

Volunteering with the Yukon Quest

The spirit of the Yukon Quest is true to its northern soul. The trail runs across frozen rivers, climbs four mountain ranges, and passes through isolated northern communities. With temperatures often dropping to 40 below, 50 mph winds, open water and jumble ice all working against the teams; the Yukon Quest is a true test of the capacity of both man and animal. The Yukon Quest serves as a tribute to the strength of the ancient bond that unites them.

The Yukon Quest is a volunteer effort from beginning to end. This epic 1,000 mile international sled dog race would have never been possible without the volunteer efforts of thousands of dedicated individuals, all of whom have lent a hand ... and sometimes much more - over the last 34 years.

We have a very diverse volunteer community that varies from retired travelers in their 70s to local youth giving some of their time through school. We have people from all over the globe, spending from 2 days to 3 months in the area, helping with the race. Some are first timers, some have been coming back for the past 34 years. There are vets, doctors, artists, construction workers, teachers, engineers, and stay at home moms... You name it! This is one of the best things about the Yukon Quest - we attract people from all backgrounds, and everyone shares this amazing experience.

You can volunteer anywhere from a few hours, to weeks or more, whatever suits your travels. There is a great diversity of tasks and duties all through the race that we are sure we can find something for everyone who shows up and offers their time. Whether it's in the office answering requests, building a chute, cooking in the kitchen or checking in race teams, there's a job for everyone!

Volunteers traveling long distances to help us usually stay in the area (Whitehorse or Fairbanks) and volunteer for one or two shifts a day, for as many days as they want. Some go on to volunteer at checkpoints, depending on their interests/skills, and we then ask for a longer commitment. Volunteers working at checkpoints also have to be ready to work overnight on shifts lasting between 8-12 hours. This is much more demanding physically but an oh-so-exciting job!

Volunteer Benefits

The Yukon Quest is an event with over 1,000 volunteers. We recognize how crucial our volunteers are to the success of the race. What we offer is the experience of a lifetime and a chance to get connected with this great race.

Benefits

- ✧ 2018 Volunteer Patch
- ✧ Invitations to Volunteer Appreciation Parties & other YQ events
- ✧ Snacks or meals at checkpoints - when possible
- ✧ Due to limited capacity, the Yukon Quest cannot provide transportation for volunteers traveling to checkpoints or traveling between Whitehorse and Fairbanks. However, for the volunteers signing up for extended stay shifts at Pelly Crossing and Carmacks checkpoints in the Yukon, we will make every effort to assist you in finding transportation.

Please note that the Yukon Quest cannot offer free accommodation, transportation or meal. However, we will make attempts to reduce volunteer out-of-pocket expenses where possible.

Notes on Volunteer Recruitment and Procedures

- ✿ **Checkpoints:** There are some volunteers who are able to assist at each checkpoint. Numbers are determined by the location and infrastructure of each checkpoint. Checkpoints on the Yukon side are more easily accessible and require a large number of volunteers when the race starts in Whitehorse. Whereas checkpoints on the Alaska side can be more remote. If you are interested in volunteering on the trail at a particular checkpoint, please let us know. We ask that you understand that not everyone can go based on specific needs at each checkpoint.
- ✿ **Code of Conduct:** The Yukon Quest has a very strict expectation and code of conduct for its volunteers, staff, mushers and dog handlers. This is the essence of the whole race, and we demand that everyone involved in the Yukon Quest be courteous, polite, and helpful towards mushers, officials, veterinarians and fellow volunteers. This also applies to each volunteer working with the Yukon Quest. Please remember everyone is doing their best, working long hours (in the extreme cold and dead of night), and that we have to be patient and understanding of other people's situations.
- ✿ **Engagement with dog teams:** No volunteers or visitors are allowed near the dog team camps, nor are they allowed to pet and touch the dogs. The same restrictions also apply to handlers, who are there to help their designated musher, and not the dogs. **Only mushers and veterinarians are allowed near the dogs.** These dogs are athletes, and therefore they need their rest at each checkpoint. The only time volunteers are permitted near the dogs during the race is to assist with parking dogs at checkpoints and at the start and finish lines.
- ✿ **Working with Dogs:** Some positions are restricted to those with experience handling or working with sled dogs (for their own safety and yours). Examples include Vet Checks and dog handlers at the start line. Please outline your experience working with dogs in detail.
- ✿ **Expenses:** Volunteers have to remember they will need to personally cover all their expenses during their participation with the race. If we can provide transportation, or a meal, this will be unexpected and at the last minute. Until you are here and working with us, please arrange your own accommodation and plan your budget to include all your food, accommodation and transportation. Some checkpoints will have floor space available for sleeping, flexibility and adaptability are essential.
- ✿ **Meals:** The Yukon Quest does not provide food for volunteers because of the large number of volunteers we welcome. We may, in some circumstances, have meals available. However, volunteers should not expect it or count on it in their expenses calculation.
- ✿ **Media:** In every case where you are approached by the media, please direct them back to Yukon Quest Officials on site. If not possible, we ask that you tell them you are not in a position to comment on the race.
- ✿ **Report to your manager to get your assigned duties:** The logistics managers, checkpoint managers or members of YQ staff are the people to talk to on site when you are wondering what you should be doing, what shifts need to be covered, where should you go and when. These crucial team members will be introduced to you on-site upon your arrival.
- ✿ **Volunteer Registration:** You will find a Registration Form at <http://yukonquest.com/support-yq/volunteer-yukon-quest/volunteer-signup>. If you intend on coming up, please fill out this form and submit it on the website. If you plan on volunteering in both countries, please specify this on the form and we will make sure both offices get the information. You can also feel free to call or email the offices directly if you have any questions.
- ✿ **WHAT WE DON'T DO:** Handling for mushers is not something that we can assist you with. These positions are established well before the race during the summer and fall months. Mushers do not generally bring in new handlers at race time.

Examples of Volunteer Positions

If there is something specific you are interested in or a special skill that you would like to share with us, please let us know!

Food Drop/Straw ~ (Physical/Outdoors) Receive, account for, verify, organize, lift up to 50 lbs in the cold

Silent Auction ~ (Office/Physical/Over the Phone) Reception/Pick up of prizes, identification, print sheets, store, transport, display, manage web entries, etc.

Banquets ~ (Various) We will definitely need a hand in setting up both banquets. This can include setting up the card holders on the tables, merchandise tables, silent auction section, coat checks at the event, tickets sales at the door, and sales during the event (memberships, raffle tickets, merchandise, etc.). If you would rather attend than work, make sure to get your tickets well in advance as both events sell out quickly!

Meet the Musers ~ (Various) Set up, help during the event, bartending, clean up

QuestFest in Whitehorse~ (Various) Welcome visitors, answer inquiries, sell merchandise, banquet and raffle tickets, serve food and drinks, run activities, set up, clean up, etc.

Start and Finish Chute Setup ~ (Physical/Outdoors) Work in the snow, setting up banners, crowd control barriers, safety, dog handlers, etc.

Start Line ~ (Physical/Outdoors) The Start Line Manager will need a large number of volunteers to assist in making the start of the race go smoothly. Tasks could include: crowd control, timer, dog handler, runner, etc.

Security ~ (Outdoors) Control the crowds and the public around the start and finish lines

Checkpoint Volunteers ~ (Various/Outdoors) Checkpoint managers need help around the clock with a wide variety of tasks, a few examples include: setting up the checkpoint, checking in/out teams, organizing food drop/straw for mushers, providing wake-up calls to the mushers, road crossings, cooking food, making coffee, cleaning up, etc.

Finish Line Checkers ~ (Outdoors) Day/night outdoor shifts to check in teams

Chute Take-Down ~ (Physical/Outdoors) Clean-up of both start and finish line chutes and any materials left on site



“It takes a thousand people
to go a thousand miles.”

Volunteering in Fairbanks during Start Week

- ❄ You need to book your own accommodations in hotels, B&Bs, and hostels in town (see our tourism websites mentioned above in the Tourist Information section on pages 17-19 and don't forget about the Yukon Quest discount at Northern Vision Hotels in Whitehorse and La Quinta Inns & Suites in Fairbanks).
- ❄ Hours will generally be during the day getting ready for the big start or running QuestFest. Some evenings might be required for last minute details and the running of events (Meet the Mushers, Start Banquet, etc.).
- ❄ Be ready to do physical work (preparing the chute and start line, managing the public, etc) and/or office work (counting tickets, selling merchandise, welcoming visitors, running activities etc.)
- ❄ You may want to rent a car or book a cab.

Volunteering at Checkpoints during the Race

- ❄ The Yukon Quest does not provide transportation for volunteers between checkpoints and you are required to make your own way up the trail.

**Please note: There may be exceptions for checkpoints in Braeburn, Carmacks and Pelly Crossing. Please contact the Yukon office to make arrangements if you want to volunteer in those two communities. Carpooling with other volunteers is highly encouraged.*

- ❄ **Accommodations are “rugged” (You will often sleep on a floor surrounded by other people and their snores and/or feet.)**
- ❄ **Must be prepared to work a minimum of 8-12 hours shift, often at night.**
- ❄ Be willing to do anything- serving food, moving straw, checking in/out mushers, organizing/moving food drop bags, cleaning up the dog yard, etc. (Capacity to lift 40lbs is preferable).
- ❄ A “go with the flow” approach and ability to adapt are best suited for these positions.
- ❄ **Important** - If you wish to support us in a checkpoint, a member of our staff will contact you and ask a few more questions to make sure this suits our needs and your expectations. Your contact info will be passed along to our checkpoint managers who will then organize volunteer shifts.

Volunteering in Whitehorse during Finish Week

Same as in Fairbanks with the following difference -

- ❄ Must be ready to work late night shifts when mushers are expected to cross the finish line in the middle of the night... don't forget they've been in the cold and darkness for days now, so a warm greeting back to civilization is always welcome!



Volunteer Testimonials

Here are a few testimonials from past volunteers, some of whom keep coming back to give their time and energy year after year!

"I shall always be very grateful to the exceptionally friendly Yukon Quest organizers for offering their volunteers so many diverse opportunities to support this event and experience truly amazing dogs racing through a breathtakingly beautiful wilderness." - **Frithjof Praetsch, Hannover, Germany**

"Volunteering for the Quest has given me unbelievable, once in a lifetime experiences that could only possibly be surpassed by actually running in the Quest. By becoming a volunteer you are welcomed with open arms into the Quest family." - **Fintan Morrissey, Kilkenny, Ireland**

"The beauty of Yukon/Alaska, the wonderful people you work with in supporting this fantastic adventure, the communities that you interact with, the mushers and their dogs, this is human beings at their best working in one of the last great wildernesses. To stand and watch the northern lights, to glimpse the wildlife, to experience the flora and fauna... this is living!! Hope this helps! Regards to all, have a great race! Hugs, G." - **Gordon Thompson, an Englishman presently living in the Italian Dolomites.**

"Out of this entire experience – I want to relay to new people who want to come and volunteer at this event...you will not be sorry. This will be one of the most incredible life-changing experiences of your life. I not only fell in love with the landscape and beauty of the Yukon, but I also experienced the kindness, the sheer generosity and love of the people." -

Cara Bissonette, White Rock, BC, Canada



Come and celebrate
35 Years
with us!



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