



WINTER SKILLS EQUIPMENT LIST

Personal clothing:

- Waterproof shell mountain jacket: Breathable materials such as [Nikwax](#) [Paramo](#) and Gortex are ideal. See the excellent BMC info sheet on clothing [here](#)
- Waterproof over trousers or salopettes: Make sure they fit over your big winter boots!
- Gaiters: These are essential to avoid wet cold feet. Standard front opening or yeti type ideal.
- Gloves and mitts plus several spares. I find that old fashioned pre-shrunk oiled wool mitts such as Dachstiens are still the warmest and are easily repaired! Buffalo Mitts are good too. Mitts should have elastic shock cord wrist loops to stop them being dropped and blown away when using inner gloves for performing more delicate tasks. Thermal rubberised work gloves for ropework.
- Hat and Balaclava: One that covers the ears plus a separate balaclava.
- Warm fleece trousers/salopettes/heavyweight winter softshell (polyester NOT *cotton).
- Warm fleece jacket or Softshell: fleece/pile or wool plus spare. Buffalo jackets are ideal though very warm especially when hiking uphill.
- Spare lightweight Belay type jacket such as Primaloft, NOT *Down.
- Thermal long underwear: Quick drying top and long johns such as Helly Hansen Lifa, NOT cotton.
- Socks: Two or three pairs of loop stitch wool or equivalent, NOT *cotton mix.

*Cotton retains moisture and is good for keeping you cool in hot summer conditions and Down loses all its insulation when damp. In the winter you require fabrics such as pile and fleece which dry quickly and keep you warm even when wet.

After more than three decades of teaching winter survival courses in the arctic alpine Cairngorms and despite all the great advances in clothing technology, I still find wool is the warmest and still the best option, for socks and even for gloves.

Personal equipment:

- Boots: Four seasons suitable for 10-12 point articulated crampons are essential (leather, synthetic or plastic can be hired). See our [YouTube](#) videos on selecting boots and fitting crampons [here](#)
- Rucksack 40-60 ltr. At least 60-70 litre required for expedition (water proof liner or builder's rubble bag).
- Map and compass: Silva 4 type compass ideal. Map case and map or preferably laminated 1:50,000 Cairngorm map. (OS 1:50,000 No.36 Grantown and Cairngorm)
- Survival bag: Orange polythene, [Alpkit](#) or Gortex bivy bags are ideal.
- First aid kit: Personal with blister kit etc.
- Lip salve and sun block?
- Whistle: For emergency alpine distress signal.
- Head torch and spare battery (the Petzl range is recommended)
- Ski goggles: Low light double glazed for blizzard conditions.
- Glacier sunglasses: To protect from snow blindness.
- Emergency rations.
- Flask/water bottle & packed lunch.
- Ice axe, crampons and helmet: if you have them (can be hired for free).

If you are considering buying new kit please phone us first to discuss the purchase to avoid expensive mistakes! For advice and a wide selection of kit we recommend Cairngorm Mountain Sport in Aviemore (see www.braemarmountainsports.com).

Bring old waterproofs for ice braking!

Those who wear expensive designer Gortex waterproofs may prefer to bring an old cheap set of waterproofs for self-arrest practice as it involves a lot of sliding about on the snow which can abrade and tear lightweight clothing.

Snow-holing Expeditions: (additions)

- Four season sleeping bag or 3 season in a snow hole! Karrimat or insulated foam sleeping mat and a breathable bivy bag.
 - Stove (gas), candles, lighter, mug, bowl and spoon.
 - Spare socks, clothing, plastic bags, and toilet paper.
 - Snow shovels, saw, avalanche probes and transceivers, if you have them.
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Climbing and Mountaineering Course: (additions)

- Technical axe and hammer with wrist loops or spring leashes.
- Helmet & harness with adjustable leg loops.
- Belay plate and screw gate krab.
- Two HMS screw gate krabs
- Two 8 ft. (120 cm diameter) slings with screw gate krabs.
- One 16 ft. (240 cm diameter) sling and screw gate krab
- Rack of gear for rock and ice, ropes etc.

Technical equipment is supplied free on introductory courses if you don't already have it. On more advanced courses you are expected to have and use your own equipment.

Clients are encouraged to use their own kit, if they have it!

Personal Kit:

- Wash kit / toothbrush / towel /spare contact lenses etc.
 - Casual clothes, warm jacket and change of underwear!
 - Optional: Trainers, tracksuit, swimwear, rock boots, camera, chocolate etc.
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Fitness:

The more prepared you are for your course the more you will enjoy it. Winter walking and mountaineering is normally more strenuous than summer hill walking. So if you have an office job and sedentary life style it is especially recommended that you indulge in some regular exercise several months before attending your course. Long days hill walking or Munro bagging with a large pack is the best preparation for the course, but cycling, jogging, swimming is all valuable training. You will be out each day for 6-8 hours carrying a 15 kg pack in winter conditions often with some standing around in freezing blizzard conditions, so be prepared.

Any queries check here first for our FAQ's or just give me a phone on +44 (0)7803 617 769 or [e-mail me](#)

Kit List FAQ's

Q. For the people that need to hire gear, such as 4 season boots (plastics, etc) from the stores you mentioned, when would be a good time to do this?

A. Phone the shops a few weeks before the course date to ensure that they keep your sizes in stock.

The phone numbers for winter mountaineering boot hire shops in Aviemore are as follows below. [Cairngorm Mountain Sport](#) together with the [Mountain Café](#) upstairs are highly recommended, please mention you're on a winter mountaineering course with Talisman Activities and you should get some discount. [Tiso Aviemore](#) also offers our clients 10% discount on [kit hire](#) and in store purchases. Together with the store and Explorer Café opening at 08.00 during the winter, you'll have plenty of time to pick up your hire kit, grab breakfast or a quick coffee?

- [Cairngorm Mountain Sport](#) 01479 810 903
- [Nevis Sport](#): 01479 810 239
- [Ellis Brigham](#): 01479 810 175
- [Tiso Aviemore](#): 01479 788 840

Q. Will there be enough time on the Saturday morning to buy or hire extra kit?

A. There's enough time on the Sat morning to get the hire boots sorted out from the shops in Aviemore as they usually open before 09:00 for ski equipment hire.

Q. Can you hire a Bivy Bag? How essential is this outside the Snow Holing night?

A. You will all require as a minimum orange plastic survival bags...the disadvantage of the poly bags are that of condensation inside the bags soaking your sleeping bags...so they are a lot less comfortable but survivable for the one night! Unfortunately no one I know hires them but breathable [Hunka](#) ones are available for purchase from [Alpkit](#) if required for £47 each or try Army Navy Stores for 2nd hand government surplus in lovely camouflaged colours! The Goretex ones are very expensive.

Q. Do I need a 4/5 season down sleeping bag?

A. For the snow holing courses you require as a minimum a 3 season synthetic bag as it is only about zero degrees in a well constructed snow hole. Remember you can wear your spare clothing. However, everyone is different and the warmer the bag is the better you will sleep though I often end up too hot in a 5 season bag so sometimes prefer a lightweight 2/3 season Rab or PHD 300 one when personal climbing! Please note that even expensive 5 season down bags will need to be kept out of contact with dampness or they will lose all of their insulation, whereas a cheaper heavier synthetic bag will still retain some warmth, even if you end up sleeping in a puddle!

Q. What breathable waterproof would you recommend apart from Gortex?

A. I'd highly recommend the [Nikwax Paramo](#) gear as it protects you from the worst the weather can throw at you, is extremely durable and far far more breathable and comfortable than breathable laminates such as Gortex. With Paramo you can literally come off the hill and into the pub and be just as comfortable as in your ordinary street clothes.

Recommended Reading:

- A Chance in a Million (Avalanches) - Bob Barton & BlytheWright
 - Cold Climbs - Ken Wilson, Dave Alcock & John Barry
 - Handbook of Climbing - Alan Fyffe & Ian Peter
 - Mountaincraft & Leadership - Eric Langmuir
 - Mountain Navigation - Pete Cliff
 - Mountain Skills Handbook - Pete Hill & Stuart Johnston
 - Modern Rope Techniques - Nigel Shepherd
 - Scotland's Winter Mountains - Martin Moran
 - SMC district guides to the Cairngorms & Ben Nevis.
 - Cairngorm John – John Alan, Cairngorm Mountain Rescue
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Insurance:

"Climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement." BMC Participation Statement
We are covered by professional liability insurance but you are responsible for organising your own CANCELLATION, CURTAILMENT & ACCIDENT COVER

- [SNOWCARD/ACTIVCARD Insurance](#)
 - [SportsCoverDirect](#)
 - [BMC Insurance](#)
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Accommodation:

On a budget then look at the Aviemore and Glenmore Youth Hostels, Aviemore Bunkhouse and Badaguish Wigwams. Mid-range we recommend High Range, The Cairngorm Hotel and the many of the local guesthouses such as the [Eriskay](#) which offers our client discount, Carn Mhor, [Cairngorm Guesthouse](#), Ravenscraig and Ardlogie. There are plenty of big national chain Hotels such as MacDonalds and Motels too. There's also loads of self-catering accommodation in the area. As Aviemore is the main tourist and ski hub it is often more difficult to get booked during peak holiday periods but once you look at the villages just outside of Aviemore you'll often find some great deals. See www.booking.com and search under Aviemore.

You can book your Scottish winter skills course online by clicking [here>>>](#)

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