

WINTER HUT TRIP ORIENTATION



WELCOME!

We're so glad you have joined us and we have a lot of information to share with you.

This **Winter Information** packet has travel and trip logistics along with our equipment list. Please be sure to read through this packet thoroughly, it will answer many questions that you may have.

A separate email has also been sent to you with **forms** for secured digital signature from *Echosign*, these can be completed online and the send button will return them directly to our office. OR - if you would prefer paper forms, PDF files of our [Trip Forms can be found here](#). These can be printed out, completed and returned to our office. We are also happy to 'snail-mail' these forms. Let us know which is most convenient for you.

Please feel free to **contact** our office if there are any questions that we can help you with.

Office Phone: 970 / 926-5299

Don Shefchik: 970 / 376-3491

-PG Field Director for Route and gear questions

E-Mail: trips@paragonguides.com

Web site: www.paragonguides.com

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Now that you have chosen your backcountry ski adventure we would like to assist you in preparing for your trip. The following pages are full of useful information from what to bring, what to expect, and how to get here. We are always happy to answer questions or concerns and make suggestions to aid in your travel.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Expect to be challenged -

This is often the most overlooked part of your trip preparation. Expectations can quickly make or break an adventure experience. For most it is the physical exertion at altitude, for some it is a reality check of their skiing ability, and for others it can simply be the idea of using an outhouse. An adventure trip is designed to engage and challenge each participant. Our goal is to continually provide each participant with the opportunity for a personal sense of accomplishment.

Expect to learn -

Your days will be spent with guides who are experts in the backcountry and related fields of guiding. Whether it be skiing, the wilderness, wildlife, the winter environment, ecology, geography, or the myriad of other mountaineering skills, we encourage you to indulge yourself in their knowledge. You will find that your guides have an attitude for learning, and will appreciate your own background and experiences as they share their own.

Expect to be a Participant -

The nature of the backcountry experience provides many opportunities to engage yourself in the activities that surround a winter hut trip. Your spirit for adventure and participation is welcomed and often a necessary contributing factor to the overall success of the trip, whether it be breaking trail or helping cook a meal at the hut. This will also free your guides up to join you for that extra powder turn or an evening game of cards.

Expect a stage change -

The huts provide a refuge from the weather and winter nights as well as a solitary experience away from the busy-ness of our daily lives. As you move into the rhythm of the trail your senses will turn to a sunrise or sunset, a mountain bathed in alpenglow, a moonlight ski, a good book by the fire, a game of cards, laughter around the dinner table, a blanket of hoarfrost in early morning light, or a hot cup of tea at day's end. It's about the camaraderie of skiing, the perfect powder turn and for the moment, a simpler life.



PREPARATION

Guides and Trip Size

Our guides are trained professionals. They are proficient in the varied aspects of winter backcountry travel. Most trips provide two guides which allows participants to comfortably ski at their own level. Personal attention is given to each participant's skiing and hut experience. Group sizes average from 2 to 13 people.

Food and Water

We know that the way you feel and perform on any given day is directly related to what you eat and drink. Food is an important ingredient of any outdoor adventure and we pride ourselves in providing you with healthy and delicious backcountry cuisine. Each autumn we cache the huts with food provisions and then supplement with various fresh foods that are carried among the group. Water comes primarily from melting snow. Vegetarian and special diets can usually be accommodated. If you have any food allergies or other specific dietary needs, please contact us for arrangements.

Fitness and Ski Conditioning

We recommend that trip participants maintain an active lifestyle that involves regular aerobic activity. Physical conditioning and regular stretching can prevent injuries and provide stamina necessary for wilderness travel.

Fitness: Maintain and increase, if possible, your regular workout routine. Cross training suggestions: skiing, running, biking, skating (ice or inline), hiking, etc. Stretch daily. Ski or hike with a pack on. Paragon has partnered with [Fit for Trips](#) for specialized training programs tailored to your hut trip.

Ski Skills: Downhill and cross-country trail skills will be used on your trip. We recommend mastering basic ski skills of snowplow, diagonal stride, herringbone and kick turns at the level of proficiency that matches the type of trip you have chosen. Your guides will provide further instruction on backcountry skiing skills.

Equipment

- Our Dynafit Test Center has a full-line of Alpine Touring & Telemark rental gear.

A complete equipment checklist is provided on the final pages of this booklet for your convenience. Please contact us if you have any questions regarding the equipment list, rental gear, purchasing recommendations, or personal clothing needs. Since **sleeping bags and the bulk of the food are cached in the huts**, your backpack should weigh no more than 25 lbs. We will be giving you a small bundle of group-food or gear to carry along with a clean sleeping bag liner and pillowcase. Personal clothing requirements must be provided by you. Please follow the Equipment List carefully. Certain items may be more applicable for different winter months. Our office or your guide can help you make those decisions. You will likely encounter a variety of winter weather and snow conditions, and having the right equipment will make your time in the backcountry a much more enjoyable experience. Avalanche gear including beacon, shovel and probe are also provided.

Make Sure That Paragon Knows You

Are you a vegetarian or on a special diet? Do you wear a knee brace or take a particular medication? Do you need a shuttle ride from your hotel? Are you arriving at an unusual time? Are you bringing your own equipment but aren't sure that it will be right for the trip? Is there a birthday or anniversary while on the trip?

Personal service is one of the things that makes Paragon Guides adventures so special. We are happy to do our best to accommodate a special diet or celebrate a hut-style birthday. We will work with you when your schedule won't cooperate and discuss options for special medical situations and / or disabilities. Please note any special needs on your reservation form or contact our office and we will be happy to discuss possibilities. Certain requests may involve additional charges.

Our thoughts on electronics at the huts

Your smart phone or tablet is more than just a cell phone these days, it is your book, your map, your camera, your connection with your family. We understand the prevalence of these devices in our lives and certainly have them ourselves. A few things to keep in mind, though, when in the backcountry with electronics.

- The huts do not have electrical outlets to charge electronics. Prudent battery use will be needed to keep your device functioning for the entire trip.
- Cold, outdoor temperatures can eat up a battery's life very quickly. Keep your device in an interior pocket if possible.
- There will be no wifi signal available and cell signal will be spotty at best.
- If you do need to make a phone call, please find an area away from others in order to not detract from their time together and the hut experience.

Summary of what is provided on our trips:

- Professional guides
- Hut fees
- Trailhead transportation
- Sleeping bags cached at the hut
- Clean sleeping bag liner / pillowcase
- All meals from breakfast day one through lunch final day
- All group gear including first-aid and repair kits
- Avalanche package: (beacon, shovel, probe)
- Backcountry & ski skills development
- Pre-trip Orientation Ski Day at the Arrowhead Ski Area



LOGISTICS

Getting to Vail

We strongly suggest that you make your travel and lodging arrangements immediately.

Factoring a **travel day in prior to the Pre-Trip Orientation Day AND a travel day on the post-trip departure** will provide a good time cushion to manage potential travel delays due to weather and other factors and will give your body time to acclimate to our high country elevation. Paragon has a discounted rate with the [Inn at Riverwalk](#) in Edwards. Call the Inn at Riverwalk - **970-926-0606** - directly to book your stay and let them know that you are with **Paragon Guides** to get the group rate.

Most folks will be flying into Denver then taking a shuttle with [Colorado Mountain Express](#) from the airport to their lodging. Usual travel time from Denver International Airport (DIA) will be around 2 1/2 hours. Weather delays are common. Give yourself a good cushion of time on your arrival, this will help alleviate the stress of traveling. Arriving 2 days or more prior to the hut trip will allow time for travel, the Orientation Day, possibly a ski day or two at Vail and provide additional acclimatization time.

High Altitude Travel

Many people have been at altitudes above 10,000 feet before, however, what seems to affect people the most is physical exertion and sleeping at elevation. There is about 40-45% less oxygen and about 50-80% less humidity available at high altitude than at sea level. All too often this is not taken seriously and consequences happen accordingly. Some people react mildly with headaches and difficulty sleeping and a few may suffer from acute mountain sickness (AMS). For participants coming from sea level, staying in the Vail/Avon area at 8,000 feet for two nights or more prior to going up to elevations of 10,000-11,000' and higher will help to prevent many of the stronger reactions you might have to altitude. Rest as much as possible your first day, drink plenty of water, and limit alcohol, caffeine and over-eating. Mild exercise is also recommended. We would be happy to provide additional high altitude information and answer any questions.

The Pre-Trip Orientation Day

The day prior to your trip departure, we will host a Pre-Trip Orientation. The day will begin when we meet at our Headquarters in Edwards at 9 am. Paragon can pick you up at your lodging for this meeting.

This Orientation will include:

- Rental gear outfitting
- Finalizing any remaining paperwork or balances that may be due
- Trip meeting with your guides to discuss the route, gear, hut life, packing, safety, etc.
- Backcountry ski skills & a moderate "shakedown tour" at the Arrowhead Ski Area, lift tickets provided as needed.
 - Ski time will be based out of our Backcountry Center at the Arrowhead Ski Area

The meeting generally wraps up around 1-2 pm. You will have the option to ski at Arrowhead a while longer if you have your own transportation arranged. Otherwise, our shuttle will bring you back to your lodging.

Trip Departure Day

Your guides will have arranged pick-up times during the Orientation Meeting. We will meet you at our Headquarters or pick you up from your local lodging. Depending on the day's logistics, breakfast may be at a local's favorite cafe or hearty finger food on the way to the trailhead.

The Last Day of Your Trip

Specific hut routes will determine how the final day will be worked out, however, generally your group will be down to the final trailhead between 2 and 3 pm. Our shuttle will be waiting to bring you back to our Headquarters in Edwards. We will break down gear and return rentals doing our best to make sure everyone has all the parts and pieces back in place. Your guides will drop you off at your local lodging as needed. We do NOT recommend flying out on the same day that your trip ends, especially if you are flying out of Denver. Final trip logistics and potential snow storms can create unforeseen delays. Many groups also enjoy a celebratory dinner out together once they've had a chance to clean up.

Some Commonly Asked Questions

Should I tip my guides? How much?

As with any service industry, tipping is a regard for the level of attention and professionalism that you received from your guides. Tips are very much appreciated by the guides and amounts will vary greatly. A good rule of thumb is 10-15%.

How much will I have to carry?

Sleeping bags and the bulk of trip food are cached at each hut. You will be carrying your own clothing and personal gear along with a small bag of the fresh food or community gear. Your pack will probably weigh 20-25 lbs. depending on the length of your trip and amount of personal gear. Focus on having a set of ski clothes and a set of hut clothes. Multiple changes of clothing will only add weight. Limit and share toiletries such as toothpaste, among family members. What and how to pack will be discussed further at the Pre-trip Orientation meeting.

What will the weather be like?

Colorado winters are well known for mild temperatures and clear skies. However, storm patterns can produce extreme temperature drops, strong winds and blizzard conditions. The Equipment List items will prepare you for these conditions. Please be sure that you have all items. The sun's UV rays are much stronger at elevation. Good quality sunglasses and sunblock are necessities for any outdoor activity. Dehydration can present a problem due to the dry climate and exertion at high altitude. Always have at least 1 liter of water with you (preferably more) and drink often.

Backcountry Skiing Equipment

Paragon Guides Dynafit Test Center

Our Rental Program offers Dynafit Alpine Touring gear and ‘free-heel’ Telemark gear

The following checklist has been prepared in order to assure you of having the proper equipment needed to make your trip a comfortable winter experience. Please check your equipment carefully *before arriving for your trip* to make sure that it provides a proper fit, is in good condition and meets your needs. Please let us know if we can help you with any gear selection. Our staff would be happy to answer your questions regarding equipment, shops, and manufacturers.

We recommend that each individual wear or have with them the following items:

*(Some items may be specific to the time of season, i.e. mid-January compared to April, however, cold temperatures and winter conditions can happen any time)

Ski Equipment:

The foundation gear of your trip. Rental gear info and rates attached at the end of this packet.

- **Alpine Touring skis (AT)** - Alpine Touring has grown in popularity in recent years as technology has made equipment lighter and easier to use. AT skis combine a touring, free-heel mode with a "lock-down" feature that then allows for alpine style turns. AT skis come in a variety of widths. A good balance for touring and turning is a ski width at the waist in the 75-95mm range. Wider skis may be best suited for day tours or staying at one hut. There are many options for AT bindings. Weight and ease of operation are main considerations. Paragon rents and sells the Dynafit line of AT skis and bindings providing the lightest weight setup available.
- **Touring & Telemark Backcountry skis, metal edged, waxable** - A metal edge ski is best for control and support. A variety of ski types are applicable for Day Tours and Hut Trips. Ski width will depend on your style of skiing, i.e., (Touring or Telemark). Appropriate width will range from 50mm-90mm at the waist (wider skis may be best suited for day tours or staying at one hut. Sidecut and flexibility will vary among skis depending on their intended use. A good backcountry ski has flexibility for powder yet is stiff enough to provide support for hard-packed conditions and trail skiing with the weight of a pack. Waxless (fish-scale) skis do not work well for most of Colorado’s dry, cold snow conditions. (Alpine touring and *Telemark skis are available through Paragon Guides*) *We do not recommend “twin-tip” skis.*
- **Backcountry Ski Boots (Touring, Telemark & Alpine Touring)** - We recommend a 2 or 3 buckle plastic boot for added flexibility and balance for touring and turning. If renting, we recommend trying your own personal footbed, this can be a great asset to the proper fitting of your boot. Brands include: Black Diamond, Garmont, Scarpa, and Dynafit. Leather boots or lighter plastic touring boots may work well. Check with us for recommendations on your existing gear or rental thoughts.

- **Ski poles** - Good quality, adjustable, metal poles adapt to the different types of skiing styles and varying backcountry terrain. Brands include: Dynafit, Black Diamond, and Leki. (*available through Paragon Guides*).
- **Climbing skins** - Required on all trips. Synthetic (nylon) and Natural (mohair) models are available. As a general rule, the climbing skins should be slightly narrower than the waist of your ski. 10mm difference is a standard width. Climbing skins will vary greatly in glide. Mohair is best, Mohair/Synthetic blends are a good compromise, longer-napped nylon models are better than short napped. Brands include: Pomoca, Black Diamond, G3, and K2. (*available through Paragon Guides*). *Dynafit AT & Telemark rental packages will come with skins.*
- **Leg gaiters** - They will keep your pants dry, legs warmer and the snow out of your boots. Many ski touring pants incorporate an over the boot cuff that performs like a gaiter. Traditional hiking gaiters may not fit over larger plastic boots. Ski gaiters are available, the elastic/velcro models work well. Brands include Black Diamond Termigator, and Outdoor Research (*available through Paragon Guides*).
- **Backpack** - Internal frame, soft packs are recommended. They should have plenty of room (approx. 2,500-3,500 cu. in. / 40-50 liter) for your personal gear and a small amount of group gear / food. It is always preferable to have a pack that has been designed to carry more gear with less in it than a pack carrying more gear than it was designed for! (*available through Paragon Guides*)

Clothing:

Layers provide a system that can be adjusted to the changes in weather and skiing terrain. The inner layer should wick away moisture from the skin to keep you dry. Polypropylene, Capilene, treated Merino wool (IceBreaker/Smartwool or natural Llama), or silk are the best materials; damp cotton will rob your body core of needed heat. The top and bottom outer layer should protect from wind and moisture. Stay dry and you'll stay warm!

- Wool or Synthetic blend ski hat - Your head and neck can dissipate as much as 70% of your body heat. Protecting your body core heat is a first priority.
- Visored cap / baseball cap - Providing a bit of shade over the eyes and face. Keeps your hair dry on a warm snowy day when the ski hat is too warm.
- Neck gaiter or balaclava - The ability to cover the entire neck adds considerable warmth. On very cold days covering the face provides extra protection.
- Mittens - For colder days mittens will keep your hands warmer than gloves. A thin glove liner can add warmth and dexterity. Wool mittens perform well but require a Gore-tex or nylon shell.
- 2 pairs gloves - (1 light, 1 heavy)
- Shell Gear (Gore-tex or similar material recommended)
 - Jacket with hood
 - Pants with a “full-zip” are best
- Ski touring pants - There are many models available, these comfortable wind and snow resistant pants are very popular. Many models include an over the boot snow cuff.
- Long underwear - top & bottom (Polypropylene, capilene, treated Merino wool or silk). Zip-T or crew neck is recommended for the top layer.

- 2-3 pairs socks (wool/synthetic blend) - Thickness of sock will depend on finding a comfortable fit with the ski boot. (NO COTTON SOCKS)
- Thin Polypropylene or Wool liner socks (optional) - Some people prefer a liner sock for added fit and comfort.
- Wool or Fleece sweater / or Expedition Weight zip-T
- Down jacket, puffy or vest - this “definitive” warm layer is recommended
- Hut slippers or light shoes
- Comfortable pants and T-shirt - Hut-wear (these can be cotton). Some people will use their ski touring pants

Gear Accessories:

- One quart/liter wide mouth water bottle (Nalgene type) is recommended (*available through Paragon Guides*). Some people prefer to bring an additional half or one quart/liter. Unless you are experienced with hydration systems we do not recommend them during the colder months due to frozen tubing and mouth pieces.
- Sunglasses - UV protection
- Ski goggles - critical for eye protection from extreme sun, wind, snow and cold.
- Sunscreen/sun block, 30 SPF minimum is recommended.
- Lip balm
- Headlamp (*available through Paragon Guides*) or flashlight
- Bandanna or handkerchief
- Toiletries: wash cloth / sm. towel / tooth brush / Baby Wipes (optional)

Optional Gear:

- Avalanche Gear - (beacon, shovel, probe)** (*provided by Paragon Guides as needed*)
- Thermos - An excellent source of additional fluids. Small, one-pint models are available.
- Wax kit with cork and scraper - Cold and medium range Swix® waxes are most often used (greens, blues and special purples / V20-30-40). We will have group wax kits available. Your guides can help with application and questions.
- Camera
- Reading material - Every hut is stocked with some reading material
- Daypack for layover day skiing
- Bathing suit (saunas at Diamond J Ranch, Janet’s Cabin, Shrine Mtn. Inn)
- Moleskin or 2nd skin for blisters
- Pocket knife
- Compass

Paragon Guides provides all group equipment, sleeping bags, emergency, medical, and repair kits. Comfortable sleeping bags are cached at each hut. A clean cotton liner and pillowcase are issued to you at the beginning of a trip. The huts have mattresses and pillows.

Remember: "The wrong equipment in the right place can ruin your whole day!"

Your shortened, take to the store, list:

- Wool or Synthetic blend ski hat
- Visored cap / baseball cap
- Neck gaiter or balaclava
- Mittens
- 2 pairs gloves - (1 light, 1 heavy)
- Shell Gear
 - Jacket with hood
 - Pants
- Ski touring pants
- Long underwear
- 2-3 pairs socks
- Thin Polypropylene or Wool liner socks (optional)
- Wool or Fleece sweater / or Expedition Weight zip-T
- Down jacket, puffy or vest
- Hut slippers or light shoes
- Hut-wear (these can be cotton).

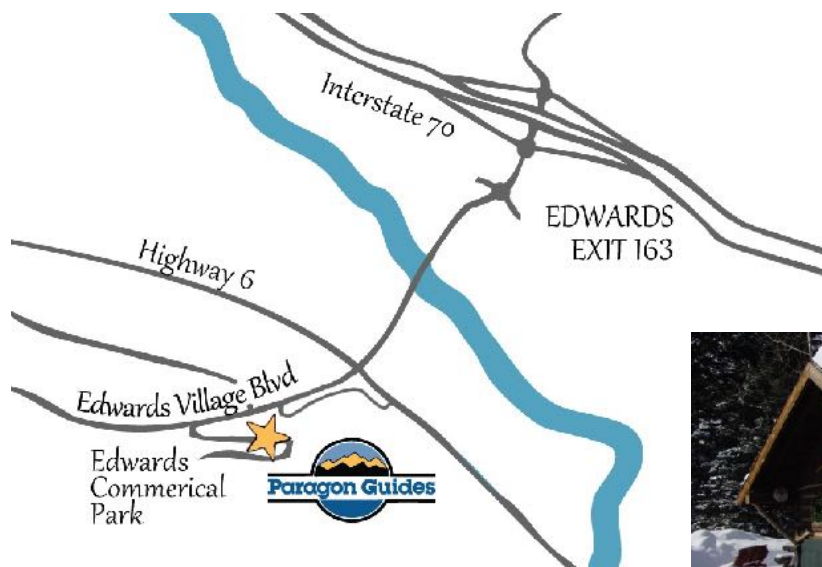
Gear Accessories:

- A one quart/liter wide mouth water bottle
- Sunglasses
- Ski goggles
- Sunscreen/sun block
- Lip balm
- Headlamp or flashlight
- Bandanna or handkerchief
- Toiletries: wash cloth / sm. towel / tooth brush / wipes (optional)

Optional Gear:

- Avalanche Gear - (beacon, shovel, probe)
 - provided on Paragon Hut Trips
- Thermos
- Wax kit with cork and scraper
- Camera
- Reading material
- Daypack
- Bathing suit
- Moleskin or 2nd skin
- Pocket knife
- Compass

Getting to Paragon Guides Headquarters & Dynafit Test Center



◆ Paragon's Backcountry Center at the Arrowhead Ski Area in Edwards. Part of an original homestead from 100 years ago. Our portal to the backcountry.

