

## Winter Camping

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Are you a fair weather camper? Winter camping, with its barren trees, provides a real sense of the land and offers views that seem to go forever. Campgrounds and trails are empty, giving a special beauty and solitude to those hardy souls who would venture outside when the thermometer drops. Winter campers know that the secret of staying warm is the right selection of clothing, equipment and food. And now the best news of all: you won't need to buy a whole new set of gear. You probably have most everything you need already.

### Clothing

When preparing their clothing list, winter campers think COLD

- Cover head, hands and feet
- Overheating produces inner moisture
- Loose layers are better than one thick layer
- Dry means warm

Most of the body's heat is lost through the nape of the neck and the top of the head. At forty (40) degrees, you lose one-half of your body heat through your bare head. At five (5) degrees you lose three-quarters! A wool knit hat is on every winter camper's list. Mittens are warmer than gloves since there is no heat loss around each finger. Carry gloves when a job requires the use of fingers. Wrist coverings are also important to warmth. They control heat loss from the top of your mitten or the bottom of your jacket. Wrist coverings can be an extension of mittens or separate knitted wristlets. Wear wool outer socks with polypropylene inner liners. Your boots should have been recently waterproofed with Snowseal<sup>®</sup> to help keep moisture out.

To function properly, your body must maintain an even temperature (98.6 degrees Fahrenheit) around the vital organs of your torso. When your body is producing more than enough heat, your blood vessels dilate to permit full blood flow to the skin's surface where the excess heat can radiate away. Overheating produces moisture that robs body heat. Wet insulation drains heat 240 times faster than dry insulation! When cold threatens your body's equilibrium, the blood to your arms and legs is restricted in order to keep your torso warm. The blood flow to the fingers and toes can be cut back as much as 99 percent. This is why your hands and feet get numb when you are cold, and why they are particularly susceptible to frostbite.

Wearing clothing in several lightweight layers lets you fine tune your cold weather comfort by adding or subtracting layers with changes in the weather or in your level of activity. The layer next to the skin should trap insulating dead air for warmth close to your body and allow body moisture to escape. Polypropylene or wool / cotton blend long underwear are excellent choices for your inner layer. Both are warm when wet and wick moisture away from your skin. A lightweight or mid-weight wool shirt and

pants over the long underwear forms your second layer. Wool is an excellent insulator that is abrasion resistant and naturally water resistant. A third layer consisting of a wool sweater or a down or synthetic fiber vest keeps your body's torso warm. This layer is easily removed during periods of strenuous activity. The fourth layer should be windproof fiber that keeps you dry and protects that layer of warm air that you have carefully harbored. Even a seemingly gentle breeze can radically reduce the body's ability to maintain heat.

Winter campers recognize the importance of controlling heat and staying dry. A simple rule of thumb for all winter campers is to put on a layer when you are cold and take one off when you are hot. Some final advice on clothes: take twice as much as you think you need and, if the clothes aren't big, they are too small. Think layers!

## **Equipment**

Just like summer camping, you will need a tent, sleeping bag, stove and pack. But here are some points to consider. That two-man tent that made it through the warm months may be a bit crowded for two campers with their additional winter gear. Make sure that the tent's seams have been recently sealed and that you use a plastic ground cloth to prevent excessive condensation buildup and water seepage.

Your sleeping system should start with a closed cell pad. Remember, sleeping on the ground is like sleeping on ice. Tests have shown that 75% of the heat loss is downward to the ground. Add blankets or a lightweight liner to your sleeping bag if you are concerned about the cold. Before you go to bed, always put on dry clothes! If you have damp clothes that must be worn the next day, dry them out by putting them inside your sleeping bag. Wear a knit hat cap or a hooded sweatshirt to bed for added warmth. If it is especially cold, turn your bag's stuff sack inside out, put your boots inside, and put them in your sleeping bag, too!

Stoves operate differently in cold weather than they do in warm. When was the last time you cleaned and performed maintenance on your stove? Make sure that you check your stove at home before heading for the woods. Consider taking along a back-up stove. Butane stoves work poorly in cold weather. You may have to warm the cartridges next to your body before they will work. Even white gas stoves may need to be primed with Fire Paste. Make sure that your pots have tight fitting lids in order to reduce cooking time. You will use three times as much fuel in cold weather.

Be prepared to carry more equipment and travel less. If your old pack was filled carrying your summer gear, you won't have room for your additional winter clothing and equipment.

## **Food**

What is different about cooking meals in the winter? Well, it is cold outside, so plan meals that are high in calories but simple to prepare. Because you will be carrying more weight in clothing and equipment and combating the cold, your body will need over 5,000 calories per day. Since that calorie count is more than twice what an adult man normally needs, it is a great time to pig out! One way to increase the number of calories is to plan meals that are high in fats and complex carbohydrates. Double up on

butter or margarine and add grated cheese to everything. Dried soups, pasta, cereals, pancake mix and rice will also allow you to carry lots of calories without a lot of weight.

One of the easiest ways to simplify meal preparation is to spend time at home (where it is warm) putting your meals together. Put each meal's ingredients with its cooking instructions in a plastic bag and label it "Friday dinner" or "Saturday breakfast". And remember, because it is cold out, you can use some of those perishables that would spoil in the summer. Plan easy to cook, one-pot meals. For breakfast, plan on a hot cereal like oatmeal (often with apple, cinnamon and other flavorings), granola or granola bars. Premix these cereals with powdered milk, sugar, and butter before leaving home and then just add water to serve. Hot Tang, spiced with a little cinnamon, makes a great morning drink. At lunch, stop for some cheese, salami, granola bars, sardines or chunky peanut butter packed in a tube. Make sure that you have some GORP (nuts, chocolate or butterscotch bits, sunflower seeds, raisins and miniature marshmallows) in a convenient pocket, so you can eat while you walk.

Plan to arrive in camp at least one and a half hours before sunset to begin setting up camp and preparing your evening meal. Use your imagination for supper ideas – an easy one-pot conglomeration of anything goes. Start with a hot cup of creamy soup. The single serving packets are available in most supermarkets. The main course can be prepared from a pre-packaged dinner of pasta, rice, or mashed potatoes and topped with canned chicken, tuna or beef. Remember that winter appetites will be stronger. A pre-packaged Lipton dinner for four and one six (6) ounce can of chicken, tuna or beef will only feed two hungry campers. Winter also provides an opportunity to experiment with spicy, hot foods. Cayenne pepper and salsas are vasodilators and thus can warm up cold fingers and toes. Hot drinks are also advisable to replenish fluid losses during the day. Hot tea, coffee, chocolate and lemonade (all with a dab of butter floating on top for extra calories) are a great final drink before you go to bed and are vital to both comfort and health.

The key to winter camping, like any other outing, is preparation. However, with winter camping, if someone forgets the matches and cannot build a fire, it may mean irreversible hypothermia. Make a list and check it twice! Set up a mock camp in the living room to see that everything is there and that it functions correctly. Borrow needed gear, because it is probably gathering dust in a friend's basement. Then listen to the weather reports, pick your location and enjoy the winter!

## Winter Camping Checklist

<b>Clothing</b>	<b>Equipment</b>
> hiking boots, recently waterproofed	> pack
> long underwear - polypropylene or wool	> pack cover or plastic trash bag
> socks, nylon or wool, 2 pair	> daypack (if you base camp)
> sock liners, polypropylene, 2 pair	> sleeping bag in waterproof stuff sack
> shirts, wool, long-sleeve, 2	> liner for sleeping bag or wool blanket
> pants, wool or fleece-lined, 2 pair	> sleeping pad
> sweater, wool	> ground sheet or space blanket
> jacket, down or pile	> wide mouth canteen, one quart, 2
> mittens or gloves	> mess kit (plastic bowl, insulated cup, spoon)
> bandannas, 2	> flashlight or headlamp, with new batteries
> wool cap or balaclava	> sunglasses (optional)
> outer shell, waterproof, with hood	> pocket knife
> rain gear (if outer shell is not waterproof)	> first aid kit (moleskin, foot powder, toilet paper, sunscreen, lip balm)
> scarf, wool (optional)	> toilet kit (toothbrush, toothpaste, small mirror, biodegradable soap, small towel)
> gaiters (optional)	
> booties, down or synthetic (optional)	
<b>Crew Equipment</b>	
> patrol first aid kit	> stove (1 per 4 scouts, plus one backup)
> propane or gas fuel bottles	> cooking pots, with lids
> matches and/or lighter	> cooking utensils
> shovel	> nylon cord, fifty (50) feet
> paper, all purpose (AP) or toilet	> bear bag
> tent, seams recently sealed (1 per 4 scouts)	
> fire paste (optional - needed only with white gas stoves)	
> clean up kit (green scrubbie, handiwipes, biodegradable soap, plastic washing pots)	