



Pocket Ranger® Blog

We connect with nature lovers, park goers & outdoor enthusiasts to promote free, state-sanctioned State Park & Wildlife apps.

Tips for Staying Warm and Dry During Winter Adventures

Just because it's cold outside doesn't mean you should stop adventuring, but it does mean that you have to prepare more. Staying warm and dry when you're out on a long [winter bike ride](#), [cross-country skiing](#), [snowshoeing](#), or exploring the wintery landscape in another way is essential. You definitely won't have a good time with numb fingers and toes, and a negative experience will make you less likely to get outside during [winter](#) in the future. Plus, hypothermia and frostbite are not laughing matters and should be avoided at all costs.



Brr! Bundle up—winter is officially here. [Image: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/>]

Dress Appropriately

Winter calls for certain [gear](#) that you obviously don't need in other seasons, and while it may seem excessive at times, it's all necessary. From top to bottom, there are a few essential items to make sure you have in stock.



The couple that dresses warm together, probably goes on to do lots of fun outdoor adventuring together. [Image: <http://www.active.com/>]

- **Socks, socks, and more socks.** And not just thin cotton socks, but at least one pair of [heavy-duty wool socks](#) to keep your tootsies snug. You'll also probably want a pair of thinner wool socks to put on underneath the thicker ones. Layers are essential for keeping your extremities toasty warm.
- **Large, breathable, waterproof boots.** To account for the thicker socks and extra layers, you'll need a pair of boots that are larger than your normal shoe size. You'll also want a pair that can breathe and that are waterproof because wet, sweaty feet lead to wet boots, which will eventually freeze and lead to your feet getting colder quicker.
- **Kneewarmers or tights/long johns underneath snow pants.** Your legs will probably be one of the warmest parts of your body as you'll typically be exerting yourself by using your legs. Tights, long johns, and kneewarmers are all helpful in providing a bit of extra warmth, though. And these, of course, go underneath any heavier [snow pants or thicker pants](#) you may be wearing—unless you're trying to create a new fashion trend, that is.
- **Jackets for days.** There's a general "rule of three" when it comes to layering. An [insulated jacket](#) is essential, and depending on the temperatures and how long you'll be outside for, an extra jacket as well as

a breathable, non-cotton shirt might also be necessary.

- **Fingers are like toes and should be treated similarly.** What we mean by this is that fingers, like toes, are extremities and often get cold first as your body concentrates heat on your torso for your vital organs. Therefore it's appropriate to layer and invest in some extra linings. There is also a lot of talk that [mittens](#) are more effective than [gloves](#), but that's usually up to your personal preference—if you absolutely hate mittens for some reason, then it's probably not worth the investment. Hand (and foot!) warmers are also helpful and are available in bulk on many sites.
- **Protect that beautiful head of yours.** A [hat](#) and [scarf](#) combo are great for winter exploring and help to keep your ears, neck, and face comfortable. There are other items—like a buff, balaclava, or earmuffs—that you might also want to look into, but as long as you're covered then you're good to go. It's also important to remember that if you start becoming warm, the scarf and hat should be the first items to be removed.

Know the Signs of Hypothermia and Frostbite



Trust me, this is not the life you want. [Image: <http://media.tumblr.com/>]

There are more than a few ways to know if you're suffering from [hypothermia or frostbite](#) as well as plenty of ways to treat both. With **frostbite**, you'll start out feeling a cold, prickly feeling in your body parts and they'll turn red (as mentioned before, extremities are the first areas that typically become afflicted with frostbite). From there, the body part will grow increasingly numb and will turn white, and may even turn blue or purple. You'll know you're in trouble if your body starts feeling warm and you experience stinging or burning. At this point you may also experience blisters a day or so after warming back up. If your frostbite advances even further, all layers of your skin will be affected by the freezing temperatures. You might lose functionality in

your joints and will become completely numb in the frostbitten areas, which will eventually turn black in the days following the exposure.

On the other hand, **hypothermia** is a whole other monster to deal with. A few signs of hypothermia are shivering, dizziness, confusion, trouble speaking, lack of coordination, weak pulse, and shallow breathing. Although it's usually difficult to notice hypothermia as the symptoms are gradual, the more it sets in, the more apparent the symptoms become. However, the shivering will cease in extreme cases. Wearing breathable, non-cotton clothes during your winter adventures is very important as cotton absorbs sweat and can freeze, making you more vulnerable to hypothermia.

Stay Hydrated



Drink up! The water's great! [Image: <http://thoughtfulwomen.org/>]

It's easy to overlook drinking water when your teeth are chattering and your muscles twitching with the cold, but it's incredibly important to stay hydrated during wintertime exercise. When your body is cold, your mind ends up preoccupied, and you simply don't feel thirsty as often, even when you're on the brink of dehydration. Water also helps you generate heat easier and quicker, which is especially important when you're covered in tons of layers. It's important to drink water often (and not a swig of whiskey, as some movies may have you believe).

Hopefully with these tips you're feeling a bit more inspired to head outside and explore, despite winter's chill. And nothing can make that easier than our handy [Pocket Ranger® mobile apps](#), which are available for download in the iTunes and Google Play Stores!