

## Winter Hiking and Camping at Merck Forest

Winter hiking and camping is popular at Merck Forest. What could be better than venturing into the snowy forest to explore the property by day and hunkering down by the fire in a warm cabin by night? Here, you got it. But, as you venture into the woods for your next trip, here are some important tips to keep in mind. This is not a comprehensive list of necessary items for your trip, rather, just some particularly notable ones to keep in mind during wintertime.

- ❖ Beware hypothermia: dress in layers, avoid cotton (wool is best), and remove clothes as you exercise before you start sweating. Bring windproof shell and consider a mask and/or ski goggles.
- ❖ Tell somebody where you are going and when you will be back, leave contact info in case of your late return.
- ❖ Always carry multiple fire sources in waterproof containers. Always.
- ❖ Know Merck Forest's emergency action plan; you are provided this when you reserve a cabin and it is also posted in the notebook at each cabin. Realize that when you are out here, you are on your own; for an emergency extraction, you must contact 911 and engage emergency services. However, cell service on the property is unreliable and also know that, from the time of your call to response, it could be well over an hour for emergency responders to arrive on property.
- ❖ Bring an emergency beacon and do not depend on cell service- coverage is poor for most providers here.
- ❖ Bring all necessary gear for first aid, survival, and navigation.
- ❖ Bring traction: at a minimum, you will want micro spikes, which are available for purchase in the visitor center. For deeper snow conditions bring ski's or snowshoes.
- ❖ Before your trip, check the [weather conditions for Merck Forest on Weather Underground](#) (search "Rupert, VT").
- ❖ Always carry a map and compass. You can download and/or print a copy from our [website](#). Importantly, you can also use the [Avenza Map App with our digital trail map](#) to heads up navigate in live time on your phone.
- ❖ Be a good steward: pack out what you pack in and leave the forest and cabin better than you found it.
- ❖ Each cabin has a guide to using the woodstove- know how to use the stove and be careful to shut down the stove when away from the cabin.
- ❖ Do not burn the hard-earned firewood in the outdoor firepit. What wood exists at the cabin now must last through spring.
- ❖ Shut the doors on any cabin and outhouse upon departure.
- ❖ Seasonal water sources listed on the trail map are frozen in the winter. Pack all water in or plan on filtering it from streams shown on the trail map (the streams run year-round, here).
- ❖ Use due diligence and maintain capacity for quality decision making.
- ❖ Proper preparation and planning prevents poor performance; most likely, if you prepared properly for your trip, you are going to have a heck of a lot of fun here.
- ❖ So... have fun!