

North Pole Ski Clothing & Equipment List

Purchasing new clothing & equipment for a polar expedition is often a harder challenge than the expedition itself. There are so many new products on the market. Add to this your “tried & true” favorite items that you’ve used for years and one often becomes overwhelmed by the choices. The recommendations we offer in this equipment and clothing list are based on gear that we have personally used on Polar expeditions; we know it works! **Do not hesitate to contact us for all your questions about clothing & equipment.**

In the list below, we emphasize “*systems.*” An excellent one-piece wind suit or a great ski boot is worthless if not used in a proper system. All your “systems,” whether it be clothing, sleeping or skiing, will need to be tested to insure that all the items are compatible with each other.

NorthWinds will supply:

- Pulk (sled) with trace & harness: SnowSled, Acapulka or Fjelpulken
- Tents: Hilleberg tent customized with snow flaps, vents, drying lines
- MSR stoves mounted on stove board, pots, & cooking items, and stove fuel
- Navigation: guide will have GPS, compass and watch
- Communication: Iridium phone & solar recharging panel
- First Aid kit
- Lead rescue equipment: throw-line bags, extra rope, floatation device

NorthWinds supplies the following items for you to keep:

- 2 pairs of goggles with wind-stopper nose guards
- 1 fur ruff to be sewn onto your wind jacket
- 2 Nalgene water bottles with insulated covers
- 2 neck gaiters (fleece neck tube to protect lower face). We do not recommend neoprene face masks.
- 2 quick dry washing cloth (1 for re-supply)

Clothing System

On an expedition to the North Pole you can expect temperatures to be around -40°C at the start, warming to -20°C as we approach the month of May. We will be working hard, pulling our pulks over many pressure ridges. You can expect wind chills up to -50°C! Your clothing system needs to wick away perspiration, protect you from the wind and insulate you from the cold.

Body

- 2 sets of top & bottom long underwear; 1 pair light-weight, 1 pair mid-weight. (You may want to bring a 3rd set to be sent to re-supply). Capilene polyester is excellent; untreated polyesters, wick-able polyesters (polypropylene) and the new smart wool are good. Patagonia makes a good capilene; Lifa by Helly Hansen is excellent.
- 1 set of top & bottom expedition-weight fleece, 100 – 200 wt.
- 1 fleece jacket or pull-over 200 – 300 wt.
- 1 breathable jacket & pants (or one piece suit) made of breathable fabric such as Ventile, untreated microfiber or a nylon/cotton blend. Look for good ventilation such as full side zips on pants and underarm. The hood needs a wire support around the rim or be stiff enough to hold a fur ruff. A ruff is extremely important to prevent frostbite on your face. We will supply you with a fur ruff. If you choose bib pants or a one-piece suit we recommend a through-the-crotch zipper; this will necessitate that the under layers also work with this system with crotch zips or slits. Please add zipper tabs to all zippers (about 2" long) to enable you to operate zippers with mitts.
- 1 mid-weight down parka with insulated hood.

Optional:

- Vest: down, fleece or fiberfill
- If you are prone to cold feet we recommend you bring 1 pair of insulated pants with full side zippers to enable you to put them on or off without removing your ski boots. Pants can be quilted down, fiberfill or a fleece lined shell.

Head

- 2 hats; must offer insulation, wind protection and cover ears. A fleece with a wind-shell cover is great. Lowe makes a good one.
- 1 pair of sun glasses that block side light such as glacier glasses or wrap around glasses. Eye protection must block 90% of UV rays.

Optional:

- 1 polypro or fleece balaclava
- 1 wind-stopper head band (can double as eye cover to block out the 24 hour light)

Hands

- 2 pairs of polypropylene glove liners; one thick, one thin
- 1 pair (plus 1 spare) insulated ski glove, large enough to fit over your liners **or**
- 1 pair wind-stopper gloves, large enough to fit over your glove liners
- 1 pair expedition over mitts; down or fiberfill, large enough to fit over any of the above gloves.

Feet

- 2 pair (plus 2 spare) polypropylene sock liners; one thick, one thin
- 2 pair (plus 2 spare) thick socks; smart wool or synthetic blend to fit over liner

Optional:

- 1 pair of camp booties or down booties for quick trips outside tent
- 1 pair (plus 1 spare) VBL (vapor barrier liner) socks

Ski System

Boots & Bindings

Many ski boot & binding systems have been tried, many have failed, none are fail-proof. The system that has proven the best is a stiff back country ski boot like the Meindl or Alpina with a Rotefella NNN BC ski binding. This is the best system - the one we recommend. The other system is a Sorel or Acton boot (rubber soled with nylon upper to the knee) with a Berwin binding (a plastic strap on binding). These boots are easy to walk in, but do not offer good ski control, ankle support and the Berwin bindings are notorious for breaking.

- 1 pair Meindl or Alpina (Alpina boots need an insulated over boots, screwed on)
- 4 pairs of Rottafella NNN BC (step in) bindings

OR

- 1 pair of Sorel or Acton boots
- 4 pair of Berwin bindings (the new stronger blue-grey, not the black ones)

Skis, Skins & Poles

- Skis: You need a back-country (BC) cross country ski with full metal edges. We can recommend: Madshus Expedition, Black Diamond Aurora (indestructible but heavy), Fischer Europa 99 or 109 or Asnes BC.
- Skins: To pull a heavy pulk you will need ½ ski skins, screwed into the mid section of the base of your ski. Purchase a full set of skins and in Iqaluit, we will cut them down, inset them and screw them on (skins do not stick on in extreme cold).
- Poles: Ski poles must be strong but not heavy, handle straps should be adjustable to fit your large expedition mitts. A nice option is to have adjustable poles like the Black Diamond "Traverse" or "Expedition." If poles are not adjustable we recommend they be shorter than your standard length as you will be leaning forward when pulling your pulk.

Sleeping System

Even though we heat the tents during meal time and place a fully insulated floor in the tents (made of thin evizote pads), temperatures while we sleep are the same as the outside temperature. You will need:

- 1 Sleeping bag rated to -40°C (or a double bag system with a down inner and light synthetic outer)
- 2 full length sleeping pads: either a Z-rest or a Ridge Rest (closed celled foam) with an self-inflating Therm-a-Rest (with repair kit).

Personal Items

Bring the minimum that you will need!

- Personal toilet kit: tooth brush, small tube of tooth paste, comb or small brush, hair elastics for long hair, nail file or nail clippers....etc.
- 2 chap stick (1 for re-supply) Recommend Dermetone
- 2 skin cream (1 for re-supply) the dry polar conditions causes skin to crack on hands and flake off body like dandruff
- 1 small sun screen (face is covered most of the time)
- Women - tampex or tampons
- Small personal repair kit for your Therm-a rest, skis...etc.
- Small personal first aid kit for blisters, minor aches and pains
- Vitamins (optional)
- 2 duffle bags, one to be left at base camp, one to be sent to re-supply
- 2 paperback reading books (1 for re-supply)
- 1 expedition journal pen or pencil

Other optional items:

- Camera, film & spare batteries (lithium batteries last longer in the cold).
- Your own Iridium phone (or Simm card for Iridium phone. We can arrange rental of phone and Simm cards.
- Mini disc player (music)