WINTER DAY HIKING

GEAR LIST

for trips guided by ADK's Education Dept.

UPDATED FALL 2026



having proper equipment is MANDATORY for your and your group's safety

Thorough preparation is necessary for a successful backcountry experience.

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Please contact ADK Education staff members with any questions.

while packing, please note

LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE

REQUIRED = MUST HAVE TO PARTICIPATE

Recommended = highly desirable

Optional = users' choice

The items labeled "required" constitute the ADK's best assessment of the personal equipment necessary to reasonably minimize the risks of such a wilderness activity. Because of this, **only participants prepared with the required equipment items will be allowed to participate on ADK trips.** For the safety of the group, the guide reserves the right to deny participation, without reimbursement, to any individual deemed inadequately equipped.

this guide uses the following format:

ITEM IMPORTANCE	Notes, tips & considerations

Please contact ADK Education staff members with any questions.

FOOTWEAR

MATERIALS MAKE A DIFFERENCE. NO COTTON ALLOWED. SEE PAGE 10

WINTER HIKING BOOTS
REQUIRED

Insulated hiking boots are mandatory for your safety.
Summer boots are not appropriate or allowed for winter conditions.
Acceptable winter hiking boots are:

- WARM from insulation intended for winter use
- WATERPROOF to keep feet dry
- GRIPPY from a lugged sole with good traction
- SUPPORTIVE above-ankle height with good laces
- COMFORTABLE from being broken-in and fitting well
- DURABLE to withstand the elements

SNOW SHOES
REQUIRED

Please see page 11 for more information

Snowshoes are available to borrow upon request
Acceptable snowshoes provide:

- ADEQUATE FLOTATION
- AGGRESSIVE TRACTION from crampons under the binding, and along the frame
- HEEL RISERS for support on steep sections
- COMFORT from a secure and easy to adjust bindings
- DURABILITY from a strong, secure frame

If you have your own snowshoes but are unsure if they are sufficient, please ask!

MICROSPIKES
RECOMMENDED

Please see page 11 for more information

MICROspikes are most helpful on sections of bare ice, such as during freeze-thaw periods. It is important to note that microspikes do not have flotation like snowshoes. Per regulation, if 8 inches or more of snow is measured on or off trail, hikers must wear skis or snowshoes. It is the expectation that hikers will swap gear as much as necessary depending on the needs and conditions of the trail.

WINTER HIKING SOCKS
REQUIRED

NO COTTON ALLOWED (see page 10 for material notes)
One pair of thick, warm socks performs best and may be accompanied by a pair of thin liner socks. Please DO NOT wear two pairs of thick socks—this can decrease circulation and make feet colder. A spare pair of hiking socks is required, and two backup pairs are recommended.

GAITERS
RECOMMENDED

Gaiters are highly recommended, as they keep snow and water out of boots. Gaiters are particularly useful in conditions with deep snow and wetter terrain, such as trails/paths that traverse streams.

LINER SOCKS
OPTIONAL

Thin liner socks can help prevent blisters when worn under hiking socks. Remember, no cotton allowed!

OUTERWEAR

MATERIALS MAKE A DIFFERENCE. NO COTTON ALLOWED. SEE PAGE 10

OUTER SHELL JACKET **REQUIRED**	The outermost top layer must be waterproof with a hood. A rain jacket or softshell jacket that is large enough to fit over all insulating layers. Breathable materials are recommended. Desirable features include ventilation zippers in the armpits, Velcro closing cuffs, and protective flaps over zippers.
OUTER SHELL PANTS **REQUIRED**	As with the top layer, the outermost bottom layer must be waterproof and allow for enough room to fit over all insulating layers. This can be either softshell pants or rain pants. Breathable materials are recommended. Full-length zippers can be helpful to remove layers easily.
WINTER HAT **REQUIRED**	Two insulated hats are necessary for warmth. Fleece or wool are ideal. A hat liner can be helpful.
FACE PROTECTION **REQUIRED**	There are days when it is so cold that any exposed skin is a serious safety concern. A balaclava or neck gaiter is necessary for face protection. Petroleum jelly can also help provide insulation on exposed skin.
MITTENS **REQUIRED**	Mittens need to be warm, insulated, and waterproof. Best practice is to layer a pair of insulated fleece or wool mittens under waterproof over mitts that act like a shell layer. Two pairs of insulated mittens are required.
GLOVE LINERS **REQUIRED**	A thin liner glove adds insulation and can be worn alone in milder conditions. A spare pair is recommended.

INSULATING LAYERS

Layering is an art, especially in the wintertime. All layers should be comfortable and easy to move around in when worn together. The weather also plays a substantial role with layering and is impossible to predict with 100% accuracy. The required items represent the minimum of what is reasonable for most trips. **Your guide can provide tailored recommendations and advice closer to your trip.**

For more substantial layering notes, see page 12.

MATERIALS MAKE A DIFFERENCE. NO COTTON ALLOWED. SEE PAGE 10

INSULATING JACKET REQUIRED	An insulated winter jacket should be large enough to fit over all layers. This is typically a puffy jacket. Since down loses its insulating properties when wet, synthetic insulation is preferred.
BASELAYER TOPS REQUIRED	A long-sleeve top that is warm, breathable, and moisture wicking. A spare baselayer top to pack is required.
INSULATING TOPS REQUIRED	Two midweight warm layers are required, one to be worn and one to pack. Fleece or wool works well here.
INSULATED HIKING PANTS REQUIRED*	Midweight insulated pants provide an additional layer of warmth. Any hiking pants should be quick drying, breathable conditions, durable, and comfortable. Depending on weather, having additional warmth from wool, fleece, or other synthetic material is helpful. Please note bibs or snowpants will NOT work as they are too bulky and heavy for hiking.
BASELAYER PANTS REQUIRED	A long pant that is warm, breathable, and moisture wicking. A spare baselayer bottom to pack is required.
VEST OPTIONAL	Vests provide core insulation. Some people prefer vests as they provide freedom of movement and are less bulky under other layers.

GENERAL GEAR

DAYPACK **REQUIRED**	A winter daypack is typically around 40L. Any pack should be durable, comfortable and large enough for food, water, gear, insulating layers, emergency equipment, and more.
WATERPROOF PACK SYSTEM **REQUIRED**	**A system for keeping gear dry is mandatory,** regardless of anticipated weather conditions. **Acceptable methods include:** • Pack liner (recommended): A contractor bag or thick garbage bag is a great way to waterproof any pack. • Dry bags: having a smaller, dedicated waterproof bag to store essential emergency gear will help keep it protected. Using smaller bags can also help keep gear organized. • Pack cover: pack covers are a great addition to keep off precipitation. HOWEVER, moisture may still breach the pack through the uncovered areas of a pack. If using a pack cover, an additional waterproof bag to protect essential emergency gear is still necessary.
WINTER WATER STORAGE **REQUIRED**	**An insulated water storage method to carry 2–3L of water is necessary for a successful trip.** Water bottles should be insulated against freezing with commercially available or homemade covers. Covers can be fashioned from wool socks or old pieces of closed cell foam. Bladder-bag systems and hoses will freeze in winter conditions and are not allowed.
FOOD **REQUIRED**	Please bring a lunch and your favorite snacks! All food should be quick and easy to eat while almost frozen. Fueling well helps keep the cold at bay.
HEADLAMP **REQUIRED**	One headlamp with spare batteries* is required. A backup headlamp is highly recommended. *See materials notes on page 10
EYE PROTECTION **REQUIRED**	Ski goggles or sunglasses protect the eyes, face, and skin from the sun, cold, wind, and blowing snow/ice.

MORE GEAR

WHISTLE REQUIRED	Three blows on a whistle is an effective rescue call.
BATHROOM KIT REQUIRED	A WAG bag to pack out solid waste is necessary since catholes are not effective in frozen ground. For more information see page 12.
EMERGENCY BLANKET REQUIRED	Lightweight emergency space blankets add little weight yet provide warmth and shelter.
HAND WARMERS RECOMMENDED	While they should not be the sole strategy for warmth, hand warmers are great in a pinch!
NAVIGATION EQUIPMENT RECOMMENDED	While this is a guided trip, having a paper map and compass (and knowing how to use them) is the best practice for any backcountry adventure.
FIRST AID KIT RECOMMENDED	ADK provides the necessary emergency first aid equipment, but many opt to bring a small personal first-aid kit.
REPAIR KIT RECOMMENDED	Items that can help fix things that break in the field. Common examples include extra snowshoe straps, batteries, duct tape, scissors, and paracord.
TREKKING POLES RECOMMENDED	Trekking poles can help with balance and stability. Snowbaskets are great in the wintertime to keep poles from sinking in the snow.
SIT PAD OPTIONAL	A small foam pad provides insulation from the cold ground.
PERSONAL ITEMS OPTIONAL	Any additional items should be kept to a minimum. Keep in mind items may freeze.

CHECKLIST

FOOTWEAR

- [ ] Winter hiking boots
- [ ] Snowshoes***
- [ ] MICROspikes***
- [ ] Winter hiking socks
- [ ] Gaiters
- [ ] Liner socks*

OUTERWEAR

- [ ] Outer Shell Jacket
- [ ] Winter Jacket
- [ ] Outer Shell Pants
- [ ] Winter Hat
- [ ] Face Protection
- [ ] Mittens
- [ ] Glove Liners

INSULATING LAYERS

- [ ] Baselayer Tops
- [ ] Insulating Tops
- [ ] Baselayer Pants
- [ ] Insulated Pants
- [ ] Hiking Pants
- [ ] Neck Gaiter
- [ ] Vest*

GENERAL GEAR

- [ ] Daypack
- [ ] Waterproof Pack System
- [ ] Winter Water Storage
- [ ] Food
- [ ] Headlamp
- [ ] Eye protection
- [ ] Whistle
- [ ] Bathroom Kit
- [ ] Emergency Blanket
- [ ] Hand Warmers
- [ ] Navigation Equipment
- [ ] First Aid Kit
- [ ] Repair Kit
- [ ] Trekking Poles
- [ ] Sit Pad*
- [ ] Personal Items*

*optional items
***available to borrow upon request

GUIDE ITEMS

The following is a list of group gear provided by ADK for the use of participants as needed.

first-aid kit

bathroom kit

map & compass

stoves & fuel

sleeping bag

sleeping pad

tarp

Please contact ADK Education staff members with any questions.

MATERIALS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

CLOTHING

COTTON

Cotton absorbs and retains seven times its weight in water, drawing heat away from the wearer. For this reason, **cotton clothing is dangerous in the backcountry and is not allowed on ADK trips.**

WOOL

A favorite material of woodsmen for centuries, wool retains its insulating qualities when wet. Wool is particularly durable, and more compact than fleece.

FLEECE

Fleece is a synthetic material that draws moisture from skin without actually absorbing water, which makes for great insulation. It also retains its insulation properties when wet and can be more comfortable than wool.

SYNTHETIC

Other synthetic materials, such as polypropylene, also serve as great insulators. Polypropylene is especially effective as a moisture-wicking base layer next to skin.

DOWN

Lighter and less bulky than synthetic materials, down is another popular material. However, down loses its insulation properties when wet, so it is important that any down items are worn with a waterproof shell layer and packed in a waterproof dry bag.

BATTERIES

cold drains batteries quickly, bring backups

LITHIUM

- ✓ longer lasting
- ✓ cold-resistant
- ✓ lightweight
- ⊗ more expensive

VS.

ALKALINE

- ✓ lower price
- ✓ widely available
- ⊗ replace more often

FLOATATION AND TRACTION

Floatation - the ability to stay on top of the snow to avoid on sinking or postholing in deep snow

Traction - the ability to dig or bite into the snow and ice to avoid slipping or sliding downwards

PROVIDE FLOATATION

SKIS

Skis are considered a “floatation device”; however, they are not ideal for narrow, icy, broken out High Peaks trails



MADSHUS PANORAMA CROSS COUNTRY SKIS

PROVIDE TRACTION



HILLSOUND TRAIL CRAMPONS



PETZEL LYNX CRAMPONS

SPIKES

Spikes, often called MICROspikes or trail crampons, are most helpful during shoulder season.

CRAMPONS

10- or 12-point crampons are commonly used for ice climbing or mountaineering. However, they can be dangerous if used improperly. These are NOT allowed on ADK guided hikes.

PROVIDE BOTH

SNOWSHOES

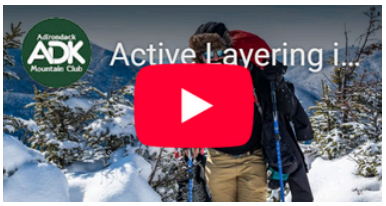
Snowshoes are required to be worn when there is 8 inches or more of snow when measured on or off trail.



MSR EVO ASCENT

Please contact ADK Education staff members with any questions.

TIPS & TRICKS



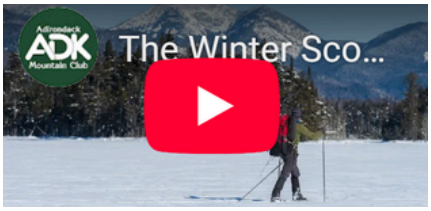
LAYERING

For an in-depth explanation on layering, watch this video!

LINK HERE

WINTER FACILI-TREES

What's a WAG bag? The options for going to the bathroom in the backcountry are different depending on the season.



LINK HERE



WINTER CONSIDERATIONS

While this is a guided hike, even MORE helpful winter hiking considerations can be found in this video!

LINK HERE

MISCELLANEOUS

- Storing water bottles upside down prevents bottle lids from freezing.
- All exposed metal jewelry should be removed.
- Petroleum jelly/occlusives can help protect areas of the face that are difficult to cover by acting as another layer. Some include SPF!
- Staying warm is easier than getting warm. Be proactive with adding and removing layers as needed (active layering).
- Fueling is especially important in the wintertime to prevent cold illnesses. Eating snacks more frequently will help keep you warm.