

PACK LIKE YOU MEAN IT.

THE RIGHT GEAR FOR THE JOB

WORDS: DEVON O'NEIL PHOTOS: NATE ABBOTT

There's only so much room in a backpack or on a snowmobile or in a duffel bag on the back of a donkey traveling through a remote mountain range. You can't bring everything when you go backcountry skiing, even though Murphy's Law guarantees you will immediately need the one thing you decide to leave at home. So how do you choose what gear to bring and what to forgo?

For some skiers, the answer reflects a complex decision-making process that only makes sense to them. For others, it is less an answer than the result of what was closest to their pack as they rushed out the door before dawn, dazed and foggy-eyed from an après session that raged into the wee hours. To shed light on what gear should make your cut on different backcountry adventures, we asked four pros to share some of their obvious and less obvious essentials. The lists aren't intended to be comprehensive. For instance, all four carry a beacon, shovel and probe, but we didn't include those in every breakdown. But their choices are backed by years of trial and error, which means you can stress less about what's in your pack and focus on the snow.



BC DAY TRIP

RACHAEL BURKS
PRO SKIER
SALT LAKE CITY, UT

1. ADVENTURE MEDICAL KIT ULTRALIGHT/ WATERTIGHT .5.

A minimalist kit with supplies to treat common injuries, this \$17 lifesaver is an essential component for backcountry travel. Worried about space? Ditch the camera.

2. SMITH I/OS GOGGLES.

Not only does Burks bring an extra pair of Smith's top interchangeable-lens goggle, she brings an extra lens. "I always bring a clear lens in case I need to get out of somewhere in the dark," she says.

3. DYNASTAR CHAM W 107.

There's a reason Burks uses these boards for 90 percent of her ski days. "They're much lighter than your typical fast-charging Dynastar, but they still uphold that integrity," she says. "They rip."

4. PEAK PERFORMANCE HELI REGULATE JACKET.

It traps heat, has an ample-sized hood for windy ridges and is built to breathe. (Burks also brings an extra Peak Performance puffy just in case.)

5. BLACK DIAMOND COSMO HEADLAMP.

Speaking of the dark, a good headlamp can turn a seven-hour exit into a one-hour exit. The Cosmo has a 70-lumen beam and weighs only 3.2 ounces.



6. PEAK PERFORMANCE HELI MID JACKET.

Proof that good fleece will always have its place, this jacket works as an insulating midlayer and includes a laminated pocket bag for your beacon.

7. LEATHERMAN SKELETOOL.

This compact, lightweight savior covers the most potential problems with the fewest tools.

8. TOILET PAPER!

Because the alternative is a snowball. Or pine needles. Or a squirrel.

9. HESTRA SKI CROSS GLOVES.

With cowhide palms and extra padding over the knuckles, these gloves are made for people who like to get after it. Burks brings an extra pair.

10. BLACK DIAMOND QUICKDRAW TOUR PROBE 190.

One of the tools you hope you never need to use, BD's popular Quickdraw Tour 190 is among the lightest probes on the market.

11. BLACK DIAMOND DEPLOY 3 SHOVEL.

The Deploy 3's shaft collapses into the blade for a tiny footprint, and the shovel weighs only 20 ounces.

12. ZIP TIES.

Take it from Burks, "You never know when they will save the entire day."

SNOW CAMPING

DAVE ROSENBERGER

PRO SKIER

LAKE TAHOE, CA, AND CHAMONIX, FRANCE

GEAR / PACK LIKE YOU MEAN IT.



1. SWIX SONIC POLES.

New this winter, the adjustable Sonic poles were designed in part by Eric Hjørleifson and tested by Rosenbarger, who calls them “the lightest, most versatile poles on the market.”

2. PATAGONIA CAP 4 ZIP NECK AND BOTTOMS.

Made with Polartec Power Dry fabric, these base layers are light, warm and don’t retain odors. Plus they feel incredible on your skin.

3. PATAGONIA POW SLAYER BIBS.

It’s hard to find a pair of expedition pants that perform well on the up and down, and are worthy of wearing around camp. With a drop seat to go to the bathroom, these bibs do it all.

4. SIERRA DESIGNS PULL-ON DOWN BOOTIES.

Wind and snowstorms that often keep you tent-bound for days make a good pair of camp shoes a must. Rosenbarger uses Sierra Designs’ booties.

5. STOIC TI DOUBLE WALL COFFEE MUG W/LID.

A double-walled, titanium mug with a lid might sound like a luxury for a ski expedition. Hot coffee is worth it.

6. BLIZZARD KABOOKIE.

Molded in the same vein as the popular Cochise, the lighter Kabookie maintains snap, offers tip and tail rocker, and is the perfect width (98 mm waist) for the variable snow conditions you encounter on expeditions.

7. COFFEE.

“For most of my ski partners, every morning starts with coffee,” Rosenbarger says. If you’re a daily variety person, pack your favorite flavors of caffeinated tea.

8. MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR TRANGO 2 TENT.

Tent choices are personal and situation-specific. For base camps where you want a bomber home, the Trango 2 is time tested and proven, weight be damned.

9. THERM-A-REST NEOAIR X-LITE MATTRESS.

Packable down to the size of a water bottle yet still fat and comfy, this inflatable sleeping pad is among the industry’s finest.

10. OAKLEY RADARLOCK XL.

“I go nowhere without these,” Rosenbarger says. “Hands down the best sport sunglasses ever made.” They come with two lenses for use in any light.

11. BACKPACKER’S PANTRY MEALS.

On a trip where every ounce counts, dehydrated meals are the only way to go. BP’s offerings taste good and are hearty, but for extra calories, Rosenbarger adds couscous and overfills the boiling water. “Still super quick and easy, but more filling,” he says. Couscous also makes a tasty breakfast when paired with cinnamon, raisins and sugar.



SLED DAY

DAN TREADWAY
PRO SKIER AND SNOWMOBILER
WHISTLER, BC

GEAR / PACK LIKE YOU MEAN IT.



1. RESQWATER.

Because maybe you had a rough night, for starters, but you also have to stay hydrated, and Resqwater has a higher rate of fluid replacement than other drinks.

2. CFR IRACK.

You end up bringing a lot of stuff into the backcountry when you have a sled. You need a rack like this one from Cheetah Factory Racing, which can be ordered with dual ski brackets.

3. PETZL CREVASSE RESCUE KIT.

Traveling on glaciers is risky business, especially on a snowmobile. Treadway always carries a crevasse rescue kit that can haul people or sleds.

4. SNOBUNJE COBRA.

"Great for a stuck sled," Treadway says of this burly sled-to-sled lifesaver. The Cobra can support 400 pounds of tugging torque and has metal hooks on both ends.

5. RECOVERY TOW STRAPS.

You can buy them in lengths from 10 to 30 feet. The last thing you want is to be 20 miles from home without a worthy tow strap.

6. SPOT GLOBAL PHONE.

If you are going to be out of cell range all day, a satellite phone takes up little space and could be your best friend if something goes wrong. This one costs less than \$500.

7. GARMIN MONTANA 650T GPS.

What good is a phone to call for help if you can't tell them where you are? The 650t is tough and comes with preloaded topo maps and a 4-inch screen.

8. OAKLEY SNOWMAD GLOVES.

Treadway brings an extra pair of these just in case. They protect from wind, water and cold, and have a leather palm for gripping the bars on 20-mile flats.

9. OAKLEY O2 XL GOGGLE.

Affordable yet worthy, the new O2 XL has a wide field of vision and an excellent venting system. Treadway brings an extra pair of these too.

10. OAKLEY WINDSTOPPER BANDIDO.

The best \$35 you can spend on gear when it's minus 10 outside, this microfleece ski mask features Gore Windstopper for extra warmth.

11. OAKLEY SNOWMAD RAS AIRBAG PACK.

The Snowmad incorporates Snow Pulse's removable-airbag system to give the pack a summer role. It also shines in winter, and Treadway swears by it.

12. MULTIPURPOSE ROPE.

A lot can go wrong when 450-pound machines, deep powder and rowdy sledneck skiers get together. Bring a strong rope. You'll never regret it.

HUT TRIP

JAMIE LAIDLAW

GUIDE

PAYETTE POWDER GUIDES, MCCALL, ID

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION.
1. Publication title: FREESKIER magazine 2. Publication number: 024-094 3. Filing date: 10/01/13 4. Issue frequency: 6x: Buyer's Guide (Sept), Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb 5. Number of issues published annually: 6 6. Annual price: \$9.95 7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: PO Box 789, Niwot, CO 80544 8. Complete mailing address of headquarters or general business office of publisher: PO Box 789, Niwot, CO 80544 9. Full names and complete mailing addresses of publisher, editor and managing editor: Publisher Bradford Fayfield, PO Box 789, Niwot, CO 80544; Editor Brad Fayfield, same address; Managing Editor Damian Quigley, same address. 10. Owner: Storm Mountain Publishing Company, PO Box 789, Niwot, CO 80544; Stockholder Bradford W. Fayfield, PO Box 789, Niwot, CO 80544 11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None 12. Tax status: Not Applicable 13. Publication title: FREESKIER magazine 14. Issue date for circulation data below: Buyer's Guide (Sept 2013) 15. Extent and nature of circulation: Average No. copies of each issue during preceding 12 months. No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date a. Total number of copies (net press run): 60,601; 70,261 b. Legitimate paid/requested distribution (by mail and outside the mail) 1) Outside county paid/requested mail subscriptions stated on PS form 3541: 20,946; 25,139 2) In-county paid/requested mail subscriptions stated on PS form 3541: 0; 0 3) Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales: 6,502; 13,418 4) Requested copies distributed by other mail classes through the USPS: 0; 0 c. Total paid and/or requested circulation: 27,448; 38,557 d. Non-requested distribution (by mail and outside the mail) 1) Outside county non-requested copies stated on PS form 3541: 8,966; 7,362 2) In-county non-requested copies stated on PS form 3541: 0; 0 3) Non-requested copies distributed through the USPS by other classes of mail: 0; 0 4) Non-requested copies distributed outside the mail: 2,787; 6,564 e. Total non-requested distribution: 11,753; 13,926 f. Total distribution: 39,201; 52,483 g. Copies not distributed: 21,400; 17,778 h. Total: 60,601; 70,261 i. Percent paid/requested circulation: 70%; 73% 16. Total Circulation includes electronic copies 17. Publication of statement of ownership for a requestor publication is required and will be printed in the December 2013 issue of this publication. 18. Signature and title of editor, publisher, business manager, or owner: Andrew Fuhrer, business manager. Date: 10/01/13. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).



1. THE NORTH FACE ALPINE PROJECT SOFTSHELL JACKET.

With so many different climates—inside, outside, ascending, descending—layers are key during a hut trip. Laidlaw uses this softshell because it fits every situation. This model is no longer in production, so check out other similar pieces such as the Apex Elevation and Apex Android Jackets.

2. MAMMUT PULSE BARRYVOX TRANSCEIVER.

Laidlaw brings one extra beacon per group. The triple-antenna Pulse Barryvox is arguably the best in the industry for multiple-burial searches.

3. BARESKIN FIT TOWEL.

Most huts or yurts worth visiting have a sauna. If you must choose, leave the swimsuits at home but bring towels. Try Bareskin's 19-by-36-inch, high-absorption, fast-drying synthetic chamois.

4. EARPLUGS.

Sound sleep is the secret ingredient to a good hut trip. "Earplugs are one of those things that when I bring them I feel like a genius," Laidlaw says. "And when I don't, I'm like, son of a bitch!"

5. DYNAFIT TLT6 BOOTS.

Lighter than Dynafit's popular Vulcan boot, the TLT6 delivers stunning downhill performance (and comfort) for a two-buckle boot.

6. DYNAFIT SPEED RADICAL BINDINGS.

"The stripped-down, minimalist design is extremely lightweight and ideal for long missions," Laidlaw says. If you like hucking over 40 feet, upgrade to the Dynafit Beast.

7. DETAILED MAPS.

"One of the keys to a great trip is knowing the terrain," Laidlaw says. Smartphone apps work well but aren't as fun as a big, laminated map that everyone can examine on a table in the hut.

8. HOUSE OF MARLEY CHANT BLUETOOTH.

Let's be honest. You go to a hut to ski but also to party. Music is key and this little guy doesn't take up too much room in your pack.

9. THE NORTH FACE NUPTSE DOWN BOOTIES.

"The ultimate expedition or outdoor après footwear," says Laidlaw. Nuptses are light and comfy, with a beefy rubber sole that's perfect for late-night runs to the outhouse.

10. JAMESON.

Beer isn't the most efficient vice for backcountry slogs. Irish whiskey, on the other hand...

11. FRESH FOOD.

Hut skiing is like car camping. You want to bring luxuries, even if your pack weighs more on the way in. Leave the freeze-dried food at home and go big with meats, cheeses, fresh produce and chocolate. And don't forget obscene amounts of bacon.