BEFORE YOU START

Ski or snowshoe touring in Yosemite can be a magnificent experience, or it can be a disaster if certain simple preparations are ignored. Park rangers have assembled a set of suggestions which, when observed, can help ensure a safe trip even if you encounter stormy weather or unforeseen problems.

Plan your trip sensibly, keeping in mind your experience and physical condition. Remember that winter days are short and you may not be able to travel as far as you expect.

Before you leave on a trip, let someone know where you're going and when you'll return.

Keep track of others in your party.

Always carry a map and compass and know how to use them. Unless you're an expert with map and compass, stay on trails, which are indicated by markers on trees. Consider carrying a GPS unit, if you know how to use one.

Get a weather forecast (209/372-0200)—then be prepared for the unexpected.

Even on short trips, carry proper gear and food for an unplanned bivouac. Always carry and drink plenty of water. If you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated.

Clothing and equipment suggestions: Wear wool, fleece, or polypropylene—a wool or synthetic hat is essential. These fabrics retain some warmth even when wet. Pack a waterproof jacket. Carry quick-energy food, water, waterproof matches, a flashlight, and a whistle from the neck strap. If you become lost or must bivouac unexpectedly, THINK! Stop early to prepare for the night. Don't thrash around or panic; save your energy. Build a fire, if possible. Avoid wind and insulate your body from snow. Drink warm liquids, if possible; eat often and huddle together. Stay dry!

Keep an eye on members of your party. Hypothermia can be diagnosed by sluggish moments, unintelligible speech, and peculiar behavior. If a member of your party appears hypothermic, take quick action to keep him or her as warm as possible.

If you have informed someone of your expected return and are overdue, remember that help probably is on the way. Maintain the attitude that you can and will survive.

If someone in your party needs ranger assistance and you can safely ski out, go to the Badger Pass Ranger Station. At night, call 911 for emergency assistance from the telephone at the ski lodge.

GETTING INTO FOCUS

Change is the way of nature. If you visit this area more than once or twice, you’ll encounter changes in the landscape and learn to recognize their subtleties. On one visit, you may find the red firs clothed in pale blue frost, wind-driven snow plastered to the ruddy trunks. Another time, they may glow a sun-lit green, chartreuse lichens clinging to each limb. Should you ski the haunted ghost forest of dead lodgepole pines, they may seem even more ghostly when silhouetted against the silent white of a building storm. On another day your reward may be vistas of white Sierra peaks, brilliant under the bluest of skies.

FACILITIES

Toilet facilities are located at Summit Meadow, Bridalveil Creek Trailhead, Sentinel Dome parking area, Glacier Point, and Ostrander Lake. Bunks are available for overnight use at the Ostrander Lake Ski Hut, and reservations are recommended. You can reserve a spot by writing or calling Yosemite Conservancy, P.O. Box 230, El Portal, CA 95318, 209/372-0740. The $20.00 charge per person, per night must be paid in advance.

KNOW THE RULES

Certain National Park Service regulations must be observed by backcountry users; these protect the park as well as visitors.

For all overnight trips obtain a wilderness permit at Badger Pass ranger station. Self-registration is available when rangers are not available.

Camp at least 1½ miles from Badger Pass.

Camp no closer than 100 feet (30.5 m) to lakes, streams, and trails.

To dispose of human waste, dig through snow and six inches into soil.

Pack out all garbage, including toilet paper.

No cutting of trees or pine boughs for shelter is permitted.

No pets permitted beyond plowed roads.

No motorized vehicles are permitted.

Skiers and snowshoers should make and maintain separate tracks.

If skiing off trails (in the Glacier Point area, be alert for power lines.

No camping is permitted at Summit Meadow or the overlooks at Dewey and Glacier Points.
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