

Green Gift Guide for Snowshoers

by Debbie McKeown

As we all become more environmentally aware, the holiday gift-giving season takes on new challenges. For the past few years, I have been more conscious of giving gifts that are organic, secondhand, made from recycled materials, don't contain dangerous chemicals, give back to local communities ... and the list goes on. When I was asked to write an article suggesting holiday gifts for snowshoers, it made sense to highlight products that have a sustainability focus. After all, as snowshoers, our sport depends on the natural environment. It wouldn't be much fun snowshoeing without it.

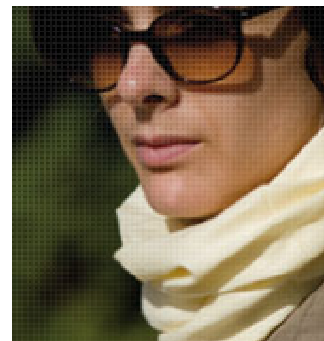
The biggest thing I learned when compiling this list is that selecting a green gift is not as straightforward as it seems. In fact, it sometimes gets downright complicated and subjective. While some of the choices are obvious, like buying a national park pass, others are less so. A company may not use materials that are outstanding for their sustainability features, yet it creates a product that has great longevity and won't end up in a landfill in the near future. Or, another company might partner with several environmental non-profit groups.

So, as you peruse the "Green Gifts" I've listed below, you decide. Being environmentally responsible means looking at the options, generating discussion and making educated choices. Happy Holiday Shopping.

Merino Wool Buff

My first Buff-encounter was on a trip to Africa where every day I watched a woman manipulate her Buff into a hat, headband, dust screen, neck gaiter or balaclava. A lightweight tube of stretchy fabric, Buff indeed fits its product description of multifunctional headwear. New for the 09/10 season, Buff is now available in merino wool, which is 100% natural and 100% renewable. Snowshoers can stay warm, dry and comfortable while creating their own impromptu fashion statements.

www.buff.es



Osprey Kode 30 Backpack

Described as a "snowplay pack", the Osprey Kode 30 is a snowshoer's dream come true. This sport-specific daypack is loaded with features, but a few of my favourites are separate





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www.tubbssnowshoes.com

divisions for wet and dry gear, a micro-fleece goggle pocket and the handy hipbelt pockets (why don't all packs have that!). My snowshoes strap easily onto the outside of the pack for those days when conditions vary and I need to hike to the snow. Osprey endeavours to be an outdoor industry leader in sustainability, environmental and social concerns. The Kode 30 and all Osprey packs are virtually bulletproof. They are built to be long-lasting and durable. In addition, Osprey boasts a long list of partnerships with organizations that work to lessen impact on the natural environment.

www.ospreypacks.com

Nikwax products

Nikwax makes a variety of environmentally-friendly cleaning and waterproofing products to increase the longevity and performance of outdoor apparel. I have been using the Tech Wash for years on my Gore-Tex jacket and am amazed that it continues to be both waterproof and breathable. It won't be ending up in a landfill site anytime soon. I recently tried the Wool Wash on my merino wool base layers and the result was enhanced softness and wicking. All Nikwax products are water-based and free of fluorochemicals. Perhaps a slightly unconventional gift idea, but one that produces significant environmental benefits.



www.nikwax.com

MEC Midweight Long Johns and Zip-T

For high intensity cold weather activities, it's hard to beat this base layer from Canadian retail co-operative Mountain Equipment Co-Op. MEC's Midweight Long Johns and Zip-T deliver superior wicking, comfort and warmth with a fabric that is 91% recycled and heavy metal-free polyester. Snowshoers will enjoy the zip neck for temperature control and the snug yet unrestrictive fit. Mountain Equipment Co-Op's mission states that their products "are built with purpose, people and the planet in mind." They do indeed set high standards as they address product sustainability, ethical sourcing, greening their operations and partnering with conservation and outdoor community groups.



www.mec.ca

Rocky Mountain Soap Company Hand and Foot Butters

Rocky Mountain Soap Company is super-diligent about using only 100% natural ingredients in all of their products. After a day in the snow, combat tired feet and dry winter skin with chemical-free hand and foot butters. They smell great, make excellent stocking stuffers and are good for you and the planet.

www.rockymountainsoap.com



Mountain Hardwear Nitrous Hooded Jacket

This superlight, 800-fill down jacket is constructed from Mountain Hardwear's EcoSensor Ripstop, a virgin and recycled polyester blend. Pack it in its own stuff sack and toss in a backpack for lunch stops or when conditions get chilly. The insulated hood provides a close fit for additional warmth, and the length is sufficient to prevent drafts from chilling the core area.

www.mountainhardwear.com



Ruffwear Climate Changer Fleece Jacket

Don't forget your four-legged companion this holiday season. Ruffwear's mission statement is "to build innovative gear for Dogs on the Go." Their Climate Changer Fleece Jacket is perfect for dogs that like to come along on cold, clear snowshoe hikes. And, considering this fleece dog jacket contains 87% recycled content, it's a great way to keep your best friend warm and comfortable AND be kind to the planet.

www.ruffwear.com



Clif Bars

Clif Bars taste great and will help power your favourite snowshoer up those steep inclines. This company has a long history of creating organic products and supporting numerous environmental causes. Bars come in several different flavours and varieties, but the two I'm hoping to find in my stocking are Blueberry Crisp and Crunchy Peanut Butter.

www.clifbar.com



Buy a park pass or make a donation

Our national, provincial, state and local parks are treasures that deserve to be protected. They need our support. Make a donation in the name of your favourite snowshoer. Or, give a park pass. What could be a better gift than a year or a lifetime of snowshoeing in the most pristine and beautiful spots on the continent?



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