

Shrewsbury Mountaineering Club

Welcome!



Safety Information For New Members

Three Seasons — Essential Equipment

The following items are normally regarded as essential for high-level three season hill walking in the UK, i.e. spring, summer and autumn but excluding winter conditions:

- Waterproof / windproof outer layer (including protection for the legs)
- Warm inner (base) & mid-layer's
- Suitable footwear (see notes below)
- Map, compass and watch
- Torch / head torch and whistle
- First aid kit – lightweight and simple
- Adequate food and drink – drinks bottle – flask of hot drink in cold weather
- Rucksack with waterproof liner to carry it all in

Unless summer weather conditions are warm, dry and settled it is advisable to add: -

- Hat / balaclava and gloves
- Spare warm clothes (extra layers for very cold conditions or emergencies)
- Survival bag or lightweight bivvy shelter for group use
- High-energy emergency food - only intended for use in an emergency
- Resealable plastic bags to keep equipment dry

Depending on the season and the activity, the following may also be required:

- Helmet - advisable for some scrambling routes
- Gaiters
- Insect repellent (anti midge) especially in Scotland
- Good sunglasses / alpine goggles - the summit of Ben Nevis in early summer sun can be very bright!
- Sun block / sunhat

Other useful items include: -

- Mobile phone (recommended)
- Walking poles
- GPS receiver and spare batteries
- Camera (and film for film cameras / spare batteries for Digitals)

Winter conditions in the mountains require additional equipment, normally including ice-axe and crampons, plus the appropriate skills and experience to use them properly.

Winter — Essential Knowledge

Winter Conditions

Every year statistics show that the most common cause of accidents in the hills is the simple slip. Many of the casualties are well equipped but not adequately prepared for the conditions they encounter. Although the mountains of Britain are small when compared to the Alps or the Himalayas, they must be treated with respect - especially in winter conditions with hard snow and ice.

Always take ice axe and crampons and learn how to use them effectively. Remember also that good navigation is essential to safe mountain travel and that winter conditions can make navigation more difficult. Consider getting some professional training, even two days training can be a life-saving investment.

Clothing & Equipment

Don't be caught out in winter. You need the following clothing & equipment: Boots (stiff soled); Crampons (that fit your boots securely); Ice Axe; Map (and map case or clear poly bag); Compass; Waterproof jacket (with hood); Waterproof over-trousers; Gaiters; Warm hat; Gloves or Mitts (and spares); Thermal top or vest; Fleece or wool sweater, Spare fleece; Warm trousers; Head-torch (and spare bulb & battery); Food & Drink; Emergency survival bag, Whistle, Watch, First Aid Kit (small).

Ice Axe

An ice axe is essential when there is snow on the hills and mountains. It is used as an aid to balance, for providing support and ensuring secure footwork, for digging and step cutting and as an emergency brake in the event of a slip. General mountaineering axes have a straight shaft between 50 and 70 cms in length (walking poles cannot substitute for an ice axe).

Always carry your axe (with the pick pointing backwards) in your uphill hand and move methodically and rhythmically, avoiding spurts and stops which lead to poor balance, instability and wasted energy. Always have two points of contact with the snow slope - either both feet or one foot and the axe. This will help to make your footwork more secure.



Crampons

Always carry crampons when there is snow on the hills even if you think you may not need to use them. It is essential that your boots are sturdy and have stiff soles. If you can flex the sole in your hands it's too soft for winter use. Your crampons must fit properly - check they fit before leaving home. Accidents can occur as a direct result of crampons coming loose.

Wear crampons whenever your boots don't create steps in the snow easily and remember to put them on before getting onto ground where you would be insecure without them. Avoid wearing baggy trousers on which crampons can snag and beware of anything hanging down from your waist. Adopt a gait that has the legs farther apart than normal, and practice using your crampons in a safe, controlled environment. You should flex your ankles so that all of the downward points bite. Avoid stamping or dragging your feet. Develop the technique of placing your feet firmly and confidently with each step. Check your crampons are still tightly fitted a few minutes after setting off.

UIAA International Mountain Code

As a response to the growth of mountaineering the world body for mountaineers, the UIAA, have developed a simple, but very worthwhile code, which the BMC Access and Conservation Committee strongly commend.

1. Observe restrictions and access agreement negotiated by National Mountaineering Federations, and avoid any actions which might endanger access.
2. Do not disturb nesting birds or other wildlife. Help protect flowers and respect sites of geological or other scientific interest.
3. Avoid actions which cause unnecessary erosion (such as taking shortcuts on footpaths) and do not leave unnecessary way marks.
4. Do not disturb livestock or damage crops or trees.
5. Do not leave any rubbish. Keep campsites clean. Avoid all risk of fire.
6. Where toilet facilities are not available, dispose of human waste in a sanitary manner (i.e. under rocks, soil, sand, or in deep crevasses, away from water supplies, paths or climbs.
7. Do not pollute fresh water supplies. Avoid any unnecessary pollution to the snow pack.
8. Respect established climbing traditions in ethical matters such as the use of chalk, pitons or bolts etc. Avoid indiscriminate or excessive use of fixed equipment.
9. In mountain areas use motorised transport sparingly and park considerately. Make use of public transport if practical.
10. On any excursions to remote or high mountains observe the UIAA Kathmandu Declaration and Ethical Code for Expeditions.

Useful addresses:

British Mountaineering Council (BMC) - www.thebmc.com

Mountain Weather Forecasts - www.mountaindays.net/content/weather