



THE WEATHER...

Bar Harbor winters are typical of those elsewhere in the northeastern United States--in general, extremely cold! When the strong winds of the ocean combine with low temperatures it becomes harder to keep warm. For example, if the temperature is 20°F (-7°C) but the wind is blowing at a speed of 35 mph (56 kph), then the wind-chill temperature is -20°F (-29°C). The snow also makes winter uncomfortable. There are usually one or two days each winter when brisk winds combine with very low temperatures to produce potentially dangerous conditions. Very occasionally COA will even close, due to the weather. Usually because of black ice.

1. Make a habit of checking on weather forecasts on TV, radio, or computer so that you will be able to dress appropriately each morning.
2. On days that are bitter cold, limit the length of time that you are exposed to the cold. When you are out in very cold temperatures **BE AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL FOR FROSTBITE** which is an injury to the body caused by freezing. Most often, frostbite affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes, and can permanently damage the body
3. Black ice, sleet, freezing rain, dry air, slush, etc.

THE TERRAIN...

You will be doing a lot of walking while at COA. The winter snow and ice, combined with the hilly terrain make it very difficult to walk, so a good pair of boots is essential.

Leave plenty of extra time to get your destination. Whether by foot, bicycle, or car, colder weather and snow/ice can substantially increase travel times. You don't want to be late for classes!

HOW TO KEEP WARM...

1. Layering is warmth: Wear many layers of loose clothing, as this ensures that there are pockets of air between the clothing layers that insulate your body from the cold. For the upper body, a long sleeved shirt worn over an undershirt and topped with a sweater and coat is best. For the lower body, a pair of long underwear underneath a pair of pants will keep you warm. Underwear made from silk is very comfortable, and polypropylene is good for outdoor sports, although both of these materials tend to be expensive. Pants need to be loose-fitting--remember that the idea is to keep warm air close to your body. Tight

fitting pants and jeans do not help to keep you warm.

2. Keep your head covered: Wearing a hat is very important for keeping warm. A wool hat is a necessity; if you really feel the cold buy a sheepskin hat--this will give you full protection against the icy winds that blow across campus. Do at least wear a pair of earmuffs to protect your ears.
3. Close “gaps”: neck and wrist openings are potential sites for heat loss. Wearing a scarf around your neck and long gloves or mittens can help you close these gaps.
4. Ventilate to cut down on perspiration: Because you will be exerting a lot of energy walking all over campus, you are likely to perspire and overheat. If you do become overheated, periodically loosen, remove or open your outerwear. Remove your hat first and then loosen the neck opening for a short period of time.
5. Make use of your body heat: Wear mittens instead of gloves. Since mittens expose a smaller surface area to the cold, your fingers will stay warmer with mittens.

Dressing in removable layers which you can take off or put back on as you need will help you to cope with the temperature differences you may encounter in entering and leaving campus buildings, which are often overheated.



WHAT TO BUY...

Your comfort depends on the quality of your clothing. All clothing is required to have a label which describes clothing fiber content and clothing care, so you can always find out exactly what you are buying.

Down jackets and full-length down coats are warmest, and since most of them already have a nylon outer shell, they provide the best protection against the wind. Even though down garments are costly, they are a good investment. Wool is the next best insulator and, although not effective against the wind, it is warm even when wet. Leather is very effective against the wind, but it is a poor insulator and inadequate for Bar Harbor’s winters.

You may be tempted to buy cotton and acrylic sweaters, since they tend to be cheaper than wool. Cotton and acrylic have less insulating value, so these will not keep you as warm. It’s often worth paying a little more for a good wool sweater.

Your feet will become wet and cold if you do not wear good foot protection. It's best to buy hiking-type boots with insulated lining and thick rubber soles with lots of tread (thick rubber grip on the bottom). These will keep your feet warm and will make walking on the ice easier, but they will not keep your feet dry unless you waterproof them yourself with silicon spray or buy snow boots which come weatherproofed. You can buy silicon spray at the shoe store when you buy your boots. Vinyl boots are waterproof but will not keep your feet as warm. Avoid wearing boots that have high heels or smooth soles. For safer walking on the snow and ice, wear boots with lower heels and treaded soles. If you're not sure what to buy, ask a friend who has been here for at least one winter season.

BUYING OUTERWEAR...

Clothing in Bar Harbor tends to be expensive, but there are some places where you can buy good-quality clothing fairly inexpensively. You may want to try Reny's, Goodwill, Walmart, Mardens, etc. There is also always the free box. If you are in trouble and caught in cold weather with no proper clothing, come by my office and we can sort something out for you as I keep some coats and other cold weather gear for international students.

The best time to shop is during a sale. Some stores have pre-season winter clothing sales in October, and most have sales right after Christmas. Don't think that this will be too late--January and February can be Bar Harbor's coldest months!

HOW IT MAKES YOU FEEL...

It will get dark. Being so far north-east, the sun can sometimes set around 3:30 in the dead of winter! This means not a lot of daylight and a lot of time spent in the darkness. It is sometimes difficult to get outside, especially if you are not used to winter sports/activities. This all lends itself to Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.), which can show itself in cabin fever (feeling squirrely! Really need to stop being cooped up inside!), or a type of seasonal depression, which is the most common and affects a lot of people, including those who have experienced long winters their whole life. Most of this is due to the lack of movement, as well as lack of light and vitamin D that we normally receive from the sunlight. Seasonal depression can show itself in various ways: lack of interest in things you used to enjoy, not wanting to wake up, always feeling tired, dropping grades, difficulty concentrating, not wanting to be in company, etc.

One solution is getting outside. Even though it can be quite cold, there are many things to do outside at COA in the winter! Build a snowman, go sledding, make a snow angel, go cross-country skiing, go snowshoeing, go ice-skating, have a snowball fight, take a walk in the woods, go ice-fishing, winter camping, etc. Lots of outdoor gear for these things can be rented easily from the gear shed for no cost.

Another possible solution is to use a "Happy Light", or winter light, that simulates sunlight (no harmful rays though), that allow your body to stop producing so much melatonin (sleep hormone the body produces when it is dark and makes you tired) and allows you to combat S.A.D. This

has been proven to be very helpful if used no more than 20 minutes a day. The library owns two of these, and winter term fireside Fridays has a happy lamp setup for use by anyone interested each Friday in winter term.

Another helpful solution is to make sure you are eating well. As it is cold and dark outside, we naturally want to eat heavier, thicker, foods. These can be nice, but when we have too much, they can keep you from feeling good and healthy and make you bloated. It is smart to always remember fruits and vegetables with the meals, even when it is cold out and they aren't as appealing as the chicken pot pie!

