



Squam Lakes Association: A Guide to Winter Day Hiking Equipment

The SLA is excited to be offering a number of outdoor opportunities this winter. Guided hikes, volunteer trail days, and many more adventures will be taking place to encourage our community to get out and explore the Squam Lakes watershed. But whether you're taking part in one of our programs or simply out on the trails, it's important to be properly equipped to make your experience both fun and safe this winter. This guide is intended to help you make the right choices of gear to wear and pack, in order to appreciate the beauty of Squam year-round.

Required Apparel Check List:

- Water-resistant Boots
- Socks (wool or synthetic)
- spikes/snowshoes
- Long-sleeve shirt and long underwear base layers (synthetic/wool, NO cotton)
- Insulated pants and light jacket (fleece/wool)
- Windbreaker or waterproof jacket
- Wind/Water proof pants
- Warm Hat (wool/synthetic)
- Warm, water-resistant gloves

Required Packing Check List:

- Day pack
- Extra set of base layers
- Extra pair of socks
- Extra pair of gloves
- 2-liters of water or more
- Trail Snacks
- Map/Compass
- Emergency signal device (whistle/mirror)
- Firestarter
- Required medication
- Flashlight/headlamp

Clothing:

1. **Layers:** Wearing layers of clothing (instead of a single heavy piece of clothing) is the most effective way to stay both dry and warm. The SLA recommends having at least three layers for your upper and lower body: a wicking/quick-dry base layer, an insulated middle layer, and a wind/water proof outer layer. This will allow you to stay warm when inactive while wearing all of your layers, but be able to adjust your apparel in order to avoid overheating or excessive sweating.
2. **No Cotton:** The highest priority while doing outdoor activities in the winter is to avoid being in wet clothing for prolonged periods. Once cotton clothing becomes wet, from precipitation or sweat, it will not dry out on the trail and elevates the risk of cold temperature injuries. The SLA recommends always wearing base layers made of synthetic material or other non-cotton fabrics.

Footgear:

1. **Snowshoes or Spikes:** While hiking in snowy or icy conditions it can be important to have additional traction. Snowshoes can be most effective after a substantial amount of fresh snow or on trails with little traffic. Half-inch spikes allow hikers to safely traverse more slippery surfaces, and are recommended over snowshoes for ice or compacted snow. Common half-inch

spikes and other forms of traction devices include Kahtoola MICROspikes (which can be purchased through the SLA store), NANOspikes, and Yaktrax Summits.

2. **Water-resistant:** Ensure that your footwear is not only comfortable and appropriate for the length of the hike, but also waterproof or water-resistant. Preventing wet socks or wet feet is a key priority to safely hiking during the winter, but can be difficult when the trails are covered in snow or ice. In addition to proper boots, having an extra pair of dry socks to change into when your feet get sweaty or damp is an essential to avoid injuries and emergencies.
3. **Circulation:** Another consideration in your choice of boots and socks is allowing for adequate circulation. Although layering clothes is usually effective for keeping warm, if no breathing space is left in your footwear, layered socks or improperly fitted boots, can cut off the circulation of warm air.

What to Pack:

1. **Additional Base Layers:** The SLA recommends packing additional base layers to change into when you go on winter hikes in order to avoid being in wet clothes for extended periods. For longer excursions bring a full set of base-layers (shirt, undergarments, socks, gloves), but even for shorter hikes you should make sure to pack at least extra socks. When hiking during precipitation, or while doing activities out on the lake ice, make sure to pack your extra clothing in a water proof bag.
2. **Food and Water:** As compared to hiking in warmer weather, water loss is not as evident in the winter. The risk of dehydration, however, is still very much a threat. The SLA recommends bringing at least two liters of water on your excursions (or about half a liter per hour) to ensure adequate hydration throughout the hike as well as in the case of emergency. Water frozen in a bottle becomes ineffective, so you may want to consider using an insulated water bottle or carrier as well as using a widemouthed bottle. In addition, packing snacks to eat on the trail can help your body stay warm as well as being essential in case of emergency.
3. **Emergency Supplies:** Even when you plan to be back before sunset or are only taking a short, relatively safe excursion, it is always advisable to be ready for emergency situations. Ensure that your pack always contains a small flashlight/headlamp and a fire starter, as hiking during the winter and at night puts you at elevated risk for accidents. Other items like first aid kits, signal devices, maps, and a compass will be provided by your guide for SLA run excursions, but should be added to your pack for other outings in case of emergency. Finally, ensure that you provide any additional medications that you could require in an emergency or if you were out on the trail longer than expected.

Advisable or Situational Packing Items:

- Hand warmers
- GPS
- Cellphone
- Waterproof stuff sack
- Toilet paper/ziploc bags/hand sanitizer
- First aid kit
- Lip balm/sunscreen
- Sleeping pad (for medical emergencies)
- Pocket knife/multitool
- Trekking poles
- Insulated water bottle/holder
- Gaiters (foot gear coverings)
- Sunglasses/goggles
- Balaclava/face mask