

Winter Wardrobe for Photography

Winter is a wonderful time for photographers to be outdoors as it provides different photo opportunities. Here is a list of suggestions for how to dress in cold weather. Most of these items can be purchased at Costco for a nominal cost, as well as outdoor and specialty shops. As photographers, we must often stand around, waiting for the right moment to capture an image. When you are standing still, you create less blood flow and you are bound to get colder. It *is* possible to stay warm and still enjoy being outdoors to photograph wonderful winter scenes.

Following is a list of suggestions and ways to stay warm and comfortable this winter.

1. **Wear an under-layer.** A basic way to stay warmer is to dress in layers. A long sleeve top and long underwear/leggings in a light weight, thin Merino wool blend (generally, it is non-itchy <\$20 at Costco) or other insulating material, is a great way to start your layers. An advantage with some of these tops is that if you get too hot indoors, they can be worn on their own, as can the women's leggings (not so much with the men's though). If it is especially cold and you will be outdoors for long periods of time, consider purchasing two sets of these layers – one in your size and another in a larger size that can be worn as a second under-layer. Avoid cotton, as it can actually pull heat away from your body.
2. **Wear a heat-retaining layer.** Look for clothing made out of materials that are very insulating. Fleece is a light weight inexpensive material (Old Navy usually has fleece tops with a short zipper that can become a turtleneck for under \$25). If you can tolerate wool, wear it as it is one of the best insulating materials. New in terms of layering, are some very thin down filled vests and jackets that can fit under a coat.
3. **Outer Clothing - Wear a wind and waterproof coat.** Features to look for in a coat:
 - Longer (nearly knee length) as opposed to a coat that comes to the waist
 - A hood
 - Cuffs that close around the wrists
 - Pockets to place hands into
 - A drawstring at the waist
 - Coat should be large enough to accommodate layers as suggested above
4. **Protect your extremities.** It is super important to cover these areas to stay warm. Wear a hat that covers your ears. Invest in a balaclava as a base layer underneath a hat or hood (<\$10 @ Costco). Expose as little skin as possible in very cold weather. Frostbite can happen in a very short time.

Keeping your hands warm is the biggest challenge especially if you have to take your gloves off to shoot and set up your camera on a tripod. There are several things you can do to keep your hands warm while shooting. If you need your fingers to operate the camera controls, you can purchase a pair of gloves that allow you to remove the fingertips or better yet, buy a waterproof mitten/glove set (Roots brand @ Costco <\$25).

These consist of gloves that fit into mittens so you can remove the mitts to better handle your camera controls while still wearing the gloves. Heat Packs are also a good thing to have around to generate extra warmth. A chemical reaction is triggered when they are shaken and are effective at maintaining a temperature of about 50°C for up to 10 hours. You can place them in your mittens/gloves, boots, and pockets. They can also be wrapped around your batteries to help them last longer in cold weather.

Invest in thick wool socks or thermal socks and good waterproof boots (higher than ankle length if you will be walking through snow) to keep your feet warm and dry. You can layer your socks as well, by putting a thin pair of socks underneath your wool socks for extra warmth.

Snow pants are an essential cold weather item. They will keep your legs warm and dry. If you will be outdoors for a short time and do not want to wear snow pants you should still wear long underwear/leggings under your pants. Consider wearing lined pants, the kind with extra pockets which come in handy for keeping your batteries closer to your body and thus warmer than in a camera bag.

5. **Wear loose fitting clothes.** There is a reason the Inuit wear big coats and loose pants. Loose fitting clothes create a protective layer of warm air between your skin and the environment. Tight fitting clothes do not keep you warm or comfortable.
6. **Cover your tripod legs.** Holding or carrying a tripod with cold metal legs will quickly draw the heat from your hands. It is a good idea to cover your tripod legs with pipe insulation available at most hardware stores or you can purchase deluxe tripod leg covers at camera stores.
7. **Move around to create heat.** If your clothes themselves can't keep you warm, move around to generate heat.

Finally, know when to go inside.