

## Winter Camping on a Budget

*(Note: this was originally written for use at a Boy Scout Leader training class, thus the frequent references to Scouting. The concepts apply to all of us. In survival, conservation of energy is vital, thus I have not rewritten this for non-Scouting classes, thereby saving my energy! Walking Crow)*

Many folks shy away from winter camping, seeing it as an expensive adventure. Certainly, it is possible to equip for winter camping by spending, literally, thousands of dollars. For serious expeditions into the backcountry that may last for weeks, this type of expenditure may be essential and justified. For the Scout Troop and the Scouts doing weekend cold weather campouts a few times a year, the cost is not justified. If you can and want to spend the thousands, you are more than welcome to do so. This article will present the basics of what can be done to enjoy winter camping even on a limited budget. To put it another way, cost can be eliminated as an excuse for not camping in winter!

Shelter needs are primary in winter camping and of those needs, clothing heads the list. Most but not all of that clothing will come from these sources:

Mail order/Internet

Sportsmans Guide [www.sportsmansguide.com](http://www.sportsmansguide.com)

Cheaper Than Dirt [www.cheaperthandirt.com](http://www.cheaperthandirt.com)

Campmor [www.campmor.com](http://www.campmor.com)

Try a Google search for “German wool pants” or “Swedish wool pants” and

follow the leads

Thrift stores\*

Charitable (Salvation Army, Volunteers of America etc)

Private (Ohio Thrift, Village Thrift etc)

Ultimate cheap (garage sales)

Flea markets

Make (or remake) it yourself

Local military surplus stores\*

\*consult your local yellow pages

What are you looking for specifically?

Let's start at your local thrift store. The first stop is for sweaters and shirts. Wool is what you are looking for. Check for shirts first. They will wear better than sweaters, open for venting and sometimes offer spectacular bargains. Up to 15% nylon with the wool is ok if not worn too thin. Acrylic blends are acceptable but not quite as good. Most of these shirts will be “off” brands. Pay no more than \$5 each, maybe a little more for Woolrich, Pendleton or Johnson. If you stumble into Filson's or King of the Mountain (probably with the coats) you have hit the “mother lode.” Move on to the sweater isle. Again, you are looking for wool or mostly wool. \$4 is a top price for a sweater. If between shirts and sweaters you end up with three that can be layered (light, medium, heavy is ideal) you've made a great start. If you are outfitting a 30 boy Troop, this will heavily impact a single store, so spread it around a bit. Chances are when you move to the pants isle you won't find many outdoor pants. If you do find them and they fit, great! Wool dress pants are an acceptable alternative. They are neither as durable nor as warm as the typical heavier pants but they work. Perhaps two pair layered is

the solution for you. Smaller waist sizes may be hard to come by but resewing the back seam is not that difficult. Remember, this is about warmth, not fashion.

From the coat isle, make a quick check for a good windproof water repellent shell. Nylon is lightweight but be careful around fires. A hood on this outer shell is highly desirable. An insulated vest may also turn up as a worthwhile bargain at a few dollars. A big insulated coat may be welcome during idle times in camp in the evening (there should be no idle daytime moments except while eating lunch). A puffy coat will be too warm during active times. When shopping thrift stores, pay attention to tag colors. Often certain days have special discounts. Hit it right and you can have a big bag of wool and a vest and shell...and change from a \$20 bill. An excellent start!

Under Thrift Store, we listed "Garage Sale." This is usually the ultimate thrift store. The only problems are time and gasoline. You may have to visit a lot of sales to see a fraction of what is in the stores. What is your time worth? If your neighborhood has a lot of sales in walking distance and you have the time, certainly give it a try. Much of what is at flea markets started out at garage sales. You are paying the flea market vendor to collect the stuff for you to shop from. Often, their prices are no better than the thrift stores. And yet, there are bargains everywhere.

Sportsmans Guide and Cheaper Than Dirt carry lots of military surplus clothing. Look for wool pants, wool shirts and wool sweaters. In 2004 good quality wool pants sold for as little as a dollar a pair. Typically, they are \$5 to \$10 a pair, still very reasonable. Smaller sizes sell the slowest so pants to fit the boys are often readily available at the lowest prices. Waist sizes below 30" however, are rare. It is not that hard to "take them in" at the waist by resewing the back seam. Try not to remove material as they will need to be let out next winter as the Scout grows. Or resell them to younger boys in your Troop. Length will need to be adjusted for the younger boys too. Again, turn up as much as you can in a wide hem and cut off as little as possible. An alternative if you find nothing but jumbo sizes is to cut the legs off, attach tie strings to attach to the belt and have wool leggings to wear over other pants. (If those leggings are then covered with the cut off legs from jogging pants purchased at a thrift store, it yields a windproof, snow shedding legging that is amazingly versatile.) This can be done with thrift shop pants too.

Wool blankets are another source of clothing, with some modifications. Ponchos, shirts, leggings, and mittens are all hidden in blankets, waiting for scissors, needles and yarn to release them.

Wool shirts and sweaters from these mail order/internet sources are less readily available. The sweaters tend to be pricy compared to thrift stores but they do tend to be more durable and may be worth the \$3 to \$10 range. When the price moves toward \$20, while they are still a bargain, you can do better.

Wool mittens, gloves and scarves are also readily available from these sources. Mittens are warmer than gloves and are at their best when covered by a cloth or leather over-mitt. The wool mitts or gloves alone may be enough in mild winter weather (25 deg F and higher) but beware of getting them wet. Wool does still insulate some when wet but wet mitts are tough on the hands.

Socks and underwear are best purchased new. These sources do sometimes offer wool socks at very good prices. Get a variety of sizes so they can be layered 2 or 3 thick. From time to time these sources may offer silk or polyester underwear shirts and drawers at fair prices but not at the bargain rates referred to above. Occasionally, wool underwear shows up at bargain prices. Recently some under shirts were offered 2 for \$10 and while not as good as the best new (\$35 to \$50 each) they are serviceable.

A variety of hats are available surplus, but it is hard to beat the knit “watch cap.” Couple this with a balaclava of silk, polyester or acrylic and the hood of the outer shell and some pretty cold weather can be handled. Insulated hoods or hats are rarely needed. Wool balaclavas are warm, but the face is where there is most apt to be an itch problem with wool. Some folks are more susceptible to this than others. Generally a layer of silk or polyester under the wool is sufficient to avoid the itch. And, as a reminder, never, ever, wear cotton next to your skin in cold weather. Never! Period! If you don’t know, here’s why. The body gives off moisture continuously. Cotton absorbs and holds that moisture and becomes damp. That damp layer transfers your body heat rapidly away from your body. In very cold weather, that transfer can be faster than your body can produce it. The result is hypothermia. The effect can be death. A wicking inner layer moves the moisture to the outer layers without absorbing it and becoming damp. Yes, if you work up a soaking sweat (by not removing layers promptly) even wicking layers will be damp for awhile. Body heat should dry them but you will need to insulate as that drying takes place, or change clothes.

Campmor in their “Special kid’s deals” section often have polypropylene or polyester underwear in youth sizes on sale. Sometimes they have smaller sizes of wool socks too. Two sets of underwear should be adequate for a weekend. One to wear and one as backup.

That leaves footwear...something to put over those 3 pairs of wool socks. First, don’t try to cram them into your summer hiking boots. Not enough room! In wet conditions, several layers of socks inside a rubber boot (either over the foot or over the shoe type with an insole inserted) are a good choice. Cold-wet conditions are the worst and the most common in our area. Wet slushy snow is the toughest. In any rubber boot condensation will be a problem. Below 15 or 20 degrees F, switching to something breathable is better. A compromise many reach is the rubber bottom, leather top pac with a felt liner. Good ones are not cheap, thus do not belong in this article. Cheap ones don’t last. Sometimes not even one trip. If the in between is in your price range consider them, otherwise getting just the liners (Rocky outlet in Nelsonville often has liners on sale...call ahead or check on line), big enough for several pairs of socks and putting it all in a flexible rubber boot (Tingley at Tractor Supply is great) is a cost effective way of dealing with it. Make a foam insole out of an old sleeping pad to put in the boot under the liners. And in dry conditions, those 3 or 4 pairs of socks coupled with a sandal works surprisingly well.

All this talk about wool...what about fleece? Good question. Polyester fleece (not cotton fleece) works well. It is lighter than wool, dries faster than wool and new, can be cheaper than wool. Its biggest drawback involves the winter camper’s friend, the fire. A spark that lands on wool and extinguishes without fanfare can melt a hole in fleece from the size of a pencil lead to the size of a dime. If it melts through an inner polyester layer, you have melted plastic attaching itself to your skin. Fleece layers are ok under an outer layer and may be desirable but it is seldom available at the price of a wool sweater.

Never overlook rain gear in the winter. If your weekend forecast is for bitter cold, it may be safe to leave the poncho or rain suit at home. In its place, put another insulating layer just in case. Otherwise, next to wind, rain is your greatest challenge. Those insulating layers have to stay dry. Snow brushes off. Drizzle or light rain will confine itself to the outer layers of wool. But medium to heavy rainfall requires a waterproof layer. Your regular summer rain gear will work if it is large enough to go on over the insulating layers. If not, a large heavy duty trash bag will work in a pinch.

Good night!

Getting a good night or two of sleep on a winter weekend is the next challenge. This is perhaps, for the leaders, the time of greatest concern. Once the boys are in their tents (if that is the shelter of choice) they are not available for periodic hypothermia checks (touching thumb to little finger, speech checks etc.). They may be embarrassed to admit they are cold...dangerously cold. If cold enough, they may not be able to communicate their condition. That is the nature of hypothermia. By the way, there should be at least 2 campers in each tent and it should be made clear that they need to be aware of the other's condition. The leaders' responsibility is to evaluate the adequacy of their bedrolls (and clothing, for that matter) before the trip and to place knowledge and responsibility into the parents' hands as well so that proper equipment can be obtained. Part of the problem for the leaders is that no two people react to weather conditions exactly the same. Conditions that are comfortable for one may be miserable for another. If a boy brings a \$700 Western Mountaineering down sleeping bag rated for -40 degrees F on a weekend trip where the low is expected to be 15 degrees and he has a good foam pad under him, chances are very good he will sleep comfortably. If he brings the same bag on a weekend trip with lows in the mid 30's with heavy rain and he lacks adequate shelter to stay dry, he could be in big trouble. There are so many variables. And for the purpose of this article, the \$700 sleeping bag is out of the question anyway. What is the answer? It is a range of possibilities.

Let's start by looking at any sleeping bag(s) already owned. If a decent 3-season mummy bag is already hanging in the closet that is an excellent start. To extend it to 4 season use, we need to either add layer(s) inside the bag or outside the bag or both. Sometimes the cheapest way out is to get a "-Mart" rectangular bag for \$20 or so and use it as an "overbag" by putting the existing mummy bag inside it. Naturally, we want the best combination of light weight and thickness. Weight crushes the loft of the inside bag while the added loft of the outside bag is where the additional temperature range comes from. A too-heavy overbag could crush more loft away than it adds. Look for a bag that has nylon inside and out that will fit over your existing bag. The interior option involves buying, or sewing yourself, one or more polyester fleece liners for your existing bag. Jo-Ann Fabrics is known for their 50% off coupon for a single item deal. A Troop project of making fleece liners is a good use of those coupons. Buy one (or more if necessary) bolts of fleece and have a sewing party. While machines could be used, even by the boys with instruction and supervision, teaching them a basic blanket stitch, whip-stitch and running stitch would be an excellent addition to your survival training program. (Your Troop does have one of those, doesn't it?) Sometimes you can find zip up fleece liners ready made for less than \$10 (check cheaperhandirt.com). Surplus wool blankets can be used in place of the fleece but they will be heavier. A simple nylon shell which you can make to fit over your sleeping bag will add several degrees to its temperature range. (That same shell coupled with a fleece liner makes a great lightweight summer bag, by the way.)The combination of existing mummy bag, fleece liner(s) and

overbag, might be overkill for most winter trips but all might be needed for a sub-zero adventure. If the boy's existing bag is a rectangular bag, by all means go for the second bag but rig a makeshift hood from fleece (attached to a liner or not) to close off one of the bags to cut drafts and protect the head. Remember, the sleeper's head should not be covered by a rectangular bag. Their breath must be directly vented outside the bag or there will be too much moisture build-up in the bag. This may not cause a huge problem on a one-night trip but if two nights are involved (planned or unplanned) the bag will be damp the second night. Draping a wool shirt or sweater over the sleeping bag opening is a good way to breathe pre-warmed air. Depending on the type of underwear chosen, it may be necessary to change into a fresh (dry) set before going to bed. Clean, dry socks are mandatory. Oh, never dry boots/shoes by a fire, with or without your feet in them.

Also critically important is what is under the bags. Closed cell foam pads are the most economical choice. The "-Mart" stores have these for about \$10 each. The mail order/internet sources (surplus) may have products that meet these prices. A half inch of thickness is barely adequate. Three-quarters is better. The pads are not for comfort, they are for insulation from the cold, cold ground! Sleeping bag insulation compresses under body weight. The closed cell foam restores at least some of that insulation. Open cell foam (unless encased in an airtight wrapper (Thermarest ®) which are expensive beyond this budget article) must be too thick to be practical for transportation, 4"-5". Placing a reflective sheet under everything will keep you warmer too (or at least make you think you are warmer). Mylar isn't so good. The Adventure Medical Kits Heatsheets are a few dollars and are a good survival kit item too. (and you can refold them!)

Where to place this sleeping nest? Well, if the "nest" is warm enough and the night is clear with no snow, sleet or winter rain expected, the stars may be the best answer. It is an awesome experience. Place removed clothing between the sleeping bag and the pad, if dry, or in a nearby pack and settle in for the night. This may be a treat which will wait for a season or two of experience and be a right of passage for the older boys... Until then, tents will have to do. And if snow or sleet is expected, tents are in order...or tarps...or both! A-frame tents (e.g. Eureka Timberline ®) will be OK for typical Ohio winter snows, unless you are in the "lake effect" area or exceptional snowfall is expected. The steep slope of the fly will shed most snow and the pole structure will support the weight of some of it sticking. If 6" or more falls, the piles that slide off will not clear the tent and the occupants may have to do some periodic pushing to keep a comfortable place to sleep. Typical 2-pole dome tents will not tolerate even a few inches of snow. The easiest solution is to find a parent who has a Sam's Club card (if you don't) and go buy their heavy-duty plastic tarp 2-pack for about \$19. These tarps are 12x16, as I recall, and can be rigged A-frame fashion over two small closely pitched domes. The tarps do not have to touch the ground and they should have a rather steep slope when pitched. Rigging a ridgeline between two trees is the easiest method, unless there are no trees, in which case bring and secure poles or wait for the trees to grow. Here is a point I cannot stress enough. If you encounter freezing rain and you are camped in the woods, GET OUT! Even if that means getting everyone up in the middle of the night and moving camp. Ice buildup on trees brings even healthy branches in trees down – hard! Those falling branches can kill. Just as you would not be under the tallest trees in a thunderstorm or put your tent under a "widow maker," the woods in an ice storm is no place to be hiking or camping.

What about using just a tarp instead of the tent and tarp combination? I've done it many times. The tent will be a few degrees warmer and will offer a little better wind protection, but tarps can work. Again, the tarp is basically for snow and rain protection. Blowing snow will find its way under a tarp. Mosquito net will block most of it while still allowing some air to circulate. Building a partial snow wall, if snow is already available, can also divert the wind away from the opening(s) of your tarp. Piling some branches at the openings will disrupt the wind and keep the snow off the sleeper.

That brings up the possibility of snow shelters. Certainly, this is a skill that can and should be taught. Rarely in Ohio will we have enough snow for a proper snow cave. Building a quinzee may be an option. This is a pile of snow 10 or 12 feet in diameter and about 7 feet tall. Sticks about 18" long are then stuck into it all pointing toward the center. Allow it to settle and bond for perhaps an hour. Then hollow it out until the ends of the sticks are encountered. This will leave a somewhat uniform thickness of 18" all around. Leave a couple of elevated sleeping platforms inside and you have a cozy little shelter. Some concerns: With two people inside, there will be about a 15 degree temperature gain. If that takes the temperature above freezing, the inside will melt, making a miserable and dangerous arrangement. As a group project to experience how it is done, they are good. To make 10 of them for a Troop of 20 boys takes an awful lot of snow and a lot of time. Don't leave it up when you leave. Warming and refreezing and warming can weaken the structure until some unsuspecting person (or animal) is checking it out from the inside when it finally collapses. That might not be pretty!

Back to the tents and tarps and another question: How do you anchor them when the ground is frozen solid? With no snow, tying the corners off to logs (drag into position), rocks, trees or bushes are all possibilities. Here is an opportunity for some old fashioned Yankee ingenuity. If there is snow, tying off to crossed sticks buried in the snow is an old standby. Some folks drive spikes into the frozen ground but the chances of getting them back are not too great, at least until spring!

OK, enough on shelter concepts! What about water?

Here are the problems: Typically, no one drinks enough water in the winter, especially when camping and... water freezes. Three to four quarts is still the adult dose of water for each day. Small boys can get by with a little less. Most of them don't like to drink because they think the world will end if they have to pee. Tactfully tell them that it won't. Lack of proper hydration is a major contributor to hypothermia, so make sure they are drinking enough water. (And that you are too!) The best source of that water will be a frost free faucet in your campsite. If the camp you choose is not so equipped but there is a centrally located source not too far away, frequent trips to resupply may be advisable in very cold weather. If you have no choice but to bring it from home, use plastic jugs. Turn them upside down (make sure they don't leak before you bring them) and pack snow or (better) lots of leaves around them for insulation. (Can you figure out why they should be upside down?). Each boy should have at least one water bottle that does not leak. During the day it should be carried under an outer garment to keep it from freezing. It should be refilled as necessary. At night, warm to hot water can be placed in it and (if hot) wrapped in an extra garment or towel and put in the bottom the sleeping bag as a foot warmer. That also insures that each boy will have a quart of water available at breakfast time. [Note: check the internet for the reported dangers of Lexan bottles and hot water. Read...research...make your own choices and inform the parents to make theirs.] If you must melt snow for drinking water, first, try to find ice instead of snow.

It is much more efficient. If you have a little water left to put in the pan, things go much better. If all you have is ice or snow, start very slowly until you build up a layer of water on the bottom, otherwise you may damage the pot. The melted water must be boiled to be safe and even then do not use a source that might be chemically polluted.

To melt snow or cook food you will need fire. To keep warm, you need shelter. Think of fire as a source of warmth only in emergencies. On longer trips or in those emergencies, a large open fire will be necessary to dry clothing. Over time, ice will condense in your insulating layers, just from body moisture, if it is cold enough. Cooking can be done on an open fire. If your Troop is not used to cooking over a fire, this might not be the best time to learn. Then again, sometimes difficult conditions can be the best teacher. Just remember that before the heat of the fire can work its way through your insulation, the outer layers of your clothing may be hot enough to be damaged before you feel the warmth. This can be costly, in terms of damaged equipment and damaged bodies if the clothing catches fire. Even a cold-numbered hand can suffer tissue damage from a fire or a hot metal pot before the sensation of heat reaches the brain. Be very, very careful in your camp kitchen in winter. That having been said, working with fire in winter can be one of the most education experiences of the trip. Camp stoves present their own challenges. White gas (Coleman®) stoves present their own dangers and costs. Be thoroughly familiar with the BSA liquid fuel policy and follow it to the letter. It is there for good reasons and every one of those reasons has a tragic story behind it. There is one danger that is not usually discussed. During refueling (always by an adult or under very close adult supervision) never allow the liquid fuel to come in contact with the skin. If it is zero degrees, the fuel temperature will be zero. Water can only reach 32 degrees. Liquid fuel at low temperature will instantly freeze the flesh. Not good. Small propane canisters may also produce weak flames when things get down to zero territory. Butane stoves simply do not work in cold weather. Kerosene will work but they are a little hard to find. The budget minded winter camper will learn to cook on a campfire. And the best way to light those fires is with the Boy Scout hot spark and some absorbent cotton (perhaps from a pill bottle) coated with petroleum jelly. Store the pre-coated cotton in a film canister or small pill bottle with a screw on cap. Use just a bit of the cotton to catch the spark. It will burn long enough to catch twigs or fuzz sticks to get the fire going. If using a stove, put a bit of cotton on the burner, light it, and then turn on the fuel. A little more cotton can be used if the stoves generator has to be preheated. Butane lighters must be dry and relatively warm in order to work. There are other “spark-based” devices that produce bigger sparks for more money (best selection I’ve found is at [www.campingsurvival.com](http://www.campingsurvival.com)). By the way, for the BSA Hot Spark, test it before you leave the store. Of the dozens we’ve purchased for classes there have been several where the scraper was not hard enough to throw sparks. If you get one of those, ask for another one that works. (in a pinch, a knife can be used as a scraper, or glass or a hard rock)

And what to cook? Rule number one: make it fit in one pot. Rule number two: minimize preparation time, doing some at home if necessary. Rule number three: more fat than usual; more protein than usual (both for sustained heat production). Stews, soups, chili all are good. A simple cook pot will do for the stew. Each Scout will need a spoon and a bowl or large cup. Another cup of plastic or stainless steel will do for a warm drink (with no caffeine, please). Ok, there is a little caffeine in hot chocolate and that is a pretty popular cold weather drink. For variety, try hot Jell-o or cider with some cinnamon. For the stew or soup, it will help if the vegetables and meat are cut up at home rather than try to prepare from scratch in the field. If it is really cold, they will be frozen by Saturday dinner and difficult or impossible

to prep properly. For breakfast, it is hard to beat hot cereal; oatmeal, cream of wheat, cream of rice, or just cooked grains; they are all acceptable. Nothing is better to sweeten them than pure maple syrup, but that doesn't fit well with budget camping. Try some brown sugar as a poor substitute. Add butter to boost the fat intake. Cooking some dried fruit in the cereal helps too. It will probably be worth at least preparing hot drinks if not hot soup for lunch. Toasting frozen bagels over a small fire can be an adventure in itself. Thawing peanut butter is not a lot of fun either. But trail mix of peanuts, raisins and M&M's can add a good mix of nutrients and calories to the noon break. Cheese and beef sticks are good energy sources if you ignore their health issues. Beef jerky (venison jerky if you have access to it and know it has been dried at at least 140 degrees) is good too.

Now for a few thoughts on cutting tools. Axes and frozen wood are a dangerous combination. Split wood does burn considerably better than wood in the round but it may not be worth the risk. Plan ahead to see what is available where you will be camping and plan accordingly. If you do have permission to gather and cut, a saw is much more efficient and safer than a swinging axe. The contact method of splitting wrist size wood will produce fuel for a cooking fire. Most of the official Boy Scout pocket knives are an absolute nuisance in the winter. The typical pocket knife requires that mittens be removed to open it. Larger lock blades with enough of the blade exposed so that it can be grasped with a mittened hand will work. By far the most practical and useful knife for winter (and most other uses too) is a small sheath knife. The best bets for the money are generally called Mora knives. They are made in Mora Sweden by a number of companies. Made with a good grade of carbon steel or stainless steel, they hold a keen edge, are easily sharpened (the sharpening method is much different than our knives – the entire bevel must be sharpened) and they are inexpensive. In fact, to buy just one, the shipping charge will be about half the cost of the knife or more! Of course, there are the “issues” with fixed blade knives, much of which is myth. BSA does permit fixed blade knives. The Guide to Safe Scouting discourages “large sheath knives” but goes on to say that we have a responsibility to teach the safe use and storage of all legal knives. Used as a tool, a sheath knife in Ohio is no more illegal than a pocket knife. I cannot speak for all local ordinances. Districts in our council are encouraged to disallow fixed blade knives at camporees (how many paring knives and boning knives are in patrol kitchens at the camporees in violation of that rule?) but otherwise they are permitted at our council camps, other than outside the troop site at summer camp. Other councils may have chosen to ignore National's policy on this. Too bad. A really safe and useful way (given a properly rugged pouch sheath) to wear these Mora knives is as a neck knife. The knife is inside the outer layer until needed. When being used, the sheath is moved outside, the knife is withdrawn and used. If it is out of use, even for a few moments it is easily and quickly returned to the sheath. A pocket knife must either be folded and reopened (with some difficulty with mitts) or it is going to be laid down which is the wrong thing to do. Even with a belt sheath the tendency for a brief period of non use is to lay it down, then into the snow it goes. Mors Kochanski has a great video on knife, saw and axe use in winter available from [www.hollowtop.com](http://www.hollowtop.com) or [www.karamat.com](http://www.karamat.com). By the way, his booklets, available from the same sources, have more down to earth information on winter camping in the far north than anything I've ever read. And you will be amazed by what he can do with a Mora knife. The knives are available from Ragnar's [www.ragweedforge.com](http://www.ragweedforge.com) or [www.lifeviewoutdoors.com](http://www.lifeviewoutdoors.com) or Smokey Mountain Knife Works [www.eknifeworks.com](http://www.eknifeworks.com). Smokey may be a little less expensive (watch the shipping, though) but Ragnar's has a much wider selection. For economy, you can't beat Eriksson's or Frosts (not Frost a Tennessee company...and it has been pointed out that some of the Frosts knives have the name Erik Frost on the blade) \$10 or \$12 bucks plus shipping

may just get you all the knife you will ever need in the kitchen or in the woods. Recently, River's Edge Cutlery, located off Trueman Blvd at I270 and Fishinger Rd, has started carrying some Frosts and Eriksson knives at competitive prices. I've just (01/07) learned that Frosts and Erikssons are merging as Mora of Sweden. You will find knives under all 3 names for awhile.

What to do on these winter adventures? Try some basic Scout skills. Knot tying relays with gloves or mitts can be an adventure. Snow opens up all kinds of tracking exercises. Don't be satisfied with learning what animal made the track, figure out what it was doing, where was it coming from and going to, how did it interact with other animals and its environment...the list is endless. Race snow snakes! (that is for real, by the way!) Have fire building contests. Bake corn bread. Hike. Identify trees by their bark. Look for birds nests and figure out who made them. Look for all other evidence of animals (hair, poop, dens, trails, slides, runs, lays, (but now we are back into tracking, aren't we?) Stay active, stay aware, stay hydrated and, as Kochanski says, "Stay comfortably cool or cold when exercising and comfortably warm when at rest."  
Go do it!

"Walking Crow"

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addendum: [www.lifeviewoutdoors.com](http://www.lifeviewoutdoors.com) is an excellent source for Adventure Medical Kit's "Heatsheets". These should be part of everyone's "survival" kit and are very useful in retaining radiant body heat in a number of situations. Be careful, though, of condensation.