



BEAT THE WINTER BLAHS with Snowshoeing in Leeds-Grenville

By Lorraine Payette

There is nothing prettier than a fresh fall of snow under a cloudless sunny sky. It beckons you to come out and play, to indulge in that clean landscape and just do something for the sheer joy of it.

At one time, snowshoes were almost a pre-requisite for living in Canada and getting around in the winter. By studying wildlife like the snowshoe hare, people quickly realized that by making shoes that were three times bigger than the bottoms of their feet, it was like making themselves lighter. They could now float up on the snow instead of sinking down into it, and the snowshoe was born. Wherever snow gets extremely deep, snowshoes make it possible to continue going about your daily business. Although some people still use them for that, most simply enjoy the chance to get out and enjoy some good old-fashioned fun.

The only equipment required for a day of snowshoeing is a pair of snowshoes. These

can be augmented with poles, but they really aren't required. The learning curve is almost non-existent, as all the activity needs, is the ability to walk. It is a little like playing "giant steps" when we were kids – you just need to make sure you don't step on yourself and you're off and doing.

The style of snowshoe is entirely up to the individual. Whether you go for the old-fashioned wood-and-rawhide Hurons or Ojibwes, or move into the modern aluminum models, having fun is the most important element.

If you don't own snowshoes, and don't know if you want to make the investment, some of the trails will rent you a pair. If you decide to buy, most outdoor stores carry them in various styles and sizes, depending on your needs, or you can shop on-line. If you don't know exactly what you want, check with the staff. Trained people can help you find the right product to maximize the fun on your trek.

Guided tour in Thousand Islands National Park

Before going out, make sure that snowshoeing is allowed on the trail you are considering. Sometimes trails are restricted, and it's always best to check before going, and make sure you bring a buddy. Even with ideal conditions, a bad fall could leave you in a dangerous spot. A few minutes of practice in your own backyard will prepare you for going out on any of the public trails in Leeds-Grenville.

For the snowshoe enthusiast, there are plenty of great places to visit. Whether a beginner or expert in the sport, this is an adventure worth trying. Anyone can give it a try – there is no age limit to this great outdoor activity.

THERE ARE GREAT TRAILS TO EXPLORE AT

Hemlock Ridge Trail (Brockville: 2 km),
Mac Johnson Wildlife Area (Brockville: 5 km),
Westport-Rideau Trail (Chaffeys Locks: 28.9 km),
Lion's Loop (Gananoque: 4.3 km),
River Loop Trail (Gananoque: 7.5 km),
Roger's Loop (Gananoque: 4.9 km),
Management Trail (Kemptonville: 2.3 km),
Marlborough Forest – Rideau Trail (Merrickville: 26.9 km),
Opinicon Loop - Rideau Trail (Perth: 23 km),
Portland Bay Trail (Portland)
and **Mill Pond Trails** (Tichborne – 6 km).

You can also contact the Thousand Islands National Park. There are beautiful trails throughout the area that are well worth taking the time to discover and explore. **LH**

For more information on trails in Leeds-Grenville, please go to www.ontariotrails.on.ca