

Snowshoeing How-to & Info Guide

Snowshoeing has been around for thousands of years. Types of snowshoes range from early wood-frame to the modern aluminum-frame models.

Overall, snowshoeing is gradually increasing in popularity throughout the United States and this is likely the case in Canada. But from year to year it depends upon the type of winter we have. Hike NS has seen an increase in snowshoeing during its annual Winter Guided Snowshoeing Series year after year.

Types of Snowshoes

Traditionally, there were two basic designs: bear paw and beavertail. There are three types of snowshoes available:

- Recreational Hiking
- Adventure: Aerobic/Fitness
- Backcountry: Hiking/Backpacking

The difference is less in shape but more in construction, how lightweight they are and how durable. The pivot action of the new binding systems makes it easy to trek through the snow and it is just like walking. If you prefer you can add poles for better stability and they will give you an upper body workout as well. The early wood frames are still used by some avid hikers, however the new snowshoes have many choices from lightweight aluminum to durable plastics. It is easy to learn and the snowshoes are reasonably priced. The basic anatomy of a snowshoe includes the frame, decking, binding and traction system.





Buying

- Costs are as low as \$50 for child sizes all the way up to \$300 for adult sizes. Many fall in the range of \$75 to \$125
- Your snowshoe should match your weight, so the bigger you are, the bigger the snowshoe
- Consider renting or borrowing before you buy to ensure you get the type you like and need
- In Nova Scotia, check out Hike NS's Where to Borrow, Rent or Buy Snowshoes guide at www.hikenovascotia.ca/resources-snowshoeing

Technique

- Walk forward
- Your stance will be wider and you'll feel it in your hips
- Front of snowshoe is angled up so it guides your shoe over the snow
- Lift your leg up a bit higher in deep, powdery snow
- Lift foot up enough so the crampons on the bottom clear the snow
- Kick or dig into the snow on up hills
- Dig in a bit more with your heel on down hills
- You can use poles – cross country ski poles or snowshoeing poles - to give you more balance but you don't absolutely need them (pole height: your arm should make a right angle)
- How to turn: tips together, tails apart and the other way around; turn like on skis; hop turns)
- How to get up: get rid of poles, bring knees into your chest roll onto back, rock back and forth (from side to side) and roll onto side and then onto knees
- Back up: lift leg up really high
- Use gaiters to keep snow out of the tops of your boots
- There are lots of videos online to see how it's done (search for snowshoeing how to video)

Preparation

- Layer your clothing – waterproof or water resistant is best
- Take safety supplies
- Know your limits
- Take water and try to keep it from freezing
- Take good food
- Let people know where you are going
- Snowshoe with a buddy
- Go to www.adventuresmart.ca/snow/snowshoe.htm for more safety and preparation tips