

Participant Expectations for 3500 Club Sponsored Winter Group Hikes ***by Laurie Rankin***

Priorities:

Be Safe, Have Fun, Summit/always in that order. _

Group Size:

Per agreement between the Catskill 3500 Club and the NYSDEC, group size is limited. If you have taken a spot on a hike and cannot make it for any reason, please notify the leader so that your space can be given to another individual.

Timeliness:

Please be on time for your hike. Road conditions are not always great in winter and some of you may be traveling a great distance, so allow extra driving time. Bring a shovel as not all trail heads are plowed out. There is very limited cell phone coverage in the Catskills. Please plan accordingly, knowing that you may not be able to communicate with the leader by phone en route. The leader may begin the hike without you if you are not on time.

Pace:

Leaders will generally provide information on the pace and difficulty of a hike. It must be understood that by signing up for a group hike you will stay together and hike as a group. You should never be cold or hot and sweaty/just add or remove layers as needed. Short breaks throughout the hike will provide opportunities to adjust layers and traction aids and to attend to nourishment, hydration, etc. It is important to prioritize your needs and stay organized at brief rest stops (rest stops are short to avoid getting cold).

Required gear:

- 1) Sturdy pack with enough room for gear and clothing.
- 2) Snowshoes and full crampons: Per the Catskill 3500 Club's insurance policy, all participants must bring these to the trailhead. Microspikes, Stabilicers and similar products are often the ideal footwear and can be brought to the trailhead as well. They are not, however, substitutes for full crampons. Once at the trailhead, we will let you know what equipment you will need to use and/or carry. On some peaks and under certain conditions, we have used a variety of gear to reach the summit. Each trip will be different. Prior to the hike please fit and practice putting snowshoes and crampons on and off the boots you will be using the day of the hike. This will save a lot of time and finger numbness on hike day. If you do not know how to use crampons properly, please inform your leader in advance.
- 3) Eyewear: Sunglasses protect eyes from glare that is amplified when the ground is covered with snow and ice.
- 4) Sun screen.
- 5) Snow shovel (for unplowed parking areas).
- 6) Headlamp.

Optional gear:

- 1) Microspikes, Stabilicers or similar products: These light traction devices are often the ideal footwear and can be brought to the trailhead as well. They are not, however, substitutes for full crampons or snow shoes, which again, must be brought to the trail head.
- 2) Camera: On very cold days, carry your camera/batteries next to your body to keep them warm (same for battery operated car keys). Lithium does better and lasts longer at cold temperatures than does alkaline.
- 3) Small piece of foam padding : This serves as a nice seat for use at rest breaks to protect from cold/wet surfaces.
- 4) Hiking/ski poles.

Clothing:

General principles

Please bring several layers. Layering is more appropriate for a winter hike in the Catskills than one super heavy layer. The geology takes you over varying terrain. You may change layers several times throughout the hike so that you stay dry (sweat free) and comfortable. You should NEVER get cold and should avoid getting too hot/sweaty on a hike. Rather, reach into your pack and add or subtract a layer if the pace, weather or terrain is not allowing you to stay comfortable. Check to be sure that there is no restriction of movement when one or all layers are being worn. Please do not wear cotton clothing as it retains moisture. Clothing recommendations are as follows:

Upper body:

- 1) Base layer: A wicking, fast drying next to skin first layer (i.e. polyester, polypropylene, thin wool) provides needed moisture management.
- 2) Insulation layers: The combination of fleece and/or wool layers and a hooded "puffy" jacket filled with synthetic or down will provide needed thermal protection and regulation..
- 3) Waterproof/breathable hooded shell jacket: This serves to protect you from rain, wet snow and wind.

Lower body:

Follow the same principles as for the upper body. Adding and subtracting leg layers while on a hike in winter can be time consuming and cumbersome. It is best to try and "get it right" at the trailhead when possible. This will mean that your legs will probably feel a little chilly at the start but you will probably soon warm up. For easier on/off and temperature regulation it is more convenient to bring shell pants that have full side zips.

Legs and feet:

- 1) Boots: Good winter boots should be waterproof and insulated for warmth. They should be roomy enough for thick warm socks without impeding circulation. An extra pair of warm socks should be packed in case your feet get wet (they can also serve as emergency mittens in a pinch). Boots should be cut high above the ankles for support and to prevent snow from getting in.
- 2) Leg gaiters: These should rise to just below the knees. They provide additional protection from snow and also help to retain heat and keep your feet warmer.
- 3) Foot traction (as noted above): Again, full crampons and snowshoes are required at the trailhead.

Head and hands:

- 1) Warm hat: Select a style that covers the ears and carry a spare. In very cold weather,
- 2) Balaclava or scarf: This should be brought along in very cold or windy weather to protect your face.
- 3) Windproof mittens: They work better than gloves on cold days (waterproof/breathable works best). Again, carry a spare pair. Glove liners are thin and come in handy when doing things that require dexterity like taking pictures.

Food:

Winter hiking consumes a large amount of calories just to stay warm. Add to that all of the extra gear you are carrying, deep snows, etc and you have the perfect recipe to eat, eat, eat! Plan on brief group breaks so that all can have a snack and a drink. We rarely take an extended stop at the summit in the winter as it can cause people to become chilled. Please bring plenty of snacks and be sure that the snack items that you bring do not freeze (see how they do coming out of your freezer).

Water:

While you may rarely feel thirsty in winter, you can easily get dehydrated. The air is often dry (like in the desert) and the work is often hard (deep snow), so please drink. We do not recommend

water bladders in the winter as the cold often causes failure. If you wish to use a water bladder, please bring at least a liter of water in a back up bottle. A thermos with some hot liquid is one of the pleasures of a winter hike.

Attitude:

Bring a positive attitude with you please. Winter is a great time of the year to be out in the mountains. You have snow (hopefully) covering all of those rocks and roots so that you can just glide over them. Views are greater with the absence of leaves. You have the bluest of blue skies and the clearest of views on those cold winter days. You see the tracks in the snow of others who are sharing the woods with you. The low lying sun creates long shadows and often provides lighting conditions that promote beautiful picture taking. You have the opportunity to be eight years old again and slide down a mountain on your backside (with crampons off)!!

Once safety is taken care of fun and usually the summit follows quite easily. Enjoy!

***Please note that the above gear list is not all inclusive. It assumes that you are hiking in a group with an experienced leader. Those who are hiking independent of an organized Catskill 3500 Club group activity should reference a more comprehensive list and possess skills in line with the intended endeavor.**