
LURE OF THE NORTH



Personal Gear List

Be sure to bring *everything* on this list, but not much more than that.

Note: We have purposely limited the amount of descriptive information and recommendations in this list to keep it useful as a clean checklist to use while packing your gear. For more detailed descriptions and specific product recommendations please check the “Personal Gear List” page on our site under the “Winter Camping” heading (<http://lureofthenorth.com/personal-gear-list/>). (Note **OPT** = optional).

Clothing – Bottoms

- Light Long Underwear;
- Heavy Long Underwear (x2);
- Heavy wool or synthetic pants;
- **OPT:** Canvas/ Nylon Windpants;

Clothing – Tops

- Light Base Layer (x2);
- Medium weight sweater;
- Heavy weight sweater;
- Windproof jacket or anorak;
- Very warm down parka with a hood;

Clothing – Extremities

- Warm wool toque;
- **OPT:** Face mask or balaclava;
- Light neck tube or “Buff” x 2;
- Thick wool scarf;
- Heavy wool mitts, and overmitts (leather ideal, or nylon);
- **OPT:** Very warm mitts for rest stops, such as down mitts if you are prone to cold hands;
- Leather work gloves (lined, or with removable liners);
- Heavy wool socks (4 – 5 pairs);
- **OPT:** Light liner socks (if wool irritates);
- Warm felt boot liners (x2);
- Cold-weather footwear: breathable moccasins are ideal, heavy waterproof winter boots like Sorels are okay. See note re: selecting footwear.
- If using moccasins, then warm-weather footwear (lightweight rubber boots) are required, or multiple pairs of small, heavy plastic bags.
- Ski Goggles;
- Underwear (x 2 -3);

Sleeping Kit

All of the following items should be packed into one small(ish) duffel bag (with exception of large sleeping pads, which can ride free) for convenience at camp.

- Cotton shorts and t-shirt - these can serve as your pyjamas or tent attire in warmer weather;
- -20 C (or better) sleeping bag;
- Sleeping pad – thick, closed cell foam pad;
- Sleeping pad - Inflatable down, synthetic or open cell foam pad (Eg. Thermarest or Exped)
- Toiletries:
 - Toothbrush/ toothpaste/ floss/ chapstick/ vitamins/ meds/ hand salve etc;
- LED Headlamp;
- Ear Plugs;
- **OPT:** Camp Booties (Slip-on/ Slip-off booties for at night - highly recommended).
- **OPT:** reading/ sketch/ log book;
- **OPT:** Therm-a-rest Trekker Chair Kit or similar.

Travelling Gear

- 2 litres of water capacity in 1 or 2 “Thermos” or other vacuum bottle;
- Whistle;
- Sunglasses and Sunscreen;
- Belt knife and fire-starter;
- MONOLINE Snowshoes (see note re: sizing and style);
- Ice traction device ("stabilicer" or similar)
- 500 – 750ml bottle to hold trail mix (much easier in winter than plastic bags);
- **OPT:** Ski/ hiking pole (I find one useful, but 2 cumbersome... others never use any);
- **OPT:** Small binoculars;
- **OPT:** Camera;

Other

- Small wash towel (soap provided);
- Lightweight Rain Gear (jacket and pants);
- Spare headlamp batteries;
- 3 - 5 kitchen-sized garbage bags;
- **OPT:** Ontario Fishing Licence and small ice-fishing outfit;
- Duffel bags (x2): You should have all of your items packed into two small duffel bags:
 - A sleeping duffel (see “sleeping kit”);
 - A backup duffel – extra clothing and other items;
 - You will be provided with a day-pack to hold items you will want to access through the day.

Extra Notes/ Clarification re: Gear Lists

Clothing Material Choices

- The best clothing material choices for traditional winter camping are generally natural fibres such as wool, leather and canvas. Your insulating layers (ie. All warm layers worn under your outer 'shell') should be made up of wool or synthetic materials such as polyester (“fleece”) or polypropylene.
 - You should not be wearing *any* cotton clothing as an insulating layer.
- Your best outer shell material is both windproof and breathable. A tightly woven cotton canvas pullover is the best, as it is both windproof and highly breathable. Alternatively a nylon wind jacket will work fine.
 - The very best outer shell is a canvas anorak which has a nice fur-trimmed hood and extends down to mid-thigh. With an anorak like this (and proper insulating layers underneath), you will be comfortable in the windiest of conditions.
 - Waterproofness is rarely required or desired in the winter. In cold, dry conditions, non-waterproof materials (“breathable” material) are best as they allow your sweat to evaporate, and will keep you drier and warmer than waterproof gear.
- Leather is a great outerwear option in places which see a lot of abrasion, such as gloves, mittens and moccasins. Again, they are windproof and breathable, but also very durable, have a great grip on tool handles and not apt to melt around the fire.

Sleeping Bags

- Down or synthetic sleeping bags are both fine for traditional winter camping. Down is best because of its lightness and durability, but synthetic is more affordable. Drying sleeping bags is easy in the heated tent, so choose whatever your budget will allow if buying a new bag. Alternatively, you may pair two 3-season bags to have a warm enough night-time setup.
- Most nights, the woodstove will be kept running all night, but only at a bare minimum. We consider a -20C / 0F bag to be the lightest bag you should bring. Nobody has ever complained that their bag was too warm!

Snowshoes

- Traditional (large, wooden-framed) snowshoes are best for this type of trip. They provide much greater flotation than small mountaineering snowshoes, and also pack a nice wide 'float' (or track) for toboggans to ride in. **We really like Bear Paw style snowshoes.**
- **2026 update:** The rawhide or “babiche” weave of commercially made shoes are becoming lower and lower quality in our opinion these days. After years of allowing these shoes on our trips, and seeing our participants suffer with failing weaves, we now require monoline snowshoes.
- For more information on styles, please see:
<https://lureofthenorth.com/info-hub/snowshoe-selection-guide/>

Footwear

- Moccasins are ideal for cold weather (-5 or less), big winter boots (such as Sorels) are 2nd best. *Whatever your boot, ensure it has a removable liner.*
 - Footwear should be sized to accommodate enough insulation to keep you warm while standing still at -20 degrees. This is more insulation than you may think:
 - 1 – 3 pairs of thick wool socks;
 - Thick felt insole;
 - Thick felt liner;
 - Mountaineering/ skiing or hiking boots are not adequate. They are too tight-fitting and restrict blood flow. A large-fitting pair may work, but you will be less comfortable.
- If wearing moccasins or other breathable footwear, it is a good idea to bring along a separate pair of waterproof (rubber) boots in case of encountering thaw conditions. An alternative is to temporarily waterproof your moccasins by putting plastic bags inside – ensure you bring an adequate supply of durable plastic bags;

Duffels

- Any relatively small duffel which will accommodate everything you are trying to pack into it will do. Keep it light and simple: no frames, no shoulder straps. In our experience it is most convenient to have two small duffels: one for sleeping items which you will use every night, and another one for backup items which you may only need occasionally. As stated, a daypack will be provided for items you will don and doff throughout the day.
- MEC-brand duffels are great for this use (and storage around the house too). Two small (35L) MEC duffels, or 1 small (35L) and 1 medium (60L) should suffice (depending on how big your sleeping bag is).

Personal Outfitting

- Please see our equipment rental price list for availability and let us know well in advance if you plan to rent anything for your trip.

Modern Snowshoes and Moccasins

- Modern snowshoes can be damaging to moccasins and as a result should not be used together. Thus we will not rent our moccasins for use with modern snowshoes. Certain styles of modern snowshoes may be more damaging to others - your discretion is advised when using your own gear.

UPDATED for winter 2025: Inflatable Sleeping Pads and Spruce Boughs

- We *sometimes* use conifer boughs as part of our tent floor. These days, with larger groups and returning to the same sites many years in a row, we have moved away from bough floors for all but our most remote or infrequently repeated trips.
- With a little bit of extra care, inflatable pads tend to survive quite well on bough floors.
- In either case, we recommend a closed cell pad in addition to an inflatable: if we're going with a bough floor, the closed cell foam adds extra protection. If going without boughs, the extra insulation is nice.

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Group Gear List

This is a very brief overview of the group gear we provide, so you can know what to expect.

Package: Tent and Tools

- Tents;
- Axes;
- Saws
- Shovels;
- Ice Chisel;

Package: Kitchen Pack (Wannigan)

- Pots, Pans & Cooking Utensils:
- Personal eating utensils like bowls, cutlery and mugs will be provided;
- Safety and sanitation

Package: Stove

- Tent stoves;

Package: Food Packs

- All group food will be provided;

Toboggans & Packs

- All toboggans, will be supplied;

Package: Contingency/ Group Gear

- Repair Kit;
- Comprehensive First Aid Kit;
- Communication Equipment:
 - SPOT Device;
 - 2-way Satellite communicator;
 - **OPT:** Cell phone and/ or radios;
- Toilet paper is provided;