing your own maintenance.

For a 17 or 20 ft yurt the time in labour will take about 2 hours to take down, and usually 4 to 6 hours for scrubbing and retreating.

The canvas should have debris swept off the yurt regularly and be spot cleaned with vinegar and a scrubbing brush on any areas with contamination (food or spills) or signs of mold.

### **WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO COOL THE YURT?**

There are a variety of ways to cool the yurt. The skylight allows fresh air to be pulled into the yurt to aid in natural convection cooling.

The skylight is an eight pointed star, made of Sunbrella fabric which is a heavy duty fade resistant material with a super clear UV resistant plastic window in the middle. The "legs" of the star attach to tie down ropes which are anchored both to the yurt and ground. You can easily take it off and on from ground level and there are no mechanical parts or fastenings that could break. The dome skylight is supported within the steam bent ash wheel by a lattice of hardwood poles.

The simple and traditional ventilation technique is to fold back the roof cover in half on the windward side. Windows can also provide added ventilation and viewing. Having two windows opposite will provide a nice cross breeze.

## **DO YOU PROVIDE FLOORING?**

The flooring we offer is a natural product which is made from coconut husk fibres. It is densely woven with a herringbone weave. It is naturally anti-bacterial and is extremely hardwearing. The flooring is tailored to fit to your yurt and edged with jute trim. Dirt and dust is easily removed by taking the flooring out periodically and banging with a broom, alternatively you can brush out debris with a long bristled brush. This flooring is really great if you are planning to place the yurt for short set ups on ground level. The flooring price includes a tailored tarp to put underneath. The tarp acts as a vapour barrier which stops moisture and humidity coming up from the ground.

## **DO YOU PROVIDE WOODEN FLOORING?**

No, however a wooden platform is a good idea to keep your yurt high and dry. Which will greatly benefit the overall health of your yurt. We have a small variety of tried and tested deck plans including portable decks in sections. When it comes to floor insulation nothing is better than a wool rug. View the traditional floor rug of the Kyrgyz yurt and buy a shyrdak available through us from fair trade women's cooperative in Kyrgyzstan.

A platform also allows for additional storage and the opportunity to install fixtures such as electricity. You can view our layout plans and decking specifications on our sales page.

## **WHAT IS THE BEST LOCATION FOR TEMPORARY USE OF A YURT?**

A good drainable surface such as a grassy knoll or a slight bump on levelled and drainable rock surface with a little sand on top for softness would be ideal for summertime use. A 200 sq ft space (17<sup>th</sup> yurt) should be manageable to clear and level with hand tools if you are out in the woods. We would recommend clearing enough trees to ensure that the yurt is in full sun.

The UV plays an important part in the health of the cotton to prevent mold growth as does adequate air flow. Using a deck helps to reduce dampness and increases the air flow resulting in a healthier space.

## **HOW CAN I PREVENT LITTLE CRITTERS FROM COMING INSIDE MY YURT?**

As long as you are living in your yurt you shouldn't have a problem with rodents, however you will want to keep all of your perishables in a mouse-proof container. You can also seal the plastic skirt (at the bottom of the canvas walls) to a deck, to achieve a barrier against rodents.



## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO PUT UP A LITTLE FOOT YURT?

A 12ft yurt takes about 30 minutes to erect. A 17ft yurt takes an hour and a half, a 20ft yurt takes two hours and a 28ft yurt takes 6-7 hours to erect. Our yurts are very easy to erect and dismantle. The modern style yurts tend to be trickier to assemble simply because they are designed with more fixtures and fittings, which can be complicated. Our yurts however are traditional in design making the set up intuitive, easy and fun! We have an instructional video for clients that cannot receive our full day training because of distances.

## WHAT KIND OF SECURITY DOES A YURT OFFER?

You can add a solid wood door to your purchase with a high quality residential lockset carrying a lifetime warranty. The yurt also has a continuous lattice wall that spans from one side of the door frame to the other, even through the windows. This means the only way to enter is through the doorway.

## WHO MAKES YOUR DOORS?

Troy Wood of Wooden Window & Door Company in the Annapolis Valley makes our doors.

## DO YOU NEED A PERMIT TO USE A YURT?

Most of the specifications of the Canadian building codes apply to permanent structures. The yurt is originally designed to be a nomadic shelter and is by nature temporary. We urge all of our clients to think of a Little Foot Yurt in this way. Our yurts are designed in a traditional fashion that use natural materials such as wood and cotton and do not fair well when left unattended for long periods of time.

By putting the yurt on a deck for example is an excellent way to get all year round use out of your yurt, but in fact only the deck has been permanently installed on that location. You may be required to get a building permit for a deck and build it to code.

Many clients choose to build a sectional deck in such a way that it can be moved or stored as required (these decks must be closer than 18" from the ground) and would be considered temporary.

For specific information on building codes and permits in your area you should contact your local building official. In certain circumstances if the yurt is used for public access permits are required and the yurt has to adhere to fire code for its coverings. Little Foot Yurt covers comply to all Canadian Fire Codes (S109).



### **CAN I USE MY YURT FOR PUBLIC ACCESS EVENTS?**

Yes, our canvas is tested to CPAI 84 and S109 ULC for fire retardency (Canadian standard for public access event spaces). If you use a yurt for a public access space (for yurt rentals) you must follow the codes and regulations for that purpose, including exit signage, back up lighting, and fire coded materials. Our commercial sized yurts (24 ft and bigger) have 6 and half foot high walls and have a 7 ft high, 4 ft wide door, which is wheelchair accessible, and is built to comply with public access regulations.

### **DO YOU HAVE YURTS IN STOCK AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE?**

Yes. We build yurts from autumn to spring each year. Depending on when you place your order most smaller yurts are ready for the following spring. Larger commercial yurts may require more notice to allow for the time to process and dry the coppice wood. Placing a deposit down to secure your order is the only way to secure our next consecutive yurt build.

All of our yurts that will be built for spring each year, must have the deposit paid and be ordered before the end of December. This is because of the cyclical nature of our harvesting techniques; the forestry component of our work (which occurs in the winter) precedes each build.

### **DO YOU OFFER LONG TERM RENTALS?**

We provide yurt rentals for up to 3 weeks. Beyond that it must be a second consecutive rental allowing us to come and service the yurt before the next rental starts. Most yurts sizes for sale are ready in the spring each year. We usually can have 12ft yurts that can be ready within a two month turn around.

### **WHEN DO YOU OFFER YOUR YURT BUILDING WORKSHOPS?**

Our annual November workshop focuses on collecting and preparing yurt materials and includes a free workshop on Coppicing & Charcoal making.

For community groups we generally recommend identifying one or two people to attend a workshop and then use the skills to orientate, share and train the greater community.

We also offer one day yurt education experiences for communities, youth groups & schools. Please refer to our workshop page on our website for more details.

We do not run workshops in the spring and summer months as we are busy in spring finishing off our builds and through out the summer we are renting out our commercial sized yurts for weddings, festivals and community events.