



Press Release

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For immediate release

Don't slip up this winter

Experts advise 'winterising' your rucksack – and your thinking

As the clocks go back this weekend and darkness falls earlier walkers and climbers are being reminded that summer is well and truly over in the mountains.

Snow is being forecast for the tops this weekend, meaning conditions underfoot could be difficult. A thin covering of snow over bare rock or scree can make footholds extremely slippery, without giving enough purchase for crampon points or ice axes to bite well.

Heather Morning, Mountain Safety Adviser for Mountaineering Scotland, said: "Conditions can be very treacherous at this time of year and just having the right equipment isn't enough: you have to be able to call on experience to know how to deal with a whole range of conditions, both weather-wise and underfoot.

"And that equipment and experience must also include a map and compass and a high standard of navigational ability, because you're not going to have the luxury of time and comfort that you do in summer: you're going to have to be able to navigate accurately in some pretty extreme conditions of poor visibility and while being buffeted by wind and snow.

She added: "Winter is a tremendous season in the mountains and the rewards are great when everything comes together, with great views, a sense of adventure and a very real sense of achievement.

"But the winter mountains do demand a lot in return and you have to be ready for the many challenges.

"Shorter daylight hours, dropping temperatures and the first snow on the hill are all good indicators that it is time to think about extra kit in your rucksack. Routes will take longer than expected in winter conditions and many people will end up finishing in the dark. So a head torch – and spare batteries – is crucial. In fact better still is to carry a spare head torch, which saves having to faff about in the cold and dark trying to change over batteries."

Heather continued: "If you are heading out on the higher tops, now is the time to add crampons, rigid boots to accommodate them, an ice axe and spare items such as hats and winter gloves to your essential kit list."

Extra layers are essential, such as a synthetic duvet jacket, and an emergency bivvy bag stored in the bottom of a rucksack is highly recommended.

And before even setting foot on the hill, a vital part of planning is checking the mountain weather forecast at a site such as www.mwis.org.uk. The weather in Scotland's mountains is notoriously fickle and a specialized forecast, specific to the mountains, is essential.

Want to learn more?

Every winter Mountaineering Scotland reaches out to the wider mountaineering community; teaming up with outdoor shops across the country to offer a series of winter mountain skills talks, to give a taster of essential skills for novices and a refresher for seasoned mountaineers.

Mountaineering Scotland also runs a number of subsidised winter mountain skills training courses, and provides further guidance and skills videos on their website at www.mountaineering.scot/safety-and-skills

Ends

Notes for editors:

Image: Winter's snow makes Scotland's mountains an exciting but demanding challenge.

Ben Macdui in the Cairngorms. Photo by Neil Reid

http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/Ben_McDui_in_the_cloud,_by_Neil_Reid.JPG

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About Mountaineering Scotland:

- Mountaineering Scotland is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland's mountains.
- Mountaineering Scotland provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.
- The Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 14,000 members representing hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers, funded through a combination of membership subscriptions, non-governmental grants and investment from sportscotland, which supports public initiatives and services in mountain safety, mountain training and the development and promotion of mountaineering activities.
- Mountaineering Scotland also acts for 75,000 members of the BMC or British Mountaineering Council on matters related to Landscape and Access in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland landscape and access work is supported financially by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC

- Mountaineering Scotland has launched the ClimbScotland initiative to encourage young people to participate in climbing and support their progression. It offers a dedicated website and a development team, which will introduce young people to climbing at schools, climbing walls and via youth organisations with a range of activities and events, while developing kids clubs and providing specialist support to parents, volunteers and teachers.
- Mountaineering Scotland is the national governing body for sports climbing. It offers pathways to climbing coaching, organises and promotes a range of regional and national climbing competitions, and manages the Scottish climbing and bouldering teams. It contributes to the management of the GB teams with the ultimate aim of seeing a Scottish athlete achieve a podium position in the Olympic Games.
- The MCofS is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and incorporated in Scotland. Company number SC322717.
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