

Winter Hiking Tips

NDR 10/2021

(based on tips from Winter Hiking in the North East article:
<https://chasethesummit.com/2015/10/09/winter-hiking-in-the-north-east-getting-started-and-gear-selection/#tips>)

- **Watch the weather!** - Keep an eye on websites like mountain-forecast.com, weatherunderground.com, and weather.gov. If the weather isn't cooperating and the forecast is downright dangerous, try a sheltered hike or go another day.
- **Use a winter hiking clothing & gear list** – using a list will minimize the chance you will leave an important item at home.
- **Tell someone where you are going** - Before you hit the trail, tell a spouse, friend, relative where you're going and what you intend to do. This will insure search and rescue will have a chance to find you if things go south.
- **Start Early** - Everything takes longer in the winter. Don't expect to set a new fastest known time on any trail. Start early and leave plenty of time before the sun goes down to finish.
- **Everyone handles cold differently** - Carry a small analog thermometer (attach it to your pack) and keep a mental log of what you're experiencing and what clothing adjustments you need to make to be comfortable. This will help you plan more efficiently for your next hike. It's all about learning what your body individually needs. Everyone is different!
- **Be Proactive** - Add or Remove layers before it's too late. Once you're cold and wet it's a battle to get yourself warm and dry again. When you stop moving it's time to layer up. When you feel warm it's time to layer down. Anticipate when you might need a wind shell and heavier gloves. It's not easy to fish them out of your pack in windy conditions while you can't feel your face or fingers... put them on BEFORE you enter exposed areas or break treeline.
- **Hydrate and Eat** - food and water play a big role in your body's ability to stay warm. By drinking and eating you're supplying fuel to your personal furnace. Keep your food and water accessible while wearing mittens. If your water is easy to get to you'll drink more! Drink a liter of water before you start a walk or hike.
- **Take Breaks** - Often times you don't want to stop since it results in getting cold. But by taking frequent short breaks you'll reduce the amount of sweat you produce, this will keep you warmer in the long run.
- **Bailing is always an option** - The mountains will be there tomorrow, you on the other hand might not be. If the weather goes south or you're feeling weak and cold it's time to head back to your car. Try again another day.
- **Know your abilities** - Don't hike a NH 4000 foot mountain as your first winter ascent. Try some smaller peaks first and work up to your comfort level.