

Going Snow Caving By Bob Wilde

When to go

January or February are the best months. Earlier there will usually not be enough snow. Later there may not be enough snow and the snow that is there will be too wet. Plan two nights. Dig the caves on Thursday night and go back and sleep in them on Friday night at 10:00. Diggers will get soaked from perspiration and melting snow. If you go back the next night they will be dry. Don't get there too early on Friday because there is nothing to do in the mountains on a cold winter night other than fall through the roof of someone else's snow cave.

Where to go

We go to the Guardsman's pass area at the top of Little Cottonwood canyon. Any place with five feet of snow or more will probably do. You can dig down and under on a field. Digging into the side of a hill is easier.

Who to take

Take at least one adult for each two scouts. Digging is a lot of work and two scouts alone cannot do it. Three scouts alone will have a hard time. Make certain that the adults are monitoring the scouts with them. Hypothermia is a real possibility. Take someone who has been before. Dig them and plan the two deep issues for sleeping in advance.

What to take

Take a couple of shovels per cave. Take one small one for digging in the cave and a larger one for scooping the snow out of the doorway.

Take plastic sheets for the floor of the cave in addition to sleeping pads. Take only Thermarest type pads or closed cell (blue) foam pads, not the yellow foam pads which can soak up water like a sponge.

Take a regular weight sleeping bag. Inside the cave the temperature will be about 32 degrees. A heavy low temperature sleeping bag will cause the camper to sweat.

Take Coleman lanterns for Thursday night to light the area where people will be digging. Take a couple of tarps to lay on top of the snow when you dig or your stuff will get lost in the snow.

On Friday make certain everyone has a flashlight.

Wear layered clothing. The person digging in the cave will be at 32 degrees. Those on the outside may be below zero. Take candy bars or other energy food. Take water. Hot chocolate is a nice touch.

Snow Cave Instruction Web Sites

http://www.outdoorswithdave.com/camping/building_a_snow_cave.htm

<http://www.wikihow.com/Build-a-Snow-Cave>

<http://hem.fyristorg.com/publish/snowcave.htm>

<http://outdoors.webshots.com/album/262091042rmwqIu?start=0>