



Snowshoe Trip Tips

Be prepared before you go!

<https://www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/activities/snowshoeing>

Introduction:

- ◆ Always tell someone back home where you plan to go and how far and long, and never go alone.
- ◆ Make certain everyone has all their gear required and that gear is on correctly (**Make certain snowshoes on tight and not too far forward on the foot**)
- ◆ Don't over dress and when you warm up, stop to take a layer off.
- ◆ Wear proper gear (**gaiters, boots, coats and etc.**)

Touring:

- ◆ The first, second and third snowshoer should pack the track for the group. It makes it easier for the rest of the group to follow. Rotate lead as needed.
- ◆ Lead person should not take too big of steps.
- ◆ In a level open area fall down and practice getting up.
- ◆ Find the right terrain and practice the following:

Uphill

- ◆ It's hard to side hill except in deep powder (**kick step to do switch backs**).
- ◆ Rest step to save energy.
- ◆ It is best to climb straight up a fall line (**side hilling on icy slopes is difficult**).
- ◆ Kick cleats into to snow on each step when climbing.
- ◆ On steep climbs the first person should make small steps that everyone can follow.

Downhill

- ◆ Going directly downhill is easier and safer than side hilling.
- ◆ Lift toes and lean slightly back on snowshoes to release cleats to slid on powder
- ◆ To have more stability going down a steep hill, drag one snowshoe behind you and bend your front knee.
- ◆ Balance with poles as you slide.
- ◆ If your front snowshoe starts to submarine, take numerous small steps to get back on top of the powder.
- ◆ To reduce sliding too fast on steep hills, do not follow tracks of others, make your own.



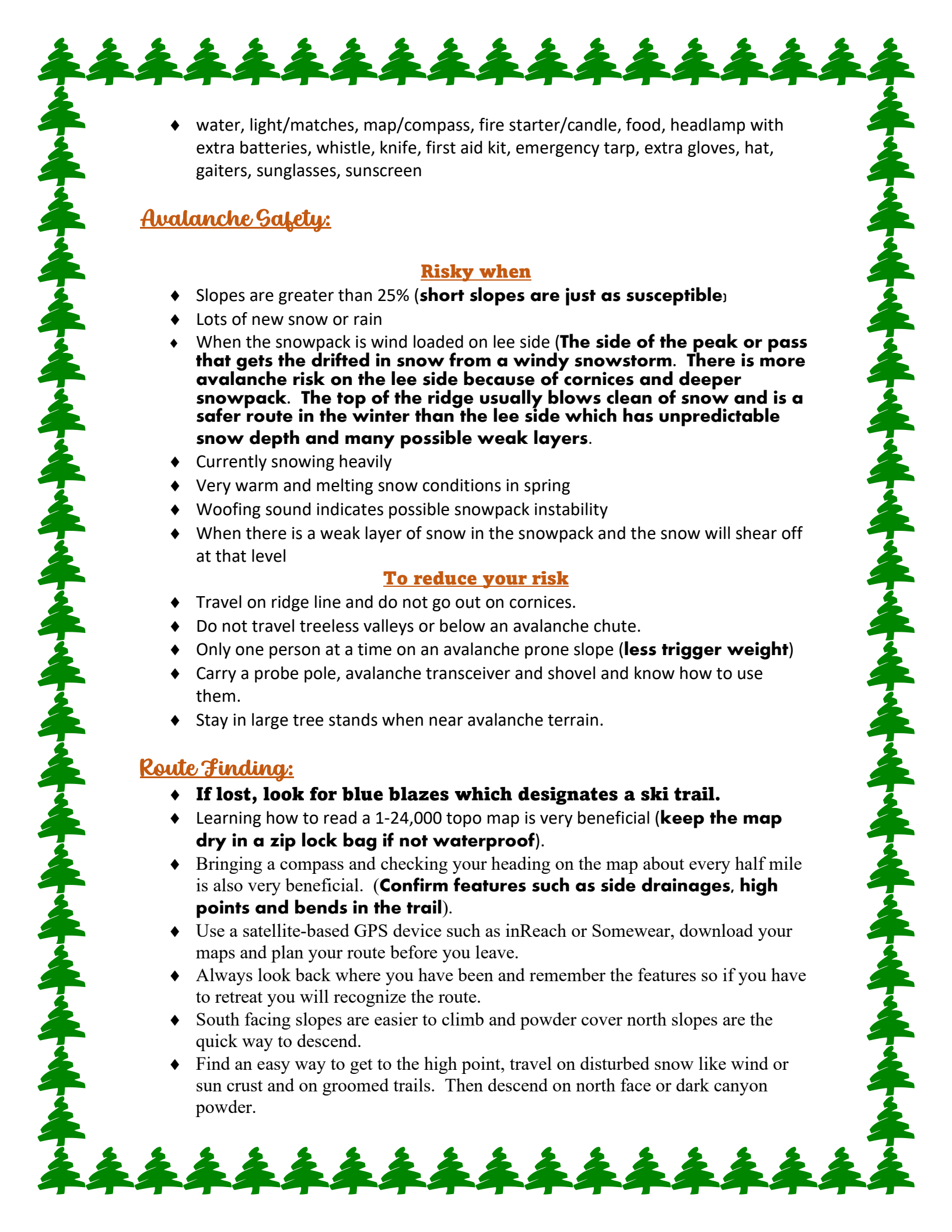
Other Terrain:

- ◆ In deep powder light step, pause, and then place your full weight on snowshoe to reduce how far the snowshoe sinks in therefore saving energy.
- ◆ Try to find an icy area or breakable crust to walk on otherwise you may sink deep into the snow.
- ◆ When going gets tough in deep powder travel on wind blown snow and disturbed snow around tree wells to use less energy.
- ◆ Be extremely careful in areas where brush is showing. You may experience hollow spots caused by underbrush.
- ◆ When crossing downed trees step directly on the log and gingerly before or after. Sharp broken branches and deep holes next to the log can be very dangerous.
- ◆ Do a small jump off a ledge, tree stump or log. Jumping can be useful because it is sometimes safer to jump than to slide into a hole or hit a rock. When jumping, It is preferable to jump into untracked powder snow to reduce the impact.
- ◆ There can be unseen dangers around tree wells and creek holes. Be careful around these areas
- ◆ Be aware of a snow mound on a tree. They can fall on you and hurt you.

General Safety Tips:

- ◆ Always Tell someone where you are going and when you are coming back.
- ◆ Do not travel alone.
- ◆ Get the weather forecast before you go (**available on website**).
- ◆ Wear layered (**wicking**) clothing (**No jeans or cotton**), wind/gear, warm hat, gloves, day pack, lunch, snacks, water, sunglasses, and toilet paper.
- ◆ There is very little cell phone coverage in Idaho's wildland. GPS devices such as inReach or Somewear, and/or Satellite radios are recommended. Rescuers monitor all radio channels by aircraft if they are looking for you.
- ◆ Every trip you make into the backcountry you should be prepared to spend the night. **This means bringing: GPS, compass, matches/lighter, extra jacket, extra insulated gloves and small first aid kit. etc.**
- ◆ If confused turn around and follow tracks back.
- ◆ If protection is needed, crawl under dense fir trees and make a shelter (**less snow and little wind**)
- ◆ Collect dry tinder under trees to build emergency fire.
- ◆ Stay put if lost and it is getting dark, find shelter, make a fire, and make a large and bright signal in snow.

The ten essentials and other recommended gear:

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- ◆ water, light/matches, map/compass, fire starter/candle, food, headlamp with extra batteries, whistle, knife, first aid kit, emergency tarp, extra gloves, hat, gaiters, sunglasses, sunscreen

Avalanche Safety:

Risky when

- ◆ Slopes are greater than 25% (**short slopes are just as susceptible**)
- ◆ Lots of new snow or rain
- ◆ When the snowpack is wind loaded on lee side (**The side of the peak or pass that gets the drifted in snow from a windy snowstorm. There is more avalanche risk on the lee side because of cornices and deeper snowpack. The top of the ridge usually blows clean of snow and is a safer route in the winter than the lee side which has unpredictable snow depth and many possible weak layers.**)
- ◆ Currently snowing heavily
- ◆ Very warm and melting snow conditions in spring
- ◆ Whoofing sound indicates possible snowpack instability
- ◆ When there is a weak layer of snow in the snowpack and the snow will shear off at that level

To reduce your risk

- ◆ Travel on ridge line and do not go out on cornices.
- ◆ Do not travel treeless valleys or below an avalanche chute.
- ◆ Only one person at a time on an avalanche prone slope (**less trigger weight**)
- ◆ Carry a probe pole, avalanche transceiver and shovel and know how to use them.
- ◆ Stay in large tree stands when near avalanche terrain.

Route Finding:

- ◆ **If lost, look for blue blazes which designates a ski trail.**
- ◆ Learning how to read a 1-24,000 topo map is very beneficial (**keep the map dry in a zip lock bag if not waterproof**).
- ◆ Bringing a compass and checking your heading on the map about every half mile is also very beneficial. (**Confirm features such as side drainages, high points and bends in the trail**).
- ◆ Use a satellite-based GPS device such as inReach or Somewear, download your maps and plan your route before you leave.
- ◆ Always look back where you have been and remember the features so if you have to retreat you will recognize the route.
- ◆ South facing slopes are easier to climb and powder cover north slopes are the quick way to descend.
- ◆ Find an easy way to get to the high point, travel on disturbed snow like wind or sun crust and on groomed trails. Then descend on north face or dark canyon powder.

- ◆ Start out off-trail snowshoeing by traveling within a marked loop so have a safety valve if you get disoriented.
- ◆ Following a ridge is easier because you can get a visual of reference points.
- ◆ Deep dark drainages are fun in deep snow but make sure the canyon comes out where you plan. Follow a drainage out to a road is not always the best plan.
- ◆ When you plan a trip always plan in bail points. You may think you can travel 4 miles but if you have 2.5 feet of powder you will be lucky to travel one mile.

Snowshoe Etiquette:

- ◆ When in off-trail or on trail do not snowshoe on top a set of human-made ski tracks.
- ◆ Do not mark up a good telemark slope. Stay on the edges or in the trees.
- ◆ When on a groomed trail snowshoe single file on the opposite side of the mechanically the set ski track. Do no walk in the center of the skate lane.

