

Frequently Asked Questions:

What should I bring?

1+ liter water bottle or hydration pack, ski helmet, sunglasses AND ski goggles, snacks, sunscreen, a camera, and enthusiasm for the outdoors! We provide the backcountry ski/safety gear, a boxed lunch, and knowledgeable guide.

What should I wear?

Backcountry skiing requires physical effort similar to jogging during skinning, and similar to resort skiing on the downhill. Warm waterproof glove/mittens and dressing in layers are key. Start with a wicking base layer, add a puffy coat and waterproof/windproof shell. Carry an extra thermal layer in case of changes in weather. Check the weather forecast beforehand and pack appropriately! It's always better to bring extra gear and leave it in the car than to leave it at home. Weather in the mountains can be very unpredictable, so err on the side of having a little extra than not enough.

Do I have to be a great skier?

No. You should have some experience skiing at resorts before this backcountry tour. If you are able to ski intermediate/blue runs at the resort, we will be skiing terrain you can handle.

Can I bring my own ski gear?

Yes! If you have your own A/T, tele, or splitboard setup, our guides will show you how to best use your gear. Keep in mind that backcountry gear is not as interchangeable as resort gear, so if you plan to use your own gear, you should have everything professionally set up and checked by a reputable ski shop prior to this tour.

What about splitboards?

Currently we do not offer rental gear for splitboards, but if you bring your own gear (skins, board, boots) and know how to use it, we will teach you the fundamentals of backcountry travel. Please join us!

What's covered in this program class?

We will begin by getting everyone fit and set up with their rental gear and go over basic safety checks. Next we will spend approximately 30-45 minutes covering some of the fundamentals of safe and responsible backcountry travel. [Topics will include avalanche awareness, terrain management, backcountry practices, group decision making, and beacon/shovel/probe use.] The bulk of our day will be spent outdoors on the snow! We have a variety of terrain to choose from and will make those decisions based on group consensus and snow conditions.

What about avalanches?

This is an introductory program and we will not be traveling into any avalanche prone terrain. However, we will discuss the basics of avalanche awareness, terrain management, safe backcountry travel practices, group decision making, and risk mitigation in the backcountry. Our tour will be a perfect opportunity to make observations and answer questions about those topics.

Is this an AVY 1 course?

NO. Consider this as a prerequisite to a certified AVY 1 course. If you don't have much experience in the backcountry but want to take AVY 1, this program is designed to help you arrive there as a much more educated and informed student. You will learn significantly more from AVY 1 if you take this class first because you will be familiar with the

fundamentals that AVY 1 builds upon. We will provide suggested resources for further education and training.

What are the guides like?

Your program will be led by an experienced, knowledgeable and enthusiastic backcountry skier. Our guides have spent a lot of time in the backcountry and want to share their passion, safety awareness, and experience with others. We approach backcountry travel as a perfect example of the YMCA's mission of "Mind, Body, Spirit" and are eager to share that with you!

For additional questions, please contact Elliott Leslie (guide and program leader) at 303-545-0060 or snordiccenter@ymcarockies.org