

# The great outdoors

It's time to get outside and banish ideas of hibernation – the snow is actually a playground for fitness fanatics

**D**o you think winter is prime time for a Netflix addiction? Or maybe the cold weather is turning your local gym into your new best friend? Well don't forget that the snow, ice and cooler weather provide the perfect backdrop for a number of activities that can't always be enjoyed at any other time of the year. Not only is exercising al fresco better for you, but there is also a lot of fun to be had – which is why Team WF are making the most of it. So what activities are at the top of our winter to-do list this year?

## CROSS-COUNTRY RUNNING £

To mix up your running routine, how about hitting the trails with cross-country running? 'If you fancy a change or you're a fair-weather skier, then grab your trail running shoes and hit the cross-country skiing paths,' suggests Mark Healy, CEO of Mark Healy Fitness Management, a specialist health and fitness company. 'Safely marked out with manicured snow, this undulating course will work your cardiovascular system hard.' Not only does the glittering scenery make a wonderful change to your usual road running, cross-country running is also available to anyone at any time, with kit getting as (un)fancy as a good pair of trail shoes. The trick to nailing it? Don't burn yourself out. 'You need to start slow and continue slow as your lungs and the rest of your body acclimatise to the temperature and altitude,' advises Mark.

## TRAIL BLAZING

With lightweight cushioning, flexibility and protection, these Vazee Summit Trail running shoes from New Balance will make the perfect cross country running companion.

● £90,  
newbalance.co.uk

## SNOWBOARDING £££

If you haven't been skiing or snowboarding yet, the feeling is hard to describe, but the benefits are obvious, both physically and mentally. 'There's no better feeling than living and training in the mountains surrounded by totally blue skies and sunshine along with that excitability of being on top of the world, shredding the piste and throwing tricks in the snow park with your team mates,' says pro GB Snowboarder and Bio-Synergy ambassador Gary Bartlett. And even if you're not in the mountains, there are plenty of ways to pretend you are. 'Getting involved is simple: visit your local dry or indoor slope for lessons and all your equipment needs can be available for hire,' Gary continues.

## GROOVY GOGGLES

These Nike Transition goggles are techy enough to keep us safe on the snow and cool enough to complete our chic snowboarder look.

● £249.90, transitions.com/en-gb



## SNOW-SHOEING ££

A popular pastime in the Alps, snow-shoeing offers the perfect time out from the piste. All you need for this day of adventure is a pair of snow-shoes, which can be easily hired from ski shops. These are then attached to your walking boots, providing spikes and grips to support you on the snow. Pack a picnic and a hot drink and spend an active day in the Alpine air exploring the mountains at your own pace.

### NEW SHOES

**Snow-shoe hire can get pricey if you're planning on doing it regularly, so invest in your own pair with these Inuit 450s from Quechua.**

● £49.99, Decathlon



## SKIING £££

Great for beginners and the super-fit alike, everyone will love the body and mind benefits of zipping down hills in the great outdoors. Fresh mountain air and the winter sun combined with a lack of phone signal make the mountains a wonderful place to switch off, but it's also the epitome of working out without realising – burning as many as 400 calories an hour. 'Skiing uses loads of major muscle groups in unison while challenging and improving your balance, flexibility and coordination,' explains Harriet Coton from Faction Skis. 'You are in a constant, dynamic squat position, rising and falling as you turn and using your leg muscles to bend the ski and press it into the snow. This gives your thighs and bum a comprehensive workout, and works your core as you keep your stability on an uneven surface, sometimes at considerable speed.'

### HEATING UP

**When thermals look this good, you'll hardly want to wear anything else. We love this Scandi Ski Seamless LS Top from Sweaty Betty.**

● £80, Sweaty Betty



## ICE-SKATING ££

With a host of rinks cropping up in the coolest of locations – particularly around Christmastime – here's a winter activity you can try without hopping on a plane to the mountains. And while you may associate the pastime with messing about with your mates when you were 12, ice-skating actually boasts a whole score of benefits. 'Ice-skating predominantly targets your lower body and core, engaging both as you try to manoeuvre gracefully around the rink,' says Mark. 'Balance is constantly tested as you change direction or avoid others so you can't help but use your core as well as your adductors (inside leg) and abductors (outside leg).' But the physical benefits don't stop there. Who knew ice-skating was also a great bum workout? 'You will also be blasting all three of your glutes (maximus, medius and minimus) which can never be a bad thing,' says Mark.



### GLOVE LOVE

**Avoid injury if you fall with these cute Avalanche Gloves from Madison.**

● £29.99, madison.cc

## CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING £££

Looking for a real cardio fix? Cross-country skiing is seriously tough-going, but the panoramic scenery is sure to spur you on. 'Cross-country skiing is one of the most intensive cardio exercises available, and even more so if you haven't mastered the correct technique!' says Mark. 'It's great for the lower body, with the hip flexors, adductors and abductors working overtime with your quads and bum. It also blasts all of the upper body with your arms and shoulders becoming an important asset at the smallest of inclines.'

### WARM UP

**A day out in the mountains calls for warming sustenance. Stash a restorative drink in this Corkcicle Canteen and keep it hot for up to 12 hours.**

● £17.99, roof7.com



## NORDIC WALKING £

Nordic walking is a popular practice in Scandi countries, where they experience some of the coldest, longest winters in the world. Labelled 'a total body version of walking', the activity involves walking with specially designed walking poles similar to the ones you'd find skiing. 'Nordic walking is a great exercise for all ages and abilities that can be performed at any time, in any place and in most conditions,' explains Mark. 'When performed correctly, this works the heart and lungs as well as the shoulders, as you raise the arms forward to initiate the drive with the poles. Using your legs to drive yourself forward with a slightly longer stride also helps to elongate any tight muscle fibres.' With such vast health benefits, you may be fooled into thinking it's an activity reserved only for the super-fit, but this is not the case. 'Having the use of two lightweight poles is also good for confidence for those recovering from an injury or just for balance on uneven terrain,' continues Mark.



### POLE IN ONE

**Take your hiking to the next level with the Nordic Walker Trainer poles from Exel.**

● £84.95, exelpoles.co.uk

## ICE CLIMBING £££

Not for the faint-hearted, ice climbing is a great – if gruelling – full-body workout. 'Body strength, flexibility, control and precision – all these are being put to the test under extreme conditions,' says Mark. 'All limbs and associated muscle groups are working hard from the moment you start. However, after the unusual positioning of the legs as you reach for the next step, or arms and shoulders as you try to drive the axe into the solid ice, you may end up questioning your current training and flexibility programme!'



### BEST BAG

**This demanding sport requires a lot of kit, so keep everything safe in this Upslope 20L rucksack from Thule.**

● £110, thule.com

