

Pricing

Because the courses are structured differently, it's impossible to determine some costs accurately. For instance, we didn't include accommodations costs in the LFI package because Ayoob comes to you. Airfare costs to Thunder Ranch can vary, of course, depending on your origination point.

However, here are the major cost factors with reasonable fee estimates attached to them.

Ayoob's LFI-1*

Course price	\$600
Ammo (500 rounds)	\$160
Meals (\$20/day)	\$60
Mileage (60 miles/day)	\$54
Total	\$874

Thunder Ranch Defensive Handgun I**

Course price (5-day)	\$900
Ammo (1,000 rounds)	\$320
Airfare	\$300
Accommodations (5 days)	\$350
Car rental (1 week)	\$250
Total	\$2,120

*LFI notes: Also requires time off work of one day. Fee is paid in advance.

** Thunder Ranch notes: Three-day course (minus night shooting costs \$550. Accommodations at YO Ranch includes all meals, including a packed lunch each day. Three-day hotel rate is \$210. Time off work: Five days.

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shoot well enough to survive nearly any attack. It was reassuring to see a grandmother, who had never fired a gun before the LFI class, shoot the center out of her target during the last day's shooting qualification test. The class was about far more than simply shooting your way out of trouble. It gave students hands-on demonstrations of real-life situations that most of us never would have considered to be a threat. One lesson was that all students were required to run a distance of 21 feet (7 yards is the FBI-determined average distance for gunfights) against the clock. The slowest runner, a man of age 75 with a bad leg, ran that distance in well under 2 seconds. Another man of age 60 with bad knees made it in 1.5 seconds. If either of these men had been an attacker with a knife, the best shot in the world would have had a tough time stopping him in that time. Until we students experienced this, not many of us believed we would be in danger from a knife-wielding attacker standing across a room.

During the video presentations we were given what were essentially police training films including shoot/don't shoot scenarios in which we had to decide how to act. Some of these scenes were of typical holdup encounters. One scary number presented in the LFI class was that you have, perhaps, one second to decide to shoot or not shoot in a violent encounter. A jury, trying you, has much longer to think about it than you did.

Thunder Ranch

We also attended Thunder Ranch, in Mountain Home, Texas, a short time ago and took the entry-level class there called Defensive Handgun I. Clint Smith, proprietor of Thunder Ranch, also requires students to prove that they're on the side of the good guys, via a letter from the local law. Thunder Ranch, like Ayoob's LFI, is very busy, so plan well in advance. If you can't spend five full days in Texas there

is a three-day version of the course offered, but it leaves out some of the more important training, such as night shooting.

Thunder Ranch is located just outside Mountain Home, Texas, which is a short drive northwest from San Antonio. There are a few cabins at Thunder Ranch at which the student can stay if he makes arrangements well in advance, but he'll have to bring his own food. Students can also overnight at one of the motels in Mountain Home, but they're about fifty miles from the ranch. We chose to stay at the nearby YO Ranch, which provides a packed lunch every day. There are no food facilities at, or near, Thunder Ranch, so the YO solved our midday eating problem.

The range and shooting facilities at Clint Smith's Thunder Ranch are as good as any available anywhere in the world. Many government spec ops units train there, as well as individuals from all over the world. In addition to several isolated and berm-guarded outdoor firing ranges for handgun, rifle, submachinegun and shotgun instruction, Thunder also has a building called the "Terminator," which has movable internal walls so that many different scenarios can be set up for house-clearing drills, and the student never sees the same setup twice. There is also a five-story tower for more specialized instruction, and also a "town" or street scene, neither of which were used in our basic class.

The first day of the Thunder Ranch Defensive Handgun One course began with a lengthy but never dull lecture, delivered in Clint Smith's rapid-fire and very intense manner. Smith, an ex-Marine and survivor of two tours of Viet Nam, keeps the students' full attention at all times. In addition, during the five-day class there were many on-range lectures as well, including demonstrations and question-answer sessions. We students who had traveled to this remote area of Texas usually got