

The Entertaining Side of Winter Camping (without experiencing cold fingers)

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Winter Camping Application

It is always fun to take a novice winter camping. Expectations are all over the place. We had a lot of fun sitting around a fire at night discussing why we go winter camping and what our expectations where and how much can we get the new (or youngest) person to put up with. Not that anyone would admit to wandering around unable to locate the trail head, but most of these strike close to home and come from past experiences.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. There is no scoring system, penalty or reward. But if you think you a have the right stuff and want to email a response or more questions to [wintercampers (at) wintercampers(dot)com] we will take a look at your application and post the good stuff on the blog. Hopefully, we will all share a chuckle.

I want to go winter camping because:

1. I enjoy winter camping
2. I like doing manly things with manly men
3. It gives me and my friends something to talk about
4. I have no idea what I am getting myself into
5. There is a hotel there right?

In the morning I like to:

1. Relax in my sleeping bag with a warm cup of coffee
2. Rave one of my fellow campers cook me breakfast so that I can have breakfast in bed
3. Get up and start the stove so that everyone has hot water for their breakfast
4. Get the heck out of there and drive to the diner

Which of the following best describes your level of camping experience?

1. I have never peed outdoors
2. I have never slept on the ground
3. I have never camped in a place without an outhouse
4. I have gone camping several times just not in the winter
5. I have gone winter camping and wish to do more
6. Just call me Rip Van Winkle

Please indicate any extra gear that you may have available to share:

What neat stuff do you have that will be the envy of your fellow campers?

What kind of vehicle do you have and how many packs and people can you squeeze into it?

Please rank your skills in terms of highest to lowest: cooking, fire building, dish washing, wood gathering, wood cutting

If you were in charge of dinner what would you bring and prepare?

Please indicate any special talents (story or joke telling, music, skits, poetry, physical comedy etc) that you would be willing to share in a group setting.

What is your personal space limitation when sleeping with strangers?

1. I have none
2. It is measured in inches
3. It is measured in feet
4. It is proportional to temperature
5. ...before I answer when was the last time they changed their poly pro long johns?

Do you snore?

1. Never
2. Sometimes a light snore
3. Constant
4. Prodigiously with volume

Are you bothered by snoring? __Yes or __No

When setting off on your last backpacking trip which of the following best describes you?

1. I went through my equipment list and consulted my trail guide and maps
2. I asked my companions if we had everything and knew where we were going
3. I figured we were only going for one night and someone must know where we are going
4. I shouldered my pack and wandered around the parking lot looking for a trailhead sign

While getting ready to head off on a trip it is realized that some heavy cook pots still need to be put in someone's pack. Your response would be:

1. I'm a strong young buck, I'd be happy to carry it
2. Give it to the boy. He won't carry his own weight but maybe he will carry someone else's
3. Why do we need to carry all these pots and pans just to cook hot dogs?
4. Cast iron pots? I only carry ultra-light titanium pots. Sure they cost a little more but it is all in the name of comfort

In the middle of the night you wake up to the sound of rustling outside the tent/lean-to.

What is your response?

1. Pull the sleeping bag further over your head and lay as still as possible

2. Jump up, flashlight in hand and search the darkness for the source of the sound
3. Go about your normal sleeping believing it is one of your fellow campers stumbling around outside looking for a suitable spot to pee
4. Throw a wild elbow or foot toward your neighbor because you believe it is just another of their persistent and nasty body habits
5. It shouldn't be a problem since you normally leave a candle lantern burning and sleep with a gun

Compelling Reasons To Go Winter Camping

As a supplement to our "[You Might Be a Winter Camper If...](#)" and [Top 10 Reasons to Go Winter Camping](#) series we have adapted [the New Nomads](#) list of [101 truly compelling reasons to do a long distance hike](#) to fit the winter camping theme. Here are more compelling reasons to go winter camping.

1. Create more empathy with the homeless
2. Learn to accept help from others
3. Learn how to balance a pack on skis/snowshoes while performing an icy water crossing
4. Develop an admirable tolerance for cold toes
5. Make yourself qualified to write a book / blog
6. Join interesting group of people who are just as antisocial as you are
7. It will make for an interesting blog topic
8. Find yourself; find God; or find cool things left behind by those summer camping wimps
9. Make peace with the voices in your head
10. Learn how to protect your bag of trail mix or learn to share
11. Be judged not by the amount of money you make, but by the warmth of your toes
12. People just have to take your word for it when you tell them how much fun you had
13. Become obsessed by idle thoughts of hot chocolate
14. No reason \ nothing better to do
15. Break your addiction to Facebook
16. Release yourself from the claws of culture
17. Ample meditation time during the 12 hours of darkness
18. It provides an excuse to wear a red union suit with a back panel
19. Breathe clean air
20. Hot salty soup never tasted so good
21. Become more in tune with a natural existence
22. Restore your feeling of love for life
23. Great opportunity to practice otherwise useless skills learned at scout camp
24. No chance of drunk texting anyone
25. Confront and overcome fears of the dark, animals, death, storms, and loneliness
26. Fun
27. Acquire an unflattering nickname based on a stranger's perception of your primary qualities
28. Develop strong leg muscles from snowshoeing
29. Get that "look" in your eyes
30. Give your mother a real reason to worry about you

31. You can completely change your personality and blame it on “What happened out there.”
32. Learn to appreciate the distinctions among brands of instant oatmeal
33. Eat absolutely whatever you want with no ill effect
34. Acquire winter camping stories
35. Justify purchase of expensive winter clothing
36. Take your mind off anything unpleasant going on in your life
37. Learn perseverance
38. Learn to read the night sky
39. Gain survival confidence
40. Redefine your standards for cleanliness, hunger, and entertainment

Face-Saving Ways to Buy Resting Time When Snowshoeing With Someone Who Is More Fit Than You

Adapted from [TheNewNomads](#).

We have all been in the situation of being on a snowshoe excursion with someone who is more experienced than us, more fit than us, didn't drink as much as us the night before, or just seems hell bent on flying across the terrain. You can't perform as impressively, yet you love their company and want to encourage their companionship and positive opinion of your ability. Snowshoeing with someone like that without ripping your chest open with exertion AND without seeming like an undesirable wuss requires some premeditation and planning.



Here are some of the ways I suggest you can use to get the rest you need on a strenuous trip without constantly whining and begging.

- Adjust your bindings. Preferably one at a time, buying at least two stops.
- Photo-op. The easiest but also very obvious excuse is the need to photograph a beautiful winter scene or companion.
- Hydration. Water is the building block of life. You can't be denied a need for a drink of water.
- The need to write down an important task you can't forget to do when the trip is over. "It will bother you all day" if you don't.
- Exploit a past injury. No one wants to imagine the possibility that they may have to limp you down the mountain. A slight gesture of knee discomfort is worth a few rests.
- Questions about flora, fauna and/or geology of surrounding features. Most people love to share their knowledge.
- Need to pee. If you are female, you can get some time here.
- Clothing adjustment. Need to shed/add layers of clothing.
- Talk about something very difficult, serious and/or intimate requiring full attention. Good for confessions, childhood trauma stories, and deep relationship issues. If you can cry on command, you've got a good long break.
- Track identification. Ask for advice on determining what made those tracks in the snow.
- The possible glimpse of wildlife. If they're not actually there or difficult to find, i.e. a small bird in a tree, you get a longer rest while your companion keeps following your finger looking for them.
- You happen to have their favorite sweet treat in the pack and would they like a bit?
- Fall. Just slip. Don't hurt yourself of course.
- Ask about the location: Where are we? What's the elevation? How many miles have we come? Someone won't be able to resist pulling out the map and figuring it out.
- Lip balm. Chapped lips are horrible. Do not have it conveniently in your pocket.
- Pack adjustment. Loosen/tighten your pack straps. You can appear to suffer a bit first to add authenticity.
- Deploy your trekking poles, walk for a while and then put them back in your pack.
- Petting / playing with other hiker's dogs buys time. Check their paws for clumps of snow.
- Request demonstrations of favorite gear items ... "Is that an anemometer around your neck?" or "How did you get your shoulder straps to agitate with your hip belt like that?" or "How do you layer your socks with those shoes on a day like this?"
- Ask for a rest break. This will greatly decrease suspicion the rest of the time.

Murphy's Law Applied to Winter Camping

- The need to urinate at night increases in direct relation to the hour past midnight, layers of clothing worn, occupants in your tent, and inches of new snowfall. Curiously, it increases in 'inverse' relation to the decreasing outside temperature.
- Sticks emerge through the snow at a rate proportional with the time.

- The weight of your backpack increases in direct relationship with the length of your hike and the depth of the snow.
- Your warmest item of clothing will be the one that is torn, wet or forgotten.
- Tent stakes come only in the quantity 'N-1' where N is the number of stakes necessary to stake down a tent. The quantity of N-1 tent stakes will all be of length L-1" where L is the length needed to reach solid snowpack.
- All food assumes a common taste and color when freeze-dried.
- Divide the number of servings by two when reading the directions for reconstituting anything freeze-dried.
- The person hiking in front of you will randomly dislodge snow from all tree branches above your head. If you remain a safe distance behind the person in front of you, then the person behind you will randomly tap those same branches with their trekking pole, dislodging the snow before they reach the branch.
- The actual comfortable sleep rating for your sleeping bag is 15 degrees more than what was advertised.
- When sharing gear with a group three will bring stoves and no one will bring a cooking kit.
- Your backpack's weight will not be affected by the amount of food eaten out of it.
- The loudness of your tent mate's snoring during night grows in direct correlation to your need for sleep.
- The sun sets 47% faster than normal when setting up camp. It sets another 28% faster if freezing rain is eminent.
- Of a 25% chance of freezing rain, 100% will fall in your campsite.
- When snowshoeing you take half as many downhill steps as uphill.
- 30% of a backpack's contents could have been left at home.
- The number of times the trip is described in a story is directly proportional to the misery experienced during the trip.

Winter Camping Top 10 List

The Top Ten reasons to try winter camping:

10. Winter camping provides an excellent opportunity to hear 4 part snoring harmonies.
9. Winter camping provides a great excuse to buy the latest and greatest gear.
8. There is nothing like the aroma of lived in polypropylene.
7. It's the only sure cure for cabin fever.
6. There is a comfortable satisfaction in knowing that you are the only one with 2 sleeping bags on a -15 degree night.
5. Wool is..."In."
4. Down booties are more than just fashion statements.
3. It provides a good opportunity to catch up on one's sleep by logging a solid 12 hours of sleep during the 14 hours of darkness.
2. Two words...."Buttery Fleece."
1. No bugs!

Winter Camping Gang Signs

Gang signals are a visual way members identify their affiliation. This can take the form of a slogan, tattoo or hand signs. Of these, hand signs, have become part of popular WinterCampers.com culture. (-)



“Throwing up” a gang sign (or “Stacking”) with the hands is one of the best known and obvious forms of “claiming.” It is used in many situations where other identifiers may not be possible or appropriate, and it can also show that a gang member is in the area to “do business” as opposed to just passing through. Usually these signs are made by formation of the fingers on one or both

hands to make some sort of symbol or letter such as the W C. The winter camper below signs that he is ready to “do business” at a Adirondack Lean-to.



Individual letters can be used to tell stories when flashed in rapid succession, each representing a word beginning with that letter. So if you encounter another winter camper make sure you can stack the W C ! ;-)

Winter Camping Quotes

“It’s not a race!”

“It’s the journey...not the destination.”

“It’s a Jamboree!”

“Always remember the 6 P’s” (Prior Preparation Prevents Piss Poor Performance)

“I’m not going to lie to you...”

“I’m not really fond of them actually.” (Skip referring to heights)

“That’s funny, I had a dream that Skip was yelling in my ear all night.”

“Well I don’t want to carry the bread!”

“Does this jacket look too puffy???”

“I’m almost too warm actually.”

“This fleece is buttery”

“It has to get worse before it gets better.”
“F\$#! sled!!!”
“It’s like a sauna in here.”
“I will be really happy if I can get it to stand up straight...”
“Is every picture of me going to be of me in some compromising position?”—“No...at least not till we digitally add the goat later.”
“My wife got me a walkie-talkie for Christmas but she just got me one so I guess it is just a walkie.”
“I have the balance of a pachyderm....well you have never seen an elephant fall have you?”
“Who is going to wear the tennis rackets?”
“Are you complaining or just stating a fact?”
“It’s just like carrying an old friend.”
“You actually brought slippers?!”
“Anyone see the trail head?”
“The wood warms ya twice!”
“You guys took up so much room I had to use Matt’s feet as a pillow!”
“It’s 12 o’clock and the amount of wood left is starting to worry me.”
“Brrr...you wanna stoke that thing a little more.”
“Do I look good?”
“I like this camping, it makes me feel like a man”
“I believe that all cylindrical meats are pre-cooked”
“I don’t really see a reason to get out of my sleeping bag yet....ok, now I have a reason”
“Ouch!! \$%@!*^! %#@!”
“It may not be a warm fire but it sure is a smokey one”
“Well, I packed two pairs of gloves but luckily I lost one of each so I am still balanced”
“You get up and get the wood. No, you get the wood. Rob should get the wood. Why doesn’t someone (else) get the wood? Isn’t anyone getting wood? I am cold, are you getting the wood? Fine, I will go get the wood”
“Does Sparky want a cracker?”
“Do you want to hold it or whack it?”
“Jay...are those crampons with wings?”
“Damn...I thought I had my headlamp but I grabbed a piece of beef stick instead!”
“Just go take a walk in the woods....we all understand the biology behind it”
“Its like sleeping on a thousand nipples”
“Watch out for the Jay-nami”
“There just went an insect!...oh wait, maybe it was just a piece of ash.”
“Honey, why don’t you break out your sausage?”
“Do you want me to hold your beef stick?”

Winter Camping Poems

I AM NOT GOING TO LIE TO YOU (About Our Winter Camping Trip December 27th)

I am not going to lie to you, said Matt with a smile.
It's a pretty long hike, a little over 4 mile.
To get to the lean-to at the clearing named Scott's
It will be a hard haul and take what you got.

The temperature may chill us to well below zero,
But I have a solution; to this problem you know.
We can load extra gear on these handy snow sleds
They slide by themselves, they just have to be led.

So we loaded our gear – on our winter trek did embark.
Jim with his pack, pulling sleds were Matt, Len and Mark.
Matt set the pace as he led the group off on the trail
But soon we heard a whine, a yell, then a loud wail.

I am not going to lie to you! through clenched lips he hissed
This sled keeps tipping and I am getting quite pissed.
I have to carry it over logs and it bumps into rocks
Each person that passes by stares, giggles and gawks.

The only thing worse than pulling the sled
Is breaking the thing and having to carry the bread.
We made it to the lean-to with time in excess
It was around three PM or so I would guess

We had angel hair pasta and it tasted de-lish
But what didn't get eaten became frozen to the dish
For the temperature was sinking, passing zero and dropping
As we climbed in our sleeping bags the trees were popping..

Matt gave Mark his good -30 winter sleeping bag
And rolled up in his summer sack, plus just one rag.
I am not going to lie to you, said Matt through teeth a chattering
I'm cold and not having any fun, not that it's mattering.

Cause I've never been colder and these feet are a keeping
My mind wide awake and the rest of me from sleeping.
I am not going to lie to you, just for courtesy sake
Instead of lying here shivering, I rather be awake

We arose at eight and searched for the trail for Summit Rock
But a long trail and cold feet stopped us at 11 o'clock
I am not going to lie to you, Matt said with despair
Though we come quite a ways, we're not close to being there.

So we all turned back, loaded our gear and headed out
Using the same trail in for our outward bound route.
I am not going to lie to you, it was a trip to remember
That one we took on The Twenty-Seventh of December.

The Much Anticipated Never Accomplished Rainbow Falls Trip To be sung to the tune of Somewhere Over the Rainbow.....

Someday we'll get to Rainbow
Falls, I know.
Mark said we'll get to Rainbow
but not what time to go.

Someday we'll get to Rainbow
Falls, I thought
Mark said we'll get to Rainbow
but I'm getting overwrought.

Someday we'll get to Rainbow
Falls, it's clear.
Mark said we'll get to Rainbow
I hope that it's this year.

On mountain tops we'll make our camp
we won't know if it's dry or damp
until we get there!

We don't know what gear to bring
if we should dress for fall or spring
or maybe summer.

We may meet at crack of day
morning, noon, it's hard to say
but why should we care?

We just don't know what we will eat
where we'll sleep or where we'll meet
what a bummer!

Someday we'll get to Rainbow
Falls, yes we can
Mark said we'll get to Rainbow
if only he would plan.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....-

We all heard Jeff Foxworthy's routine, "You might be a Redneck if...". WinterCampers.com
made their own version of this theme.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....weekend weather forecast calls for freezing temperatures
and additional snow so you pack an extra tarp, spare wool socks and go anyway because they know
you have the whole place to yourself and it will be glorious.

When friends ask if you "want to do something this weekend", it usually involves freezing
temperatures and snowshoes.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You have a closet or a whole room dedicated to gear storage.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Cooking breakfast utilizes boiling water and Ziploc freezer bags.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....More than 50% of your wardrobe is wicking.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Someone at work mentions gaiters and you are the only one that doesn't immediately think of the animal.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You have caught an article of clothing on fire over an open flame more than once.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You like to go winter camping to catch up on your sleep.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You have seen all the Survivor Man shows.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Your dog is experienced enough not to step on your snowshoes or skis and has their own backpack.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You can expound upon the differences between various synthetic insulation.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Your watch does more things than just tell time.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You've skipped work or school because there was fresh snow.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You weigh your backpack before leaving the house.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Your collective camping gear costs more than your first car did.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Your iPod playlist includes a heavy rotation of SnowPatrol and Coldplay

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You have tried to make your own pulk.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You own seasonal gear such as down booties, and insulated overpants.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You own an over-sized backpack you use just for winter.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Your winter vacations are spent in the Adirondacks and not in the Bahamas.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....All your vacation pictures have the color white in them.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You have woken up to have it snowing inside your tent.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....When choosing a hat you pick one that would also be good to sleep in.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You have tried to sleep while listening to the sound of trees popping and prodigious snoring.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Drop seat long underwear make sense to you.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Your non winter camping friends think you are crazy.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Wearing layers has become an art form.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You don't find the word crampon funny...or maybe you do.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You have walked at least a mile in frozen boots.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You have broken off "snotcicles" before you snack.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Your gloves come with a nose wipe.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Your tent accommodates a stove pipe.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....Most of your sleeping bags have -/negative before the description.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....When people cringe at the weather forecast you get excited!

You might be a WinterCamper if.....You get excited about losing electrical power during the winter because it provides an excuse to pull out the winter gear.

You might be a WinterCamper if..... if you buy snowshoes for your spouse at Christmas in hopes they will come with you, but for some reason they don't seem to be interested.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....if your gloves all have burn marks, or holes melted in the fingers.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....you consider 15 degrees F to be comfortable weather.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....you look forward to winter!

You might be a WinterCamper if.....worry about sweating when it is 10 degrees outside.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....you hear a brutal weather report and the idea to sleep outside and test some equipment rolls thru your mind.

You might be a WinterCamper if.....you have ever slept with a rock or hot water bottle..