



Winter Recreation

Wildlife Viewing and Photography

If you associate winter with staying indoors next to a warm fire or bundling up on your couch with a good book, you may be missing some of the best wildlife views Mother Nature has to offer.

Bird-watching can be more enjoyable in the wintertime as birds are exposed from the lack of leaves. You also will have an easier time spotting smaller mammals such as rabbits and squirrels, which become more active as their areas of safe cover and natural food leave with the warmer weather.

Whether you're looking to experience wildlife in its natural state or capture memorable photographs to share with your friends and family members, winter is a great time to take in the beautiful sights and sounds of nature.

TYPES OF ANIMALS TO PHOTOGRAPH

Wildlife varies greatly by region, but there are a few staples that The Humane Society of the United States recommends seeking.

- **Chickadees:** This type of bird is known to stay active whether it's warm or cold. They likely will be eating as much as possible during the day. They use those extra calo-

ries to keep warm during cold winter nights.

- **Blue jays:** A bird that is notorious for being a natural warning alarm for other birds, blue jays can alert you to spot a hawk or other predatory bird nearby.

- **Chipmunks:** These four-legged wonders are usually burrowed away during the colder months, but you can often see them scurrying to

collect food on warmer winter days.

HOW TO ATTRACT ANIMALS

Food is sometimes scarce when the cold weather arrives and the vegetation dies. To attract animals to your neck of the woods, consider creating a safe spot in your yard for them to eat or collect food for the cold months.

Offering food, water or shelter for your local wildlife will assure that you have plenty of activity to watch in your backyard or even on your balcony.

WINTER BIRD WATCHING

A lot of people think bird watching in winter months will be uneventful due to the birds migrating south. That simply isn't the case. The winter brings out different types

of finches, songbirds and other birds that are accustomed to colder climates.

Look for areas with brushy areas that offer berries, nuts or fruit trees. Spotting predatory birds is easiest in open fields with small amounts of snow. These open fields make it easier for birds to spot potential prey and can help you end up with the photograph of a lifetime.



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Downhill Skiing

Ski slopes offer some of the most beautiful views in America. With rich trees, towering mountains and a seemingly unlimited amount of snow, you owe it to yourself to experience these views in person.

Downhill skiing is easy to learn if you take the right steps. It's an activity that can be shared amongst friends or family and can even lead to new friendships. Read on for some tips on how to get started and where to go when you get the hang of skiing.

SKIING TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

If you've decided you want to hit the slopes but aren't sure how to start, the best thing you can do is ask a local expert. Head to your nearby resort and enroll in ski lessons. A professional instructor will offer you the know-how and safety tips required to introduce you to the sport.

One of the lessons you will learn from your local expert is to aim ahead, just like in driving. Doing so will help keep you apprised of upcoming dangers or other skiers. Keep your eyes 10 feet ahead of the tips of your skis to effectively monitor the terrain while maintaining your balance.

HOW TO CHOOSE SKI SIZE

No amount of training or practice will be enough if you're not using the right equipment for your ski trip. Choosing the correct ski size can be difficult. Your local ski equipment experts can help you choose your equipment accordingly.

Giving your accurate height and weight may make choosing your appropriate ski size less of a hassle. Make sure you're honest with your skiing expert, as they will use the information you provide to fit you with the safest skis for

your body build.

If you're just starting out, you will want to look for skis that are shorter or closer to your chin. These skis are great for someone who isn't interested in skiing aggressively and will mostly ski on trails.

SKIING HOT SPOTS IN AMERICA

Park City Mountain Resort in Utah is one of America's favorite ski resorts for several reasons. Its 7,300 acres and 41 lifts give skiers many options to choose from. You

can pick from 324 different runs, including one that is more than 18,000 feet long.

Another favorite is Aspen Snowmass, located in Colorado. There you can find more than 3,000 acres, 91 runs and 20 different lifts.



Tips for Avoiding Frostbite

Winter comes with many American traditions, such as sledding, ice hockey and the classic snowball fight. Did you know you could possibly be putting your health on the line by not protecting yourself from winter's icy chill?

When faced with extremely cold conditions, it may only take minutes for your body to feel the effects of frostbite. Be safe this winter and learn the signs of frostbite and how you can prevent it.

DRESS ACCORDINGLY

As your body temperature lowers, it will do what it can to preserve heat. This means your blood vessels narrow and allow more blood to flow to your core, protecting important organs. This leaves parts like your hands and feet with too little blood to keep warm without your help.

If you will be exposed to cold weather conditions for long periods of time, dress to protect yourself.

Mittens are a better protector than a pair of gloves, but if you need the extra mobility gloves offer, try wearing two layers. Socks also should be layered. It is a good idea to wear a larger shoe than normal, as you don't want the extra socks to be too tight and restrict even more blood flow.

WHO IS AT RISK?

While everyone is certainly susceptible to getting frostbite, there are a few factors that may make you more susceptible.

If you have cardiovascular disease or diabetes, you may be at a higher risk of



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frostbite, as your body is already suffering from poor circulation. Drinking alcohol also can lead to frostbite, as it can decrease your perception and cause you to be less aware of the cold you're facing.

SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT

If you suspect the onset of frostbite

this winter, seek medical attention as soon as possible. The Mayo Clinic reports that frostbite often starts as cold skin accompanied with a prickling feeling. You also may experience numbness or notice discolored skin with frostbite. Blisters on your skin after it has been rewarmed is another good indicator.

Treatment for frostbite can include elevating the affected area, prescribing medicine to limit inflammation and removing blisters that may have formed. Extreme cases of frostbite may even lead to amputation, so remain vigilant about safety while enjoying the outdoors during the cold winter months.



Winter Camping

Camping outdoors doesn't always have to be done in warm weather. If done safely and properly, winter camping may become a new tradition for you and your family.

While camping during the winter may come with a few more hazards than a warm camping trip, there are preventative measures that you can take to assure a safe, fun stay. You will likely be facing cold temperatures, snow or ice. Being prepared for these hazards will give you peace of mind while you're enjoying the winter's extravagant views.

KNOW THE TERRAIN

Knowing the ins and outs of your camping environment is important regardless of the temperatures. Spend some time exploring different camping sites during warmer weather. This can make it easier to know how to get around if you are faced with snowy weather in the winter.

You also can talk to local guides or use websites to get a satellite view of your desired camping site. It's a good idea to note where bodies of water or roads are. Find yourself a promising exit plan, in case extreme weather causes you to leave.

MUST-HAVE ITEMS

When facing colder condi-

tions, there are many items and accessories you need to have in order to stay warm and safe.

- **Warm sleeping quarters:** Whether you plan to drive an RV or rent a cabin, make sure your lodging option is equipped with heaters that are in working order for the night hours.

- **Waterproof boots:** A high-quality pair of waterproof boots will protect your feet from wet weather and offer a layer of insulation to protect from the cold. These will be your best defense against frostbite on your toes.

- **Gloves or mittens:** Keeping your hands warm is critical. Bring a few extra pairs just in case you get them wet.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Chances are that you won't have wireless phone service if you're camping out in the deep wilderness. Pass out two-way radios amongst your group in case someone decides to stray farther than the rest.

Never camp in the winter alone. Tell friends where you plan to camp and the trails you plan to hike.

How To Choose A Cabin

A couple days away from your busy everyday life can provide huge benefits to your health and sanity. Rather than booking a room at a hotel or condo, look into renting a cabin. You will be surprised at the vast amount of cabin rentals available.

Renting a cabin during the winter can help you and your family make unreplaceable memories. You might have up-close-and-personal wild-life experiences that you would otherwise miss. Cabins are a great way to get away from life's stressful responsibilities and truly soak in nature.

WHICH CABIN IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

You'll have many options when it comes to choosing your perfect winter getaway cabin. You may prefer a cabin with electricity or a basic structure that offers a wood-burning stove.

When deciding which cabin is right for you, consider how much time you intend to stay indoors. If you decide you want to spend most of the day skiing or sledding, you may be able to save a few bucks by renting a bare bones cabin.



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If your intentions are to stay indoors and enjoy the silence that comes with a cabin in the wilderness, however, you may benefit from a premium cabin stocked with cooking gear, beds and electric heat.

A SAFE, ENJOYABLE STAY

When choosing a rental, do your research on the safety risks. A good way to find out if your cabin may be compromised from different winter risks such as avalanches is to call park rangers in the area.

They can tell you peak times of the year that the cabin should be avoided.

Don't forget to pack your skis and hiking equipment. Resorts that offer cabin rentals are known for their stunning views, romantic environ-

ments and attractive trails. Most of these resorts will offer packages that showcase all of these favorite features. You may discover a few hidden hot spots by talking to the locals and regulars at the resort.

Celebrating Winter

For many Americans, winter means bitter cold, icy roads or being snowed in. As much inconvenience as winter causes, it's also packed with fun opportunities to share with friends and family.

Instead of getting a case of the “winter blues” follow the tips below to make this winter a memorable one enjoyed with those around you.

HOLIDAY CHEER

The winter months are packed with holidays that many Americans celebrate. Rather than falling into the stress that comes with this busy season, think of it as a chance to spend time with family and friends.

Thanksgiving is traditionally a holiday that is meant for family gatherings. To avoid a stressful November, plan your gathering as the year progresses. Having a solid game plan on where your family will eat dinner, who will bring certain food items and how your travel plans will unfold can make this busy time of year a breeze.

Another stressful part of winter can be Christmas shopping and the transition into the New Year. Start your Christmas shopping early by picking up great deals that your local businesses offer. Don't get caught up in what can be an overwhelming shopping experience; enjoy the lights, music and religious importance that Christmas has to offer.

OUTDOOR FUN

If you're lucky enough to live in an area that receives a



fair amount of snow, there are many different outdoor activities to enjoy. Grab your sled and find a hill with a flat bottom. Avoid hills near fences, water or roads for a safe sledding experience.

Building snowmen is a fun activity for all ages. Grab old

clothes or other props to give your snowman some personality.

If you're feeling adventurous, consider ice fishing. Find a body of water in which the ice is at least 4 inches thick, use an auger to create a hole and enjoy a winter weather

fishing trip.

INDOOR FUN

If you're not up for spending a lot of time outside during the cold, there are still plenty of ways to celebrate winter indoors.

Choose a day or two

throughout the week to incorporate a family night. This could mean playing a board game together or letting a different member of the family choose a movie for you to watch together. Grab a cup of hot chocolate and enjoy the winter from inside.

Successful Snowshoeing

Have you seen cartoons with characters walking through the snow with apparatuses that resembled tennis rackets strapped to their feet? The reference is to snowshoeing, which was a method of transportation our ancestors used to survive brutal winters.

Today's snowshoes hardly resemble their predecessors. Rather than being framed by wood, modern snowshoes are constructed with aluminum and nylon. These more rugged materials make extreme terrains easier to manage.

SNOWSHOE ORIGINS

Snowshoeing dates back 6,000 years. It is thought that snowshoes were originally used by Central Asian immigrants to migrate to North America. The travelers modified pieces of wood, which made it possible for them to travel easily in the snow.

Wearing snowshoes allows you to “float” on the top layer of deep snow. Originators of the contraptions used them to enable easier travel for trading, hunting and relocating.

MODERN-DAY SNOWSHOEING

Today we generally use snowshoes for recreation rather than survival. Snowshoes make it easier to extend your hiking season during the colder months. The activity also is a great way to stay in shape, as operating a pair of snowshoes takes a little more effort than walking in regular shoes.

Just as summer brings running marathons, winter bring snowshoeing racing events across the country. You can find these events in New York,



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Wisconsin, Colorado and other cold-weather states.

TIPS FOR SNOWSHOEING

Like all other outdoor winter activities, there are safety measures to follow. Dressing in layers, wearing gloves and

packing plenty of water are all crucial to having a worry-free snowshoeing adventure.

When starting out, you may be surprised at how much like walking snowshoeing actually is. One obvious difference is that you will need to walk

with your feet farther apart to avoid hitting your snowshoes together with each step.

The other required skill with a learning curve is walking uphill or downhill. Your snowshoes will be equipped with cleats or crampons.

When walking uphill, kick into the snow with the front of your boot. This will allow the cleat or crampon to give you a better grip going up. When going downhill, do the opposite and plant your heels into the snow.