

Snowshoeing: A Quick Lesson

Why has snowshoeing become so popular?



The answer is easy. Snowshoeing is easy to do, safe, good exercise, requires little experience and gets you to some fantastic out-of-the-way places. "If you can walk you can snowshoe".

Snowshoeing is a great form of exercise. It offers a low impact and safe workout that strengthens muscle and improves endurance. Snowshoeing uses major muscle groups at relatively high intensity so it burns plenty of calories.

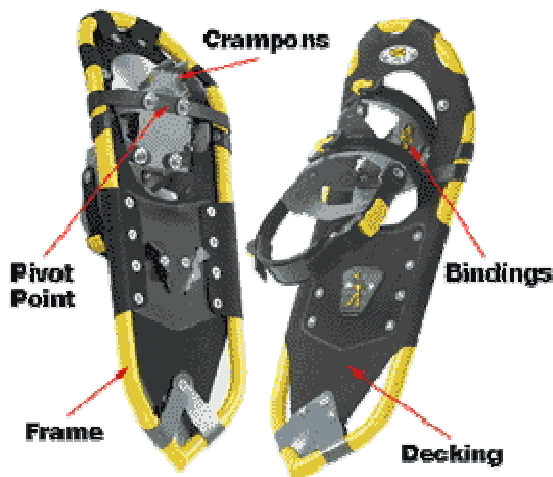
The use of poles while snowshoeing gets the upper body moving and helps condition arms, shoulders and back muscles. Poles are also a huge help when it comes to balance.

But regardless of all the great health benefits, perhaps the greatest appeal has to do with where snowshoes can take you!

About Snowshoes

The concept is simple. Put more surface area on your feet and you won't sink as far into the snow. But like all things gear related, simple concepts can quickly become complicated.

Here is a quick lesson.



- **Frame:** on modern snowshoes the frame is made of aluminum making them strong, lightweight and maintenance free.
- **Decking:** is composed of extremely rugged, waterproof material such as Entech or Nyltex designed to withstand temperatures down to -50 C. This material is also lightweight, strong and maintenance free. We have yet to see a snowshoe returned due to a cracked decking.
- **Bindings:** hold the snowshoe on to your feet. The design and material of bindings can vary greatly. This is one feature that really defines the quality (and price) of a snowshoe. There is more to learn about bindings but it will be easier to explain when you come in to Tumblehome.
- **Pivot Point:** an integral part of the binding that determines the action of the snowshoe when you walk. Some pivot points create a "spring-loaded" action, keeping the snowshoe close to your foot, while others pivot around a pin, allowing the snowshoe to drag on the snow. There are advantages to both systems.
- **Crampons:** these are the 'tooth like' claws on the base of the snowshoe that grab on to the snow and ice to prevent slippage on hilly terrain. Crampons can have different configurations and are made of various materials. Crampons are another key feature that determine the quality (and price) of the snowshoe.
- **Boots:** Snowshoes can accommodate a range of footwear. An ideal boot will be somewhat insulated but not too bulky or heavy as it is easy to overheat when snowshoeing. Your boot should fit well and not have slippage at the heel. Due to the exaggerated walking motion, it is easy to get blisters if you have incorrect footwear. Some footwear will actually have a lip on the outside of the heel to accommodate the heel strap of a snowshoe.
- **Poles:** Snowshoe poles are recommended. You can use a pair of hiking poles as long as you have a snow basket. Snow baskets can be purchased separately to replace the hiking basket that you use the rest of the year. If this doesn't work, snowshoe poles may also be purchased.
- **Clothing:** As in all outdoor winter activity you should dress in layers. This allows you

to remove or add clothing as needed to maintain a comfortable temperature and prevent overheating and sweating. Your clothing should wick moisture (do not wear cotton), and it should be loose fitting and comfortable.

As in all things gear related, the question: "How and where do you plan to use your snowshoes" must be addressed. An aggressive, fitness oriented snowshoer will have different requirements than someone looking for a casual walk in the snow. This is where the Tumblehome staff comes in. We can show you the differences and explain the features that matter most to your style of snowshoeing.

The only other required ingredient is **snow**. Think snow!