

WALKS

in your shoes

» Looking for adventure? A great view of nature?
A way-cool workout? Walk a mile in some snowshoes



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on the right trek

It doesn't get much cooler than these three destinations



1 Vermont
Snowshoe alongside white-tailed deer, gray rabbits, or an occasional moose with Vermont Adventure Tours. Explore the hard-pack groomed paths or tree-lined trails on 2- and 4-hour snowshoe tours in and around the Rutland area. \$45 to \$75; vermontadventuretours.com, 802-773-3343



2 Wisconsin
Load up on a homemade breakfast at Justin Trails Bed & Breakfast Resort in western Wisconsin before hitting the 10 miles of snowshoeing trails on its 213-acre property. Spend the afternoon dog sledding, snow tubing, or relaxing on a horse-drawn sled. \$800 to \$1,500 a week or \$115 to \$250 a night, including snowshoe rental; justintrails.com, 800-488-4521



3 Utah
After snowshoeing through the well-marked trails of Cedar Breaks, a 3-mile wide, 2,500-foot deep canyon, head back to local favorite Red Mountain Spa (a 1-hour drive) for gourmet meals, daily guided hikes, unlimited fitness classes, and luxurious spa treatments. \$249 to \$409 a night plus \$100 for an all-inclusive snowshoeing tour; redmountainspa.com, 800-407-3002

Add these to your shoe rack.



stepping out

» Writer Stefani Jackenthal—who has left tracks in the snow all around the country—remembers her first snowshoe buzz

IT'S A SNOWY SATURDAY MORNING in New York City, and I can't handle running shoulder-to-shoulder with sweaty urbanites under fluorescent lights at my gym. Instead, I break out my new (as in, still in the box) snowshoes and poles—the ones I got as a gift the previous winter—and trudge over to Central Park.

After I fasten the straps over my sneakers and adjust my poles to shoulder height, I get in a sumo stance and take a giant step forward, trying to avoid clipping the backs of my heels. It's like I'm 10 years old again and clunking around in my brother's size 14 boots. Frustrated, I stop to watch a group of guys smoothly snowshoeing across the terrain. I realize I need to make like I'm on an elliptical machine: Step higher, land on the ball of my foot, and push off with my front foot to move forward. Before long I've found my own crunchy rhythm. It's slightly harder than regular hiking—since I'm not used to this kind of motion—but it pushes me to work my lungs and legs. And as a triathlete,

I'm loving it and wishing I had done it sooner.

The perfect follow-up to my Central Park venture? An already-planned ski trip to Alta, Utah, the following month. While everybody else hits the lifts and ski runs, I persuade one friend, Caroline, to rent snowshoe equipment and join me for a trek through the wooded cross-country ski trails near the slopes. To fuel our 4-hour hike, we strap on hydration packs, fill our pockets with PowerBars, and head out.

About half an hour into a twisty trail, we turn onto thick, untracked fields littered with fully grown spruce trees and covered with freshly fallen snow. We follow bunny tracks until the sight of an incredibly steep mountain—the kind you'd think would win you a medal or massive media coverage for climbing—stops us in our tracks. Without much hesitation, we know our next move.

Halfway up the mountain, my glutes, hamstrings, and triceps burn with each steep step. I dig my pole into the shin-deep snow and instantly sink into a snow-covered abyss, which sends me flying forward into a not-so-graceful face plant. I untwist my body and sit in the deep snow, laughing as the tears freeze on my face. Even with the snow melting inside my shirt, I'm into the moment's rest.

As we approach 8,500 feet, I feel slightly drunk from the thinning air and excitement.

Nearly 3 hours after we left our toasty lodge, the web of trees finally busts open into a wide span of snowcapped mountains and blue sky. We've reached the top! My heart pounds as I high-five Caroline and collapse onto the feathery snow, where we both sit in the noon sun. Watching the lifts in the distance carrying skiers up the mountain, I'm just as happy not to be aboard. We didn't need any "technical assistance" to climb up here. On our own and unplugged from civilization—no cell phones, MP3 players, or powered lifts—we've found what all treadmills lack: the silence, stillness, and peace of nature. And while a medal would have been nice, I knew I had already received my reward.

best in snow

» Great gear to keep you in step this winter



With a feminine shape that eliminates annoying fabric flop, the **Isis Luna Long Neck** is a lightweight zip-up top that's warm enough to wear on its own and thin enough to layer. Its Power Stretch wicking material keeps skin dry and cool (\$115, isisforwomen.com).



Just a twist of **Leki's Tour FS** adjustable aluminum trekking poles gives them a custom fit for any snowshoeing adventure. They're easy to switch from the longer length you need on uphill to the shorter length for downs. And "snowflake baskets" mean they won't sink in deep powder (\$79.95, leki.com).



Toting water on the trails is a whole lot less taxing with **CamelBak's Catalyst** hydration waistpack. The lightweight pack—which holds a hefty 28 ounces of fluid—fits snugly against the small of your back. Its wide-mouth cap is a snap to fill and locks down water-drip tight (\$35, camelbak.com).

Hip Burner

Place poles about 6 to 9 inches out to your sides and behind your hips. Stand on your left leg and cross your right leg in front of the left ankle. Uncross legs, lifting right leg straight out to side. Hold 3 seconds, return to starting position, and repeat eight times. Switch legs.



Redfeather's Stride Snowshoe is made with a lightweight V-tail aluminum frame, powerful rubber-nylon webbing, and grippy stainless steel crampons designed specifically for women's narrower strides (\$189 for a 21-inch model, \$199 for a 25-inch, redfeather.com).



Snow's no problem when you're wearing **The North Face's Apex Atlas Pant**. Its innovative, supple manmade material allows unrestricted movement—and looks great. Durability? It's got a lifetime warranty (\$149, thenorthface.com).



Butt Burner

Plant poles in front of you, about hip-distance apart and about 1 foot in front of snowshoe tips. Lean on poles for support while standing on right leg (slightly bent) and lifting left leg straight behind you. Bend left knee, bringing toward your head. Hold for 3 seconds, straighten, and repeat eight times. Switch legs.



With the lightness and flexibility of a trail shoe and the support of a waterproof boot, **Montrail's Stratos XCR** is the perfect choice for snowy trails. Its midheight cut offers solid ankle support and the rubber tread gives terrific traction (\$140, montrail.com).



With **Suunto's X9i** you'll never get lost again. The quintessential multi-tasking sports watch is a compass, altimeter, and barometer; it also has GPS and compatibility with digital mapping services worldwide. Oh yeah, it tells time too (\$499, suunto.com).

Forest Gorp



Chew on this energy-rich trail mix from the WH kitchen to fuel yourself during a snowshoe hike. Toss these ingredients in a large zip-top storage bag. —Devin Alexander

- 2 C low-fat granola without raisins
- 3/4 C dried mixed blueberries, cherries, strawberries, and cranberries (do it yourself or try a mix such as Mariani's Berries 'N Cherries)
- 1/2 C yogurt-covered raisins
- 1/2 cup salted, dry-roasted pepitas (pumpkin seeds roasted without oil)
- 2 1/2 oz chopped dark chocolate
- 1/4 C chopped dry-roasted almonds

Makes approximately 4 cups (eight 1/2-cup servings). Each serving has 295 calories, 5 g protein, 51 g carbohydrates, 9 g fat (4 g saturated fat), 4 g fiber, 98 mg sodium

PREVIOUS SPREAD: PHOTOGRAPH BY KENNAN HARVEY/OUTDOOR COLLECTION/AURORA; CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: GOODSHOOT/PUNCHSTOCK; WILLIE HOLDMAN/INDEX STOCK; BRAND X PICTURES/PUNCHSTOCK; VERMONT ADVENTURE TOURS

JENS MORTENSEN; EXERCISES: MICHAEL