



Alex Forestier

THE LATEST

## These Luxury Camping Trips Are Made for Black Travelers Who Want to Explore Outdoors

*Led by chef Rashad Frazier, Camp Yoshi trips also come with gourmet meals.*

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It was on a family camping trip to **Montana's Glacier National Park** this past summer, that chef Rashad Frazier's dream of what would become Camp Yoshi first took shape. As he and his wife Shequita shared photos of glacially carved valleys and saw-toothed cliffs, they received a flurry of both awe and concern from loved ones. *Isn't it dangerous?* friends and family texted. *Do you feel safe?*

“With the pandemic, George Floyd’s murder by a police officer, and the social unrest that followed, they were stunned to see us so off the grid,” Frazier says. “But we never felt more relaxed. Having found our rhythm, we wanted to help others discover theirs, too.”

With the recently-launched **Camp Yoshi**, a multi-day adventure that pairs gourmet cooking with wilderness experiences, Frazier wants to bolster people of color’s confidence in traveling to remote places—and give them the tools to make venturing into the wilderness a lifelong endeavor.

For the North Carolina native, who began attracting a following in 2012 with his lifestyle brand, **Pulled Together**, and later with his catering platform **Yoshi Jenkins**, it’s all part of a longstanding effort to empower other people of color in various aspects of their lives. Frazier is a nature enthusiast, childhood summers camping at his parents’ lakeside home having formed an early love for the outdoors, but he knows there are barriers to getting out there—something he learned on a **national park**-hopping road trip at age 17. “As amazing as [being outside] sounds, there was also fear,” says Frazier. “That’s the trauma of camping for many African-Americans, passed down through generations. Getting outside, in the woods, was often associated with danger.”

With all of this in mind, Frazier announced Camp Yoshi’s inaugural four-day culinary adventure last fall. Out of a hailstorm of interest, he selected six Black professional men. Most had little or no camping experience.



Rashad Frazier cooking huevos rancheros near the John Day River Aaron Robinson

On a crisp morning in October, Frazier and his brother Ron, a master of routes and logistics, assembled the group and headed east from his current homebase of **Portland, Oregon**, to the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, making frequent stops to inhale pine-scented forests and gawk at heart-stopping mountain panoramas.

Five hours later, they pulled into their campsite alongside the rippling John Day river. Frazier set up his cooking station and two bartenders (part of his production crew) began mixing cocktails. The campers, meanwhile, unpacked their gear and assembled the **tents**, a first time experience for most. Frazier continued to push them out of their comfort zones, encouraging them to take a dip in the river.

“In my head I was like, ‘Get in a river! In October?’ quipped Ornette Coleman, 46, a web designer from **Baltimore** who joined the trip. “Sure enough, I jumped in. It was a highlight.”

Though Frazier had considered traveling ahead of the group to set up camp, he decided to wait to ascertain the team’s comfort level with putting in the effort themselves. To his delight,

everyone enthusiastically volunteered for everything: the driving, dishwashing, fire building, even managing the leave-no-trace porta-potty.

This is what Frazier means when he says he wants to give his clients the tools to take future trips on their own, and what differentiates Camp Yoshi from other luxe wilderness experiences: Yes, an expert chef prepares a daily menu of delicacies—fresh caught lingcod, braised short ribs—and, yes, there are whiskey drinks so good you could find them at a **big city cocktail bar**, but that decadence is paired with team building and the challenges of a rugged camping trip.

## The Brew Boys

Are you still there?

► YES, CONTINUE PLAYING

Sharing the camp tasks united the group of strangers right away. “Off the strength of Rashad and Ron, a collaborative tone was established from the git-go,” says Keenon Perry, 40, a photographer from Teaneck, New Jersey. “If we needed to unload gear, it wasn’t like people were standing around watching. We understood immediately this was going to be a shared experience.”

The next campsite, which the caravan drove to the following day, was even more remote—in the middle of the sun-dried, cracked Alvord Desert, separated from the moist Pacific Ocean winds by the Coast Range and the Cascade Mountains. “We were so remote, our phones didn’t work,” says Michael Brown, 45, a financial compliance associate also from New Jersey. Brown



admitted to feeling some trepidation about how a convoy of three trucks with Black men in rural Oregon might be perceived. They had not seen, in two days of travel, another person of color, nor would they on the entire trip. “It turned out to be fine,” he says.

For Perry, the experience can be summed up simply: “We were there existing and honoring our environment just like everybody else.” That, and the meals Frazier managed to whip up in even the remotest of locations. (Just one such standout: A surprise serving of gourmet sloppy joes—braised turkey and chicken drenched in a thick gravy of brown sugar, birds-eye chile peppers, fresh garlic, ginger and soy sauce, served on toasted brioche buns with onion—at a lookout 9,734 feet high on Steens Mountain).



The campers at the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument Aaron Robinson

Ultimately, the trip produced the transformative effect that Frazier had hoped for. For Ornette Coleman, his only previous experience camping had been an overnight at the Kings Dominion theme park in Virginia when he was 10. “After Camp Yoshi, I want to be able to do this with my two sons.”

That evening, for their final meal, Frazier sent his campers out in style with eight bone-in, New York strip steaks, that he purchased, fresh cut, from a local farm. He pan fried crispy Yukon gold potatoes, pre-cooked in duck fat confit style, with garlic sage and rosemary. Frazier toasted the group for the trip's success. "You survived!" he said. "Now go take your family and friends camping."

*Reservations are available now for Camp Yoshi 2021 with itineraries to Moab, Utah; Telluride, Colorado; and Oregon.*

EXPLORE OUTDOORS

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