

Equipment List and Notes for Snowshoeing

General

Before setting off on your trip, we recommend that you have a look at our suggested equipment list below. Having the right equipment can really make the difference to your snowshoeing experience. It is important you chose equipment that fits you well and that you feel comfortable with. If you are trying out snowshoeing for the first time for a day or a half-day, you do not need to spend lots of money on new equipment. Instead, you can just use any ski/snowboard/walking gear you already have or you can rent most of what you need in the resort.

Manufacturers' marketing material often looks and sounds fantastic so it is easy to be tempted by the latest, top-end, expensive stuff, with all the features and amazing colours. It is normally not necessary to buy the most expensive gear to get the best. The most important criteria for any equipment is - **IT HAS TO FIT YOU**. In our experience, equipment that is simple yet functional is generally the best. For clothing, we find that a layering system is the most flexible and economical.

We recommend buying equipment from a specialised retailer that stock a variety of makes, models and sizes and who has experienced staff, ideally trekkers themselves, who can offer advice. Unless you know exactly what model and size fits you, it can be a gamble to buy equipment on-line. If possible, the best test is to use the equipment before you go on your trip. Most equipment is better when 'worn in' and it will give you an opportunity to identify any shortfalls. Having said that, most winter sports destinations, like Chamonix, have many very good gear shops.

Base layer

The most important function of the base layer is to transport moisture away from your core, so it has to have a wicking effect and cotton is therefore not suitable. This is particularly important in winter where you often get very warm and sweaty when moving and cool down very quickly as soon as you stop. Wicking underpants are also recommended, and long-johns provide a lot of warmth to the legs.

Mid layer

The purpose of the mid layer is to provide warmth. This is typically a fleece but other materials such as wool or 'Primaloft' are also good. In the coldest part of winter, one top may not be enough. For flexibility to deal with all types of weather, particularly on multi-day trips, it is worth having one lighter top and one warmer top.

Walking trousers

As you will be moving on snow, wearing something waterproof is always the best. However, on short tours (half-days) or late in the season when the snow is compacted, a pair of walking trousers may be OK. Gaitors will be a huge advantage if you use walking trousers. Walking trousers can also be part of a more

flexible layering solution with a pair of shell-type waterproof trousers.

Wind and waterproof

Like with skiing, it is necessary to have a wind and waterproof outer layer to protect against the snow and the elements. Waterproof materials that can breathe are, by far, the best when you are being active. A hood on the jacket will come in handy on particularly windy or snowy days. Trousers with half-way or full length leg zips are the most practical. If you're a skier (or snowboarder), your ski saloppettes and ski jacket will work fine for half-day and day-walks. For multi-day trips, a shell-type jacket and trousers as part of a layering system are recommended.

Socks

Warm walking socks are important. Remember that you are going to have your feet in cold snow all day. Socks with a wicking effect help keep your feet dry if you have a tendency to get sweaty feet. Ski socks will work too.

Boots

Your boots are very important as you will spend all day wearing them in cold and sometimes wet snow. You don't need specific snowshoe boots as snowshoes can easily be adjusted to fit any walking boot. Warm walking boots with some sort of waterproofing are the best. Trainers and casual shoes or boots are no go. If you don't have suitable boots, they are available to hire in Chamonix and many other snowsports resorts.

Hats

A warm hat is essential. In addition, a light coloured sun hat will be useful later in the winter season when the days get warmer and the sun stronger.

Gloves

Gloves are essential. A pair of insulated and waterproof gloves will keep your hands warm and dry. Ski gloves will work just fine too. If you're on a multi-day trip it may be worth having a pair of fleece gloves to wear when you are working hard and getting warm. Fleece gloves are also fine late in the winter season when the weather is warmer.

Sunglasses

Sunglasses with protection from all types of UV rays are essential. Models that wrap around the face and prevent sun coming in through the sides are recommended as the snow reflects the sun from all angles. Ski goggles are also fine, as long as they have UV protection, and they can be very useful if it snows.

Sun protection

A high factor sunscreen and lip balm is essential. Choose a sunscreen that doesn't run in the eyes when sweating.

Rucksack

On half-day and day-walks, a small rucksack for water and food is useful unless you have big pockets. It is also nice to have a place to store layers you don't use in case the weather changes or you get hot. If you are in a group, you can share a rucksack between you. For multi-day tours a rucksack of around 30 litres should be enough to hold extra layers, food, water and avalanche rescue equipment.

Gaiters

Gaiters can be very useful in fresh, deep snow and if you do not have waterproof trousers.

Snowshoes

There are literally hundreds of snowshoes on the market for different types of snow conditions and uses. Generally, snowshoes need to have enough surface 'float' to support the weight of the user and they need crampon points and 'toe claws' / front points underneath to assist with grip on hard-packed snow/ice and steep slopes. Snowshoes can be rented in Chamonix and most other snowsport resorts.

Walking poles

Walking poles are essential when snowshoeing. They help you stay balanced in the snow and help take the strain off your legs on ascents and descent. Telescopic poles with a comfortable grip and adjustable wrist loops are recommended. A large snow basket will prevent them sinking into the snow. Ski poles may also be used. Walking poles are often rented together with snowshoes.

Hydration system

Whether you prefer bottles or bladder is a personal choice. In winter bladders have a tendency to freeze up. Many prefer a flask to bring hot drinks. One litre is the absolute minimum you should carry on a days walk.

Personal Medication and first aid

You must carry any personal medications that you take. On multi-day trips, it is also highly recommended to carry blister treatment such as 'Compeed' or sports tape, pain relief, etc for personal use.

Sanitary kit

Some may like to take a tissues and a few wet-wipes for unplanned toilet, particularly on multi-day trips.

Other equipment

Most people like to take a camera as we will be walking in very beautiful surroundings. On multi-day trips some people like to take binoculars and navigational aids such as map, compass, GPS and altimeter (your guide will have necessary navigational aid but some like to practice with their own equipment).

Insurance.

Don't forget to take out insurance to cover your activities. You should carry a copy of your insurance documents with you.

Printer friendly equipment check-list:

Item	Half-day	Day-walk	Multi-day	Check ✓
Base layers	M	M	M	
Mid layers for warmth	M	M	M	
Walking trousers	M	M	M	
Wind and waterproof jacket	M	M	M	
Wind and waterproof trousers	O	R	M	
Warm walking socks	M	M	M	
Walking boots (ideally 3 or 4 season rated)	M	M	M	
Gaiters	O	O	O	
Walking/ski poles	M	M	M	
Snowshoes	M	M	M	
Avalanche rescue kit (transceiver, shovel, probe)	O	O	M	
Sun hat	O	O	R	
Warm hat	M	M	M	
Warm gloves	M	M	M	
Rucksack	O	R	M	
Hydration system (bottle, 'bladder' or flask)	R	M	M	
Sunglasses and/or ski goggles	M	M	M	
Personal medication and first aid	M	M	M	
Sun protection (sun screen incl. lip balm)	M	M	M	
Sanitary kit (tissues, wipes)	O	O	O	
Extras (camera, binoculars, navigation aids)	O	O	O	
Insurance covering your chosen activities	M	M	M	

M = Mandatory - this equipment is essential for your comfort and safety.

R = Recommended - we believe your experience will be improved with this equipment.

O = Optional - go on, you gear freak.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you are in any doubt about what equipment you need.