

WBC Snow Travel Basics 2023

Why Go?

- New environment
- Instant Solitude
- Fun to smoothly move on top of bushes and rocks and NO BUGS!

Where to Go?

- Mt Pinos
- Angeles Crest Highway: Mt Waterman, Cooper Cyn
- Mt San Jacinto- Palm Springs Tram
- Mt San Geronimo= Alpine
- Mt Baldy=Alpine
- Mammoth Lakes, Rock Creek Lakes, South Lake
- Yosemite NP Badger Pass
- Spring Backcountry Skiing
- Mountaineering Snow Climbing
- Lee Vining Ice Climbing and Glacier Climbs & Couloirs

When to Go?

- Locally- Right after Storm if Accessible
- Mid Winter go to low angle snow= closed roads
- Avalanche Awareness and Forecasts
- Spring in Sierras= April to June
- Stable Snowpack, Warm temps, few storms
- Freeze/Thaw and Postholing
- Dangerous stream crossings when Big Thaw is on.

Hazards

- Cold and wet clothes, feet, head, and hands
- Winds and snow loads on tent
- Sunburn, snow blindness
- Trench foot
- Stream Crossings and Snow Bridges
- Tree Wells
- Abrasions from falls and slides
- Blisters from stiff boots. Tape heels & react to hot spots.
- Lower leg injuries
- Cuts from ski edges, crampon punctures

Gear!

- Clothes=3 layers= base layer, dynamic mid layer(s), hard shell, big puffy in camp,
- Pants-soft shell pants, hard shell pants, puffy pants
- Don't wet out clothes with sweat= dress for cool, eat snack fuel, and keep moving. Bundle up at breaks.
- Glacier Glasses and Goggles
- Dry base layer for sleeping?
- Hands- Liner gloves, spring ski glove, gauntlet gloves, warm mitten, extras

- Head- Sun hat, warm beanie, hood on puffy, buff
- Traction devices- Snowshoes, skis, micro spikes, crampons
- Boots and Down booties
- Socks and extras
- Gaiters
- Trekking poles with big baskets
- Ice Axe and how to arrest yourself
- Avy Transceiver, Avalanche probe, shovel + Avalanche Course
- Headlamp, lantern, battery pack, Sat Comms, and Phone in the Cold
- Extra straps to carry snowshoes, hip pack for snacks & to keep things warm.
- Paper map in gal. Ziplock bag.
- Compression stuff sack, sacks to stay organized.

Snow Camping GEAR

- Tent for wind and snow loads
- Snow stakes
- Winter sleeping bag 0 (?) degree
- Sleeping Pads= Foam pad + Inflatable = R value over 5 combined
- Liquid fuel stove to melt snow with big pot and stove platform
- Sit pad
- Water Bottles with Wide mouth and thermal wrap that will hold boiling water (bladder hoses freeze and you risk soaking insulation inside pack)
- Water treatment in the cold=melt snow, boil, UV, chemicals, choose sources carefully.
- Pulk = Sled

Making Camp

- Out of Avalanche zone- Look up!
- Possible access to running water (Don't fall in!)
- Wind break if possible
- Above cold sinks
- Stamp down tent platform and let snow set up
- Anchor tent while setting up so it doesn't blow away
- Bury deadmen tent stakes, dig vestibule step down
- Dig snow kitchen= seats and table
- Stamp down travel paths around camp
- Toilet and LNT. Cover urine, pack out TP

References:

“Allen & Mike’s Really Cool Backcountry Ski Book” by Allen O’Bannon and Mike Clelland

“Ultralight Winter Travel” by Justin Lichter and Shawn Forry

“The Mountaineering Handbook” by Craig Connally

“Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills” from Mountaineers Books

BackpackingLight.com

