

# 16 Essentials for your Snowshoeing Backpack

by International Mountain Connection

When we go into the mountains we should always be prepared, but what are we supposed to have in our snowshoeing backpack? A mountain rescue specialist put together a backpack with all of the essentials to make sure that we have everything we need for a safe snowshoeing day. You wanna (want to) know what's inside? Let's get started!

Hi, this is Michelle with International Mountain Connection, thank you for joining us. Remember if I'm speaking too fast, if you would like to see captions, or download the transcript, all of that information is available in the description box below.

We're going to start with the three most important pieces of equipment. If you are going to be snowshoeing in an area that is prone to avalanches, these items must absolutely be in your backpack.

For a complete avalanche rescue kit, you need a transceiver, a probe, and a shovel.

So, this is a transceiver and it has two main jobs.

Job number one. If you're in an avalanche, your transceiver is going to start emitting a signal. And that signal is going to help the other members of your group find you.

Job number two. If someone in your group is in an avalanche, then you can change your transceiver over to search mode. And that way it can locate the signal of person who is underneath the snow.

This is why it's so important for everyone in your group to have a transceiver, because if you're under the snow and you don't have one, then it's really difficult for the other group members to find you. The transceiver is going to help you find the signal of the victim, but it's not going to give you a precise location. You're going to need a probe for that.

This is a probe and normally it's three meters long, but as you can see, it folds up nice and neat to go into your backpack. So, it's kind of like a tent pole.

The last item to have in your avalanche rescue kit is a shovel. And nowadays, most shovels come in two pieces and can be put together like this one, or they fold. That way it's easy to put in your backpack.

Even if you're going somewhere where there isn't a high risk for avalanches, it's a good idea to have a shovel with you anyway. Because if something happens and you have to spend the night on the mountain, you can use your shovel to dig a hole and that will help protect you from wind and keep you warm until the mountain rescue team can come and get you.

We talked about having a shovel in case you need to spend the night in the mountains. It's also a good idea to have a lighter and a candle. This can help you keep your hands warm, either until you are rescued or until the sun starts shining again.

Some people call this a survival blanket, some people call it an emergency blanket, but basically it's a sheet of polyethylene. And if you're injured, then you can wrap this around you to help you stay warm because if you are no longer moving you no longer have that body heat being generated. It's also helpful for mountain rescue teams to locate you because it's reflective and they can find you during the day and night.

As you can see it's pretty small, compact, easy to put in your backpack, but whenever you're searching for one of these, make sure you do not buy the least expensive blanket that you find. In case there is a real emergency, you are going to want something that's a little bit more durable and it's not going to fall apart.

And of course we don't want to get lost, so we need to have navigation equipment. That can be a map, with a compass and an altimeter or it can be a cell phone, but what should you choose?

Not everybody knows how to read a map, use a compass, and figure out what the elevation is. So it's not always a good idea to go "Old School". But if you decide to use your cell phone, then there are a few things that you need to keep in mind.

A cell phone is a great tool to be able to use when we are in the mountains because you can use GPS. However, you need to make sure that you have a full battery, because a lot of times, these applications do drain your battery and you don't want to be in a situation where you can't find your way back because you don't have any battery left.

In addition to that, you need to make sure you know how to use the application that has the map that tells you where you are. You can't have a lot of technology if you don't know how to use it! So if you don't know how to use your cellphone's GPS, then you need to learn that. If you prefer to learn how to use a map and compass, then learn that, but you need to be able to navigate on your own in the mountain in case you get lost.

You need to have at least one and a half liters of water. It doesn't matter if it's a bottle or if it's a water pouch, but just make sure you have at least one and a half liters.

I really like to have a water pouch so I can have water any time while I'm hiking, but the downside is that often the mouthpiece freezes when you're snowshoeing. So just tuck this under your backpack strap and it should keep it warm.

I don't know about you, but I love to eat! I have my first lunch, my second lunch, my first snack, and my second snack, and that's when I'm just going on a day hike. So, in addition to all of that food, I carry "just in case" food. So what's "just in case" food? "Just in case" food is just in case something happens, you have something in your backpack that will help you get through until you get back to the car or until someone comes to rescue you.

This can be a cereal bar, this can be an energy bar, this could be a gel pack, it could even just be an apple. But, you need to have something in your backpack that you're not planning to eat, but you have "just in case".

And of course we need sunglasses! Sunglasses are so important because the sun is reflecting up off of the snow and it can be really harmful to your eyes. You should have a minimum of category 3 and it's best to have category 4. Even if you don't wear them in town, when you're in the mountain, in the snow, you need to have sunglasses.

Sunscreen is so important when you're in the mountains. It's the same idea as having to wear sunglasses. You have the sun beating down on the snow and that is reflected back on you. So even if you don't burn easily, you need to wear sunscreen. It needs to be at least 50 and you need to make sure that you're applying it often. Nowadays they sell little tubes like this that you can use on your face and on your lips. It's really lightweight. There's no reason for you not to be wearing sunscreen.

Another really helpful piece of equipment is a headlamp. Maybe you're supposed to be back before nightfall, but even with good intentions, things can happen. You can say, "Oh well, I have my phone and my phone has a flashlight." Well, maybe you ran out of battery, so now you no longer have a

headlamp. So, it's good to have a headlamp that's used just for that (purpose) and make sure that you have new batteries inside.

You also need to make sure you have a warm jacket with you. Obviously you're not going to wear this when you're hiking, but when you stop to drink or to eat, then this will help keep you warm until you start moving again.

This is even more important if you're stopping at a summit or at a pass that is at a high elevation because a lot of times there is wind and you'd be surprised how much cooler the temperature is.

And if it looks like there is going to be a lot of wind or maybe some rain, then you need to make sure that you have a windbreaker or a rain jacket with you.

I don't know about you, but I grew up hearing that we lose 40-45 percent of our body heat through our heads. It turns out that's not exactly the case, it's more like 10 percent but our heads are very sensitive to wind and cold, so it's always a good idea to have a hat in your backpack and if you want something lighter especially in springtime, you can always wear a baseball cap.

I'm sure it won't surprise you when I say you need to bring a pair of gloves, but what if I said that you actually need to have two pairs of gloves. Am I crazy? I don't think so!

I can hear you now! Why do I need a second pair of gloves? Well, maybe you fall, maybe you have a group member who didn't bring any gloves, or maybe! It was a really nice day and the sky was blue and you and your friends decided to have a snowball fight. And so you're picking up the snow, and you get snow inside your gloves. Now your hands are cold and the clouds came in and it covers the sun and your fingers are freezing. So it's a really good idea to have a second pair of gloves, in your backpack.

Here are all of the essentials that we talked about today. It looks like a lot, but it doesn't weigh much. This weighs approximately 13 pounds or just over 6 kilos. I can hear some of you now! I can't do my 10 mile hike if I have to carry all of that stuff. Well, if you're unable to hike with this basic equipment and food in your bag, instead of making your bag lighter, you need to make an adjustment to your itinerary. Either you need to find something shorter or with less elevation change.

I'm not trying to be Miss Gloom and Doom saying something horrible is going to happen to you when you go into the mountains. What I am trying to tell you is that the mountains, they just don't care if you're really athletic. They don't care if you've spent your entire life in the mountains. Basically things happen. People get lost, people get hurt, and your equipment can break, it can take you longer than you thought to get back to your car than expected. A lot of different things can happen and you just need to be prepared.

Before we go, I would like to tell you that we have been working on a video series called "Safety First". And we're going to talk about what you need to do to prepare to go into the mountains, what to do in case something goes wrong, who to call, and what to do until that help arrives.

So stay tuned and click on the subscribe button and the bell to make sure that you receive notifications of our new videos.

Thank you for joining us today. I hope you learned some new vocabulary and you know what to put in your backpack for your next snowshoeing adventure. If you'd like to continue to make progress, follow us on Instagram or read our blog. And remember, Brian isn't in the kitchen. He's in the mountains!

Bye! See you soon!

