

Appalachian Mountain Club

Winter Backpacking Equipment Checklist

The following equipment is required on winter backpacking trips, in addition to ordinary winter hiking gear. *Be familiar with and test your gear beforehand, particularly tents and stoves.* Items marked with an asterisk (*) are often shared among 2-3 participants – contact the trip leader to discuss requirements. **The trip leader's decisions on equipment for a given trip will be final.**

Camping Gear

- **Sleeping bag:** Winter bag, with hood, rated at least minus 10 to minus 20 degrees F. Two bags may be used together if one is smaller than the other (so the outer bag does not compress the loft of the inner bag). Check with the leader.
- **Sleeping pad(s):** Use two pads (generally a self-inflating pad plus a foam pad) with a combined R-value of at least 5. Some newer pads have an R-value of at least 5 on their own. Foam pads also used for insulation while standing and sitting during meals.
- ***Tent:** Either a Winter tent or a three-season tent with steep walls and minimal mesh (although three-season tents are not recommended for above treeline).
- ***Snow stakes and/or cord** (for “deadmen” snow anchors) should be carried for each tent. Some use plastic bags filled with snow as a deadman.
- ***Snow shovel:** Strong, collapsible, mountaineering type. For many uses, from digging down to a stream, carving out a campsite, emergency shelter building, and so on.

Cooking Equipment

- ***Stove:** White gas stove, such as MSR Whisperlite, Dragonfly or XGK. No canister stoves (unless approved by the leader). No alcohol stoves.
- ***Wind screen:** designed for your stove.
- ***Base for stove:** Either commercial metal base or home-made board or stand to prevent hot stove from sinking into snow.
- ***Fuel:** in labeled, aluminum bottles. Generally 4-6 oz. white gas per person per day, although this varies with conditions and stove types. If you are melting water for snow, bring twice what you would bring in summer.
- ***Cook-kit:** Pot or kettle with cover for melting snow and boiling water. Some bring a separate pot for cooking meals (although meals that do not require separate cooking are preferred). Pot gripper, dipping cup, stirring spoons.
- **Personal mess-kit:** Insulated mug, bowl, spoon, etc. An insulated cozy for your bowl is recommended.
- **Matches/lighter:** Butane lighters, if kept warm and dry, usually work, although always bring matches in a waterproof container.

Other Gear

- **Backpack:** Large enough to contain all your gear plus your share of group gear and comfortable to wear with weight.
- **Straps/cords:** To attach snowshoes and other gear to the outside of your pack as needed. Bring extras.
- **Camp clothes:** Fleece or other synthetic, wool or down. Bring ample insulating layers (such as thick fleece or pile jacket or synthetic or down parka, insulated pants, booties, warm mittens) to remain warm when standing around in camp for an extended period.
- **Headlamp:** Always bring extra batteries. Many prefer lithium batteries in Winter.

Food for Camp

- **Hot Drinks:** Tea, hot chocolate, coffee, Jell-O or other hot drink mixes.
- **Dinner:** Either freeze-dried dinners or “Glop”: Instant rice, potatoes, couscous or noodles (use egg or Ramen noodles, which are faster to cook than ordinary pasta) with veggies, soup mix, sauce, cheese, precooked meat (diced in advance), etc.
- **Breakfast:** Hot cereal (instant recommended), nuts, dried fruit, powdered milk, bagels, cheese (diced in advance), etc.
- **Extra munchies:** To bring into tent with you to help keep you warm at night.

In general, beware of foods that will freeze or that will be difficult or time consuming to cook or eat in the cold, and emphasize foods that are light in weight and high in calories. Use Zip Lock bags or small resealable plastic containers. Organize meals beforehand and package separately.

Optional Gear (depending on tastes and conditions)

- **Bivy sack or sleeping bag cover**
- **Sleeping clothes:** Extra underwear, socks, balaclava, depending on your sleeping bag and habits.
- **“Pee bottle”:** to avoid trips outside at night (well marked to avoid confusion with beverage bottles).