

You Must Be Present to Win!

Snowshoeing the Wasatch

by Lori J. Lee



There is always the small print. That little one-liner on the bottom of the ticket that tells you if you wander off before the drawing, that the great pair of K2 skis, the trip to Costa Rica, or the latest and greatest iPod will not fall into your hot little hands.

Not so long ago I hung a six-foot wooden sign that read "You Must Be Present to Win" on my dining room wall. You can imagine the various interpretations, but my reason for having it there was to remind me that every moment my mind is not fully attentive to the present experience – reading a book to my son, paddling across Tony Grove lake, soaking in the rays of the sun that warm me along my snowshoe route – that I lose. I lose the opportunity to take with me what that experience offered.

For those who already snowshoe, no explanation of why one snowshoe is needed, but if you are one who has yet to don a sleek and technologically-savvy pair of modern snowshoes, you may wonder at those of us who do. A simple, but rewarding sport, snowshoeing will perhaps offer you something different than it offers me, but you won't know what that is until you shrug off the impulse for winter hibernation and start making your path across the clear, brilliant crystals of water and light that make it possible to explore places even summer trails won't take you.

Since 1998 snowshoeing participation has grown 85%, and 45% of snowshoers are women. In the words of Garrett Graubins from Trailrunnermag.com, "It's official: snowshoeing is the winter-time craze."

Let me share a few reasons for the craze: First, we women want to stay fit—burn off that Ben and Jerry's binge from last night. Snowshoeing burns more calories than cycling, hiking, or skiing. Capturing the hearts of trail runners, snowshoeing has become a winter training venue that even hardcore winter competitors embrace as the lean, mean, tough way to put in a



5 or 10K while braving the elements and getting a work out that beats the heck out of a treadmill.

The ease at which one can get involved in the sport pulls in many an interested party. You don't need a resort. You don't need a 50-dollar pass. You don't need an entire weekend or even a whole day for a snowshoe jaunt. Snowshoeing is accessible to everyone, young and old, rich and not-so-rich, city or canyon dweller --any time and any place there's enough snow. If you can walk, you can snowshoe. You won't even need lessons.

Snowshoeing also appeals to the pocketbook. At one-third the cost of a ski or snowshoe gear package, getting started doesn't require a second mortgage on your house. (The basic snowshoe package cost around \$250-\$350.)

Snowshoe companies like MSR, Atlas, Tubbs, and Crescent Moon have been dumping money, time and expertise into

HENRY DAVID THOREAU recorded, in his journal, on January 6, 1858, the following: "...Very little evidence of God or man did I see just then, and life not as rich and inviting an enterprise as it should be, when my attention was caught by a snowflake on my coat-sleeve. It was one of those perfect, crystalline, star-shaped ones, six-rayed, like a flat wheel with six spokes, only the spokes were perfect little pine trees in shape, arranged around a central spangle. This little object, which, with many of its fellows, rested unmelted on my coat, so perfect and beautiful, reminded me that nature had not lost her pristine vigor yet, and why should man lose heart? Some times the pines were worn and had lost their branches . . . These little wheels came down like the wrecks of chariots from a battle waged in the sky . . . We are rained and snowed on with gems."

technical development of snowshoe gear. The result sparkles from the hanging wall displays at the local REI and other sporting good stores. Gone are the days of the humongous woven tennis rackets tied to the feet—today they're designed for flotation, maneuverability, even racing. Made of top-grade aluminum for fast and light backcountry travel, modern snowshoes are equipped with steel-claw crampon systems that give you divine traction. The binding-boot-body interface is solidified with such things as polyurethane stirrups that capture your feet, and polycarbonate buckle ratchets to keep your feet secured. Needless to say, the gear provides every opportunity for a great outing and most companies now have lines made specifically for women and children. If you don't have your own gear, renting snowshoes gives you an opportunity to try out different makes, models, and the sport itself. Rental snowshoes are available in most local gear and ski shops.

To adrenaline junkies snowshoeing may seem blasé, boring, a waste of time, but I'll let you in on a little secret: snowshoeing is more than it appears. Filled with moments of syncopation between body and mind, the senses of touch (the cold and the

heat of the sun), of sight (the views, the winter wonderland), of smell (the fir trees, the clean air), of taste (clean snowflakes on your tongue), and of hearing (silence) provide all you need to win the jackpot.

The last reason (that I have space to mention) that you should look into the sport, is that you can take anyone along. When my son was five he'd tromp across the lawn, in the summer, snowshoes clamped to his feet, just waiting for snow to fall. When the kids are along, you won't get as far down the trail, but sometimes it really is the journey, not the destination, and what you win is found along the way. ❄️

For more information on snowshoes check out the following websites:

www.atlassnowshoes.com
www.tubbssnowshoes.com
www.crescentmoonsnowshoes.com
www.msrgear.com/snow/

Lori Lee is the author of *Wild Weekends in Utah*, a multi-sport outdoor adventure guide. She is also the author of *The Best Snowshoe Trails of the Wasatch and Yurts of Utah* that will hit the shelves for Christmas of 2007.

