

14 Winter Survival Tips from the Coldest Parts of the Country

How to brave (and enjoy!) the bitter cold at its worst—from those who know it best.

Start your day early



F8 STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Bozeman, Montana resident Melissa Moran doesn't let temperatures in the teens or dark skies deter her early morning workout. She goes to spin class at 5:30 a.m. three days per week in the winter, no matter how cold it is outside. "My mental clarity is simply better after an early morning workout. I don't care how cold it is (outside)," she says. "I went to an afternoon class last week and it just wasn't the same. When I work out in the morning, I'm more focused throughout the day—on what I eat, etc. It gets me on a routine and a schedule that I can follow." All of this, she says, ultimately makes her a happier, better mom and wife—which, if nothing else, just might be the only motivation we all need to get ourselves out of bed on the darkest winter days. Here's [how to stay safe in the coldest of temps](#).

Replace your gloves with mittens



ALEXAT25/SHUTTERSTOCK

Switch to really nice thick mittens, advises Michigan resident Teca Shorter. Though you will give up dexterity, if your activity allows for it, "Mittens tend to be warmer than gloves because your fingers generate more heat when they're not separated from each other by fabric, as they are with gloves," according to [REI.com](#). Here are [more ways to keep your hands—and feet—as warm as possible this winter](#).

Add hand warmers for instant heat



STOCKPHOTOFAN1/SHUTTERSTOCK

Scott Seiberg, owner of veteran-owned junk removal service [JDog Buffalo South in New York](#), says hand warmers are a staple in his truck during the winter months. "When your hands get cold, you lose the dexterity in your fingers. We lift heavy things all day long so we need to be able to use our hands," he says. "They're a great extra heat source to put inside your winter boots, too." You can buy [HotHands](#) in bulk on Amazon.

Dress in layers



MARGOSTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK

Seiberg says layers are key to staying comfortable in the winter despite major temperature shifts from indoor to outdoor environments. While Buffalo's average low is [about 20 degrees in January](#), Seiberg says his crew will often go from 10 to 70 degrees in a matter of minutes while on a residential job. "Once you start to sweat, you have to get your layers off quickly so your clothes don't freeze," he says. "I start out with long johns and pants. Then, I'll throw on a t-shirt, sweatshirt and two hats. I'll wear a knit hat with a baseball cap and switch them out during the day." Here are [more strategies to layering for warmth—and style—in winter](#).

Buy waterproof footwear



AFRICA STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

"I get a new pair of waterproof tennis shoes every two years," Moran says. Seiberg agrees. "I always wear waterproof boots. You get your feet wet, you're done." Want to increase the longevity of your footwear? Follow these [tips to keep your shoes in tip-top shape](#) from day one.

Invest in a quality thermos



CH_CH/SHUTTERSTOCK

Research [says](#) we can actually be perceived as happier and more approachable when we hold hot beverages. And few things are as soothing as a hot cup of coffee or tea in the wintertime. If you bring your drink on the go, consider transferring it to a thermos for extended warmth. Charity Tapp, a barista at [Java Moose Espresso Cafe](#) in Grand Marais, Minnesota, says a quality thermos is the single best way to keep any drink hot for a long period of time. She recommends the [Hydro Flask](#). Check out these [mind-blowing facts about snow](#).

Eat your vitamin D



ALGAE/SHUTTERSTOCK

"We don't see as much sun during the winter, so it's important to take in more of those sunshine vitamins with what we eat," Ashley Lariscy, director of nursing at [BrightStar Care's Novi](#) division in Farmington Hills, Michigan, says. ([According to AccuWeather](#), the Farmington Hills area sees average temperatures that fall between 15 and 20 degrees in January.) "Foods like tuna, salmon, and oranges are great, or even oatmeal with some sort of fresh, frozen fruit."

If you're expecting snow, park your car outwardly facing the street



DUTOURDUMONDE PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Lori Nissen, Minneapolis, Minnesota resident and Lutsen, Minnesota cabin owner, says she always reminds her kids to park their cars outwardly facing the hill of their driveway, especially when they're dealing with a steep or L-shaped driveway. According to Nissen, it's easier to drive straight up the hill instead of reversing down it beforehand. "If it snows overnight and your car's parked facing the street, it makes it a lot easier to make a run for it (the hill)," she says. Plus, with [January temperatures in Lutsen that drop to -5](#), ice is another factor Nissen and her family can't ignore. Follow this [checklist to make sure your car is fully prepped](#) to take on the iciest of winter roads.

Bake a cake or plant a garden



NADEENE/SHUTTERSTOCK

"The smell of baked goods brings everyone to a lovely place," Lariscy says. "It's important to find time for things that trigger soothing memories when it's cold out. I'm also huge on plants in the home, especially during the winter. A windowsill with an indoor herb garden is a great way to brighten up anyone's day." Here's [how to bring the spirit of winter into your own home](#).

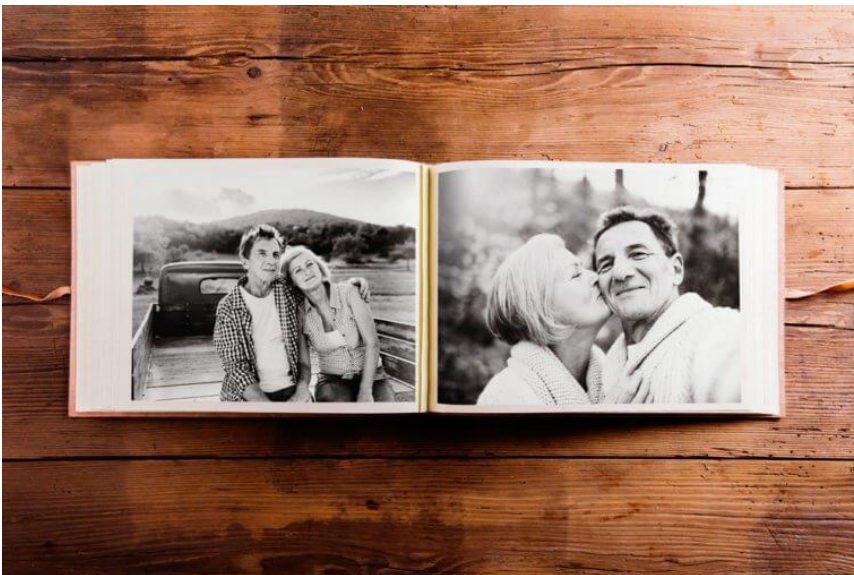
Pick up the phone



MIMAGEPHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK

It's easy (and only natural) for most of us to hibernate when it's cold out. But don't be a stranger. "We tend to spend more time indoors during the winter but it's important to etch out some extra time for socializing," Lariscy says. "People underestimate the power of a phone call."

Find new sources of warmth and comfort



HALFPOINT/SHUTTERSTOCK

Kris LeDonne, Whippany, New Jersey resident, [endures temperatures in January as low as 10 degrees](#). LeDonne says her greatest source of comfort on such cold days comes from her role as a pro services executive for photo and video digitization company Legacy Republic. As a pro services executive, LeDonne facilitates this process for families living in New Jersey—and helps them recreate, remember and relive their most treasured family memories in the process. "Delivering comfort brings me comfort," she says. "It's been such an amazing experience to see loved ones come together to share meaningful memories with [Legacy Republic's Studio](#). The warmth and comfort that comes from reliving, protecting and sharing these legacy moments with families is incredible," she says. "It's like that favorite movie I could watch over and over again."

Bundle up and play



JULIJA EROFEEVA/SHUTTERSTOCK

If there's anything we can learn from those who brave the coldest temperatures and most extreme winter weather conditions, it's to *embrace* them. [The Great Northern](#), an annual tradition in the Twin Cities, celebrates all things winter with three of Minnesota's most valued seasonal festivals: the City of Lakes Loppet, the Saint Paul Winter Carnival and the U.S. Pond Hockey Championships. Events range from cross-country ski races to snow sculpting contests, pond hockey tournaments, giant snow slides and more. This year's celebration—which runs from January 25 to February 4—will even feature a 70-foot tall ice palace. "The Great Northern is all about welcoming winter and proudly sharing our most cherished traditions with neighbors and newcomers," John Munger, co-founder of The Great Northern, says. "Winter is a defining characteristic of Minnesota, and we're proud of it." Don't miss these [destinations that are even better in the winter](#).

Crack open a window



QUADSHOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK

Lariscy says we're at greater risk for illness during the winter due to large indoor gatherings without much ventilation. She says it's helpful to crack open a door or window for a breath of fresh air every once in a while, even if it seems counterintuitive. "It's healthy to let that fresh air in and take a nice, deep breath," she says.

Look up



NADEZHDA BOLOTINA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Lutsen, Minnesota resident and co-owner of the area's treasured [Lockport Marketplace](#), Nan Plude-Bradley, used to spend the holidays winter camping with her family along the Gunflint Trail in northern Minnesota. Temperatures would frequently drop below zero and anywhere from one to two inches of ice would decorate the walls of their tent—but the striking beauty of the winter night sky, she says, made the freezing temperatures entirely worth it. "The night sky is so crystal clear in the winter," she says. "It doesn't matter how warm or cold it is out. When you're out there and it's late at night, you can hear a pin drop—it is just so still and beautiful." If that sounds like a dream trip to you, you'll want to [check out these vacations for people who love winter](#).