

Winter Camping: Would You Do It?

By Kate Jackson

Most of us think of camping as a great three-season activity - but for winter, not so much. However, if you're one of those folks who dreams of extended adventures in the great outdoors, no matter the season, then camping out in the cold may be something worth considering.

Sure, it sounds a little bit nuts and it definitely takes a fair bit more planning than your average camping trip; but if you're educated, prepared and careful, winter camping can be amazing, and totally doable.

So, if there is something that calls you out into the wild, whether it be snowshoeing, ice fishing or cross country skiing - pitching your tent in the snow might just be the ticket to taking your next excursion to a whole new level. Here are a few tips to get you started:

Get educated first. Make sure you know what you're doing before you set foot out the door and even before you make any concrete plans. Find books on cold weather backpacking or camping, follow a few expert blogs, learn the basics of first aid (if you don't know them already) and get out to attend a class on winter camping or survival skills. Most importantly, know that you're prepared with the knowledge and skills to keep yourself, and your companions, safe and healthy in the frozen wilderness before you make a move.

Plan, plan, plan. As with any backcountry trip, planning for the expected (and unexpected) is key to staying safe and enjoying your time outdoors. Be sure you have the right gear to keep you warm, fed and hydrated for the duration of your trip and then some. The extreme conditions that often occur in these parts call for a seriously safety net of extra food, water and warm clothing in case of emergency. That way, if you were to get lost or get trapped by a massive snow storm, you will have basics on hand.

Not all camping gear is created equal. Things like camp stoves, water filters, hydration bladders and batteries can all go a little haywire in frigid temperatures. Check to make sure the gear you are packing in will actually serve it's purpose once you're out there. And remember, things that seem like luxuries for the summer camper, like a thick sleeping pad or a wool base layer, are absolute must-haves when camping in winter.

For more information about camping out in the winter...even with kids (cozy cabin, anyone?), check out the MN DNR's page on winter camping at www.dnr.state.mn.us, then search winter camping.

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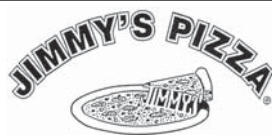
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