

FREE BASIC TO ADVANCED MOUNTAIN CLIMBING INSTRUCTION

PROSPECTUS SNOW CAMPING FROM BIVY TO BASE CAMP

Outing: Free Snow Camping and some techniques for climbing steep snow slopes
Date: Saturday and Sunday, April 4 and 5, 2009
Location: Very near the Swampy Lakes Snow Park shelter, very near the cars
Time: 3pm or so on Saturday until 11am or so on Sunday
Leader: Robert Speik
Goal: We will camp as a group and dine, learn and socialize together

Swampy Lakes:

Swampy Lakes Sno-Park (Hwy 46 - Milepost 16, elevation 5800') maintains a good snow depth. Trails and snow conditions are wet and soft to new to icy conditions for skiing or snowshoeing at this time. Access to about 25 miles of easy to most difficult Nordic ski trails, six warming shelters (day use only), with connecting trails to Meissner, Vista Butte, and Dutchman trail systems. There are also 3.5 miles of easiest to intermediate snowshoeing trails. This designated snowshoe trail is designed and recommended for snowshoers only. The ski trails in the area are open to snowshoers as well, but remember to avoid walking on the set ski tracks. Area is closed to dogs.

Trail Conditions:

Check the anticipated trail conditions under USFS Trail Tips at

http://www.traditionalmountaineering.org/Trail_tips.htm

Watch the weather forecast closely, check outside and pack accordingly.

A few winter trail safety reminders from the USFS to keep in mind during periods of unsettled weather with moderate to heavy snowfall are: If heavy snowfall has been or is in the forecast, avoid going out if you are not ready to deal with it. When it is snowing or has been snowing more than 1 inch per hour with several inches of new snow you are likely dealing with some challenging and “ugly” road, trail and snow conditions.

Conditions that may include:

- Hazardous driving conditions – very slick or unplowed roads and snow parks, poor visibility, traffic delays due to accidents, etc.
- Unmanageable snow conditions beyond the snow parks - deep or heavy snow making skiing, snowmobiling or snowshoeing difficult to impossible. Trail grooming is often behind schedule or not being done during heavy snowfall periods.
- Trail markers or junction signing snow covered and difficult to impossible to follow resulting in losing the trail. It may be snowing blowing so hard that the tracks you set heading in have been covered within minutes of setting them. Minimal to zero visibility only complicates the situation.
- Finding yourself in a deep snow situation where you are unable to climb up moderate to steep terrain to get out and essentially becoming seriously stuck. Snowmobilers are especially susceptible to getting “caught up” in these deep snow moments and head down a slope they are unable to climb back up, only to find themselves the objects of a search and rescue mission.
- Avalanche hazards can rapidly increase during unsettled weather. Do ongoing stability assessments and/or avoid suspect avalanche terrain. Keep in mind, there are avalanche safe routes even during extreme avalanche periods; be able to recognize and use these routes when necessary.”

--Chris Sabo, Trails/Wilderness, Bend/Fort Rock RD, Deschutes NF

We will scout the venue for our Adventure a few days before this free Seminar. We will need snowshoes. (There is not enough room for skis around the camp.) We will site our snow camp more than 300 feet from the edge of the parking area. The snow should be very deep, wet, heavy, easy to compact

for tents and trails, and easy to dig for caves and dig out our “kitchen-dining” area. We need to melt snow, cook and eat together.

We suggest you bring a real shovel, this time. (You might break your aluminum backpacking shovel.) We use a “D” handled fire-fighter shovel. Many shovels make light work!

We checked the log shelter where we can enjoy after-dinner conversation warmed by a hot fire in the wood stove. We usually have to dig a passage to enter the Shelter; the Shelter is often covered by six feet of snow with drifts to ten feet. There is a mortal risk of a roof release (or collapse), which can, in part, be mitigated by entering at the side and ducking around the corner under the eaves. (We will define the entrance with route marker flags.) There is no wood in the shelter! **We need some nice pine logs and kindling for an evening next to the 50 gallon wood stove. It is close to the cars.**

We will mark the very short trail from the Trail Head signboard past the Shelter to the camping area with route flags. We will also mark the clear area where we can construct our base camp “kitchen-dining” area. See the pictures:

http://www.traditionalmountaineering.org/Photos_SnowCamping.htm

We will also mark a trail to the fine new USFS toilet. (Bring your own gaskets and paper and hand wipes, just to be sure.)

Parking Requirements: We have been advised to park together (so that the plows can more easily back us in?). There is lots of room against the center island across from the toilets. **(Bring shovels, chains and tow ropes, just in case.) You will need an Oregon Snow Park Pass!** (Do not forget to put it on the dashboard.)

Survival Instruction: We like Preparedness Instruction and not Survival Instruction.

Lodging: Test your bivy, tent or snow caving ability. This is a Seminar, so you can ask us for our free advice, or not. Check our web for information about snow caves. Use the Search feature to find all the snow cave information.

It is critical to have good insulation under your sleeping bag. We note that closed cell “ensolite” pads are cheap, light and inexpensive. Used pads are selling for \$3 or \$4 dollars at Second Season Sports. I take two pads, one thick winter inflatable and one foam pad to sit and stand on as well sleep well.

(Feel free to take loads of bedding from home if you are not sure about the rating of your bag(s).

It is important to have “snow stakes” of some type. Big plastic stakes are OK; aluminum “snow stakes” seem better. Experiment with using plastic grocery bags filled with snowballs as “dead persons”.

If you have a “three season tent” it may work, but watch out for snow loading or spindrift coming through the netting. (Netting sides on an inner tent and the strength of the outer shell is the difference between three and four season tents. I use a two-pound single wall tent used on the Rupal Face of Naga Parbat.

Watch out for snow load – you may have to get up and shovel out during the night. Watch out for wind – your tent can blow in or blow away! Watch out for 30-pound snow “bombs” in the trees or breaking branches.

Dig a hole 12 inches to 18 inches deep in front of your door so you can sit down and take off your boots.

Bring a brush or light towel to get rid of stray snow inside your tent before it melts.

Bring a wide mouth “P” bottle (at least 48CCs, believe me) to avoid going outside.

Do not cook or burn a lamp in your tent! You may be overcome by fire or carbon monoxide!

Food: Bring your own backpacking food. It is best to dedicate your largest pot to warming snow. It is not good practice to “boil snow” – it takes too much time and fuel. Melt the snow and then filter it if you need to drink it. Bring a small plastic cup to dip boiled water out of the snow pot; do not try to tip a heavy pot of hot water into a cup of coffee.

Use your smaller pot for “cooking” your Mac and cheese with Vienna sausages, etc. We have oatmeal with walnuts added, and coffee in the morning. We usually have a Cliff Bar before getting out of our sleeping bag. If we are cold at night, we have a Cliff Bar and put on a warmer hat.

Water: Use wide mouth Nalgene bottles or bags for water. There are things you can do to keep them from freezing. Try to melt the nice new snow for your water. Use a jug from your car as last resort.

Other beverages: We like a beer or glass of wine before dinner. We will bring some chips to share as we enjoy watching our snow melt to water. After dinner, when we adjourn to the log shelter, we enjoy coffee and Kaluha, or cider and schnapps and cookies and chocolate and trail mix and ice cream and

Clothing: Your boots are very important. Try them out but do not let your feet get cold. It is possible to incur frostbite on this Adventure. We will be relatively inactive and unable to warm ourselves by exercise.

The short Sunday Clinic will be conducted on the flats and concentrate on tying in to the rope and anchoring the rope to the snow. You can watch or jump in and tie in. You cannot learn all the knots and rope management on Saturday, but you can view what we know to be valuable techniques. Bring gear if you have it.

Required gear -

- your Ten Essential Systems including extra clothing for possible stormy weather
- your cell phone (to check it out)
- your winter backpack, with shelter, insulation and ability to melt snow for drinking water and food
- your four season backpacking tent or bivy sack
- two inches of waterproof insulation and a 20-degree sleeping bag (or two 40-degree bags, etc.)
- snow shovel (including big shovels for those who wish to try a snow cave or two)
- your good humor and enquiring mind

There is real danger of becoming lost and losing your life from hypothermia! Please do not wander away from the marked venue without checking out with the Leader. There is danger of frostbite! Do not let your extremities get cold!

You will be expected to sign the GROUP ROSTER, INFORMED CONSENT, LIABILITY RELEASE AND SIGN-IN AGREEMENT and have a great time. Be sure to sign out!

On Belay!
Robert Speik, Leader