

## Winter Backpacking Tips and Tricks



Backpacking in the winter? You bet! Think of it: no mosquitoes or ticks, no crowds, no sticky humidity. What could be better? The nights are crystal clear, too - perfect for stargazing. Of course, you need to be prepared for the conditions. Following are some tips and tricks to help you enjoy your adventure.

- **Pack lots of food.** You'll burn more energy than normal just to stay warm, so pack carbohydrates. Eat during rest breaks and have a snack at the end of the day while supper is cooking. Have some candy and/or granola bars. Pack a chunk of cheese and cut off bite-sized pieces for snacks. One nice thing about winter camping is that you can carry food that would spoil in warm, summertime temperatures.

- **Drink lots of water.** You won't feel like you're sweating like you do in the summertime, but the dry winter air will sap your moisture plenty fast. Drink up - a lot. Rescuers say dehydration is just as big a problem in the winter, if not more so, as it is in the summer.

- **Keep your tent ventilated.** Ventilation is important so your warm, moist breath can escape. Otherwise your sleeping bag and all your gear will be frosty in the morning.

- **Heat water before bedtime** and fill a Thermos bottle with it. Keep it inside the tent or even, on especially cold nights, inside your sleeping bag with you. In the morning you'll have hot water for coffee, hot chocolate, hot cider, and/or instant oatmeal while you're cooking breakfast or breaking camp.

- **Put your boots inside the tent**, or even inside your sleeping bag on especially cold nights, overnight. If they're wet or muddy, turn your sleeping bag's stuff sack inside out and put the boots inside it (so the mud gets on the outside, not the side that will contact your sleeping bag).

- **Don't breathe into your sleeping bag.** The moisture from your bag will make you cold and clammy.

- **Warm up before bedtime.** Do jumping jacks. Go for a brisk walk. Do something to warm yourself right before crawling into your sleeping bag. Your body heat will warm the bag; the bag won't warm you.

- **Answer the call of nature before bedtime.** Besides avoiding the unpleasantness of having to get up in the middle of a frigid night, you'll empty yourself of a reservoir of water that your system would otherwise have to expend energy keeping warm.

## WHY GO HIKING IN WINTER?



1. No crowds. You'll have the trails, the campsites, and the views all to yourself.
2. No bugs. Mosquitoes and ticks are long gone. You can leave the DEET at home.
3. No poison ivy or nettles. Poison ivy vines snaking up trees retain the Evil Plant Oil year-round, but you won't have to worry about brushing against those leaves.
4. Different scenery. Snow, ice formations along creek edges, and woods with no leaves all create new and different scenes than you see in the summer.
5. Photographic opportunities. See number 4.
6. Good food. You can pack food for snacks or meals that would spoil in the summertime heat.
7. Hike off-trail if there's snow. Deep snow cover means you won't make new trails or ruts, so you can get off trail and navigate through the woods to places you might not get to visit in the summertime.
8. Prevent cabin fever. Get a regular dose of the sun's vitamin D and keep your mood up all winter long.
9. Fitness. Hiking, hiking through snow, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing are all great exercise. Forget the stuffy gym and enjoy the invigorating fresh air of the winter woods and fields.
10. Be a real outdoors-person. Getting outside year-round gives you a unique perspective and education on what the natural world is like all year long.
11. Learn new things. Winter is a great time to learn animal tracking, especially the morning after a fresh snowfall. See the wing marks where a hawk or owl swooped down for a tasty mouse breakfast. Find where a deer spent the night.

# The Ten Essentials for Hiking/Backpacking

The "Ten Essentials" is a list of items that can save your life in the event of an outdoor emergency. You probably don't need these items on a Greenways walk or urban hike but we strongly urge you to carry them with you on any backcountry outing. Consider the Ten Essentials as an insurance policy against the unexpected. You will not use these items on every trip but at some point during your hiking career you will be glad you have them along.



## Ten Essentials

1. Map
2. Compass
3. Flashlight/headlamp (be sure to have an extra set of batteries that fit your flashlight/headlamp)
4. Extra food (enough for one extra day)
5. Extra clothing
6. Rain gear ( jacket and pants-always carry rain gear even if the sun is out)
7. [First aid supplies](#) (be sure to include an extra day of any medication you are taking or might need in an emergency)
8. Pocket knife
9. Matches (stored in a water tight container in addition to matches or a butane lighter)
10. Fire starter (can be candles, chemical fire starter, backpack size fire logs)

For a more detailed discussion on the Ten Essentials, go to:

<http://www.twohikers.org/Gear/TenEssentials.htm>

## Other Essentials

11. Space blanket (used as windbreaker, heat reflector, signaling device)
12. Sunglasses
13. Toilet paper
14. Extra socks/liners
15. Head covering (for rain/warmth)
16. Duct tape
17. Insect repellent
18. Iodine tablets or water pump (carry extra water if water location is a potential problem)
19. Trash bag
20. "In case of emergency" card (list name and number to call in an emergency, medications, medical conditions and whether or not you are a contact lenses wearer). You may want to pack your driver's license and insurance card in a plastic bag for protection.

## **Participant's Responsibilities**

Each outing participant has the responsibility to:

1. Acquaint themselves with the outing and verify with the scheduled leader that the outing is within the participant's capability and experience.
2. Arrive on time at the designated meeting spot.
3. Show up for the outing properly clothed and equipped.
4. Leave all trails, camps and surrounding areas in as good or better condition than found.
5. Completely extinguish campfires before leaving site.
6. Remain in the trip area until all party members have returned unless otherwise agreed upon with the leader.