

WINTER MOUNTAINEERING

SUGGESTED KIT LIST

This list contains suggestions – especially for clothing – if you have been wearing an old woolly jumper for the last 10 years & it has done the job on cold & wet Scottish winter days, then keep on using it! However do not forget that an Alpine winter day when skiing - although sometimes the air is a lot colder than a Scottish winter day – it is also a lot drier. Expect cold but sometimes moister air in Scotland in winter.

- **Footwear** - A pair of boots suitable for Scottish winter mountaineering have at least a three-quarter shank; meaning that the boots do not bend too much when wearing crampons ie B2 or B3. Any good quality leather or plastic boot (Scarpa Vega or Omega) with a reasonably stiff sole would do. Scarpa Manta B2's are fine for Scottish mountaineering & climbing up to grade II. Scarpa Triolet GTX (B2/B3), Scarpa Freney GTX (B3) or Scarpa Cumbre (B3) are good. A popular Scarpa boot is the Phantom Lite, the one with a big zip over the laces. These are very comfortable, reasonably warm but expensive at nearly £300! Sportiva Nepal and Nepal Extreme Evo GTX are well-proven and suitable for Summer Alpine mountaineering as well. For steeper climbing (grades IV & above), stiffer B3 boots are needed.
- **Gaiters** – Good quality gaiters with a zip.
- **Rucsac** – At least 50 to 55 litres. Preferably without side pockets, - they get caught on rock when scrambling - with an ice-axe loop. Rucsac liner – heavy duty bin liner or fertiliser bag (cleaned) is fine. Better are 'Exped' rucsac liner bags with a roll-top seal. Rucsac should be big enough to carry thermos flask, waterproofs (top & bottom), spare fleece, head-torch, packed lunch, crampons, harness, helmet, slings & carabiners, spare gloves & hat, personal first aid kit, camera, mobile 'phone, water-bottle.
- **Crampons** – 'clip-on' is the most practical method for putting on & taking off eg Grivel 'Crampomatic' – but boots need to be fairly stiff & have a good ledge or welt at the heel. A good option is the Grivel G12 'New Classic' or similar system, with a front cradle for the toe, & either a cradle or a clip-on for the heel. We can supply either type to borrow for the course if needed. Grivel make the 'G20' crampon, Be aware that some boots have step in heel welts to make them look "techy" even if they're not. If in doubt a modern type Strap On crampon (eg New Classic binding) is best. Grivel also make a GSB (Grivel Scarpa Binding) binding that will only fit boots designed specifically for GSB.
- **Anti-balling plates** are needed to stop snow 'balling-up' under the crampons.
- **Boot/Crampon Compatibility:** Many manufacturers now rate their mountain boots for stiffness and the type of use they are designed for:
 - B0:** Not really suitable for crampons.
 - B1:** Flexible boots that are suitable for trekking and hill walking only. C1 crampons only.
 - B2:** Semi-rigid boots designed for mountaineering and easier grade snow and mixed climbing, but not for steep ice and harder mixed climbs. C1 or C2 crampons.
 - B3:** Fully rigid boots for mountaineering, ice and mixed climbing at all grades - but not always the most comfortable boots to walk in (though things are improving). C1, C2 or C3 crampons.
- **Crampons:** These should be no stiffer than your boots or they may fall off.
 - C1:** Flexible (eg Kahtoola, Grivel G10)
 - C2:** Semi-rigid (eg Grivel Airtech, G12, G14)
 - C3:** Rigid (eg Grivel Rambo, DMM Terminator)
- **Ice –axe** – 'Walking' axes' are usually 55 to 60cm in length, & are fine for general mountaineering & snow gullies up to grade II. Longer than 65cm means the axe starts to get in the way when traversing & climbing in constricted gullies. Harder & steeper ice-climbing require two axes usually; with shorter shafts – 50 to 55cm typically, and steeper picks. We have spare ice axes to borrow, to use as well as your own on days when 2 axes might be needed. Wrist loops are useful for scrambling with axes, & give support for climbing. I tend not to use wrist loops for general walking on snow, but keep a wrist-loop in



the top pocket of my rucksac with a 'larks-foot' knot already tied so that I can fit it quickly & easily. Grivel, Charlet Moser, Mountain Technology & DMM are all good makes of ice-axes.

- **Waterproofs** – Goretex or similar top & leggings very important to carry. A lightweight windproof is a good idea if dry – & keeps the spindrift & showers out.
- **Gloves** – Waterproof gloves have not been invented yet! But if dry, Dachstein mitts are good, cheap and work well in dry 'fluffy' snow. If wet, a shell outer & fleece inner works well. The inners can be dried overnight, & spares are easy to carry & change during the day. A pair of thinner fleece gloves are a good idea. Ice/snow-climbing places great demands on the hands – you need dexterity to deal with carabiners etc, but hands get cold whilst you are hanging off ice-axe loops. There is no easy solution, most people make sure they can feel their ice-axes & place ice-screws etc, so wear good quality gloves to enable them to do this, and sometimes suffer cold hands as a consequence! It is common to stuff spare dry mittens or gloves down the front of your jacket whilst climbing wearing gloves, then put the mitts/gloves back on when the stance is reached – then suffer the hot-aches. A spare pair of ski-gloves/mitts in the rucksac is a good idea anyway if the main pair get wet.
- **Hat** – A warm fleece hat is important, with a spare in the rucksac - (even an old woolly balaclava as spare). Make sure that it fits under a climbing helmet – there is no room for 'bobbles' or the like.
- **A neck- gaitor** or 'tube' – Is a good thing to carry to keep out spindrift & protect the neck closure in the wind & cold. Made from light fleece.
- **Trousers** – Do not rely on Rohan Bags or similar cotton trekking trousers to keep the legs warm. Fleece trousers tend to be sweaty & are not wind-proof. Troll 'Rockstars' – a bit like 'Ron Hills' but heavier, are a good option. An alternative is to wear a pair of Goretex, or similar, salopettes over a pair of long-johns, & keep them on all day. 'Alpine' trousers eg. Mammut, Mountain Hardwear, Mountain Equipment, trousers made of a Schoeller material, are very good. but they can be expensive. Avoid cotton or thin nylon. On very cold days a pair of thin 'long-johns' made by Patagonia, Mammut, Helly Hansen etc – are a good idea.
- **Top** – A fleece 200gm to 300gm top, with a good neck closure. Perhaps a lightweight 100gm fleece as a spare in the rucksac. I carry a fleece or a primaloft waistcoat eg Rab Generator vest - in my rucksac as a spare – it packs very small & light.
- **Thermal or 'wicking' layers** – Absorbs & wicks sweat & dries quickly. 'Layering' I find more adaptable & versatile than one layer 'Buffalo' systems. 'Smartwool' wicking layer tops are very good & less odorous after a day out.
- **Head-torch** – It gets dark at about 4.30 pm in late January & February - although we will aim to be down before it gets fully dark on most days, (hopefully!) Sometimes a **headtorch** (a torch that leaves your hands free) is useful for the last half an hour on the path. Lots of choice these days with LED bulbs but make sure there are at least 4 bulbs, or one extra bright as Petzl Myo XP or Tikka XP. Little Petzl 'Tikka' 3 LED torches do not cast a strong enough beam, but are fine for map-reading. Petzl Tikka Plus have 4 LED's & are good.
- **Food & drink** – I eat things like flapjack's & Snicker bars, as well as sandwiches. I usually carry a ¾ litre flask of tea/coffee/or hot Ribena. Make sure you have with a good supply of 'hill food' for the day.
- **Harness/helmet (for scrambling & climbing courses)** – We supply a harness & helmet if you do not have your own. Bring what you have & would like to use. A harness that you are able to put on over boots & crampons is most user-friendly, eg – Black Diamond Bod or Alpine Bod, & Troll Technician or DMM Alpine. These harnesses work by pulling up the leg loops between the legs, & fastening the loops by non-load bearing buckles. This means that the user can put the harness on whilst wearing skis or crampons.
- **Slings, carabiners & belay plates** (for scrambling & climbing courses) – if you have any of these items, then bring them along. You do not need to buy these specifically for the course, we have some to borrow.

- **Personal first aid kit** – spare contact lenses – ‘Compeed’ blister kits etc. – in a waterproof container or ‘Exped’ roll-top bag.
- **Map & compass** – I will carry a map & compass, but another set in the party is a good idea if you have one to bring.
- **Emergency kit** – I will carry a ‘group shelter’ big enough for three people, also a first aid kit & mobile phone. We should all have spare food, something like Kendal mintcake that you would only eat in a dire emergency!
- **Sunglasses** – Sometimes needed even in Scotland in Winter!
- **Goggles** – Useful for walking or navigating into spindrift.
- **Ski-stick** – I use a collapsible 3-part ski-pole for the ‘walk-ins’, then carry it inside my rucsac when climbing or scrambling.
- **Small waterproof bags** – For example a collection of different sized & coloured ‘Exped’ bags are very useful for organising kit in the rucsac. Very good value for money including a rucsac liner bag from 40 litres up to 80 litres. ‘Exped’ bags are sold in sizes from 1 litre up to 40 litres, as well as rucsac liners, and are useful for keeping things ‘compartmentalised’ rather than just stuffing everything into one big bag.
- **Useful websites**

www.mwis.org.uk

Mountain weather forecasts.

www.grivel.com/Products/Ramponi.asp

Grivel crampons

www.petzl.com/en/home

Petzl headtorches

www.rab.uk.com/

Rab clothing

www.needlesports.com

Good gear-shop, based in Keswick, Cumbria

www.mountain-equipment.co.uk

Mountain Equipment clothing

www.killinoutdoor.co.uk

Good gear-shop in Killin, Perthshire. Canoe & cycle hire also.

www.scarpa.co.uk

Boots

www.mountainvision.co.uk

Winter Mountaineering & Alpine Guiding

www.skyeguide.co.uk

Cuillin Munro's, Scrambling courses, Cuillin Traverse. Also Munro & Mountaineering courses and guiding in the NW Scotland.

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