



High Altitude Tips



Welcome to Mammoth Lakes

Mammoth offers many recreational opportunities from downhill skiing and snowboarding to mountain biking, rock climbing, and horseback riding—all in the majestic high mountains of the Eastern Sierra.

The center of town is approximately 7,500 feet above sea level, and the elevation at the base of Mammoth Mountain near the Main Lodge is 9,000 feet. Visitors may experience some minor side effects due to Mammoth's high elevation.

Altitude Adjustment

Here are a few tips and suggestions for staying healthy and enjoying your stay in the mountains:

When you first arrive, acclimatize yourself for a period of time prior to beginning strenuous activities. At high elevations, the atmosphere is thinner and there is less oxygen and less humidity available to you than at sea level. This can result in a number of symptoms such as muscle fatigue, insomnia, mild headaches or slight shortness of breath.

Avoid sunburn

Our thin atmosphere filters out only a minimum of the sun's ultraviolet ("UV") rays and can result in severe sunburn. So be sure to take adequate precautions to protect your eyes and skin.

UV exposure has been linked to an increased incidence of skin cancer, use a sun block lotion with an SPF of 30 or greater. During high-exposure activities such as spring skiing, those with fair skin may experience a sunburn after only two hours of sun exposure, even after applying maximum sunscreen protection.

Parents should be especially careful with young children, and apply a generous amount of sunscreen prior to any outdoor activities. Be sure to reapply at least every four hours. If you're perspiring or getting wet from the snow or water, apply it more frequently.



Keep warm

There's an old saying here in Mammoth: "If you don't like the weather, wait ten minutes . . . It's sure to change." At this elevation, the weather can change quickly. Winter or summer prolonged exposure to the elements can cause serious problems. Children are not always aware that they are becoming too cold. Parents should watch for red noses and red ears. If this occurs, bring the child in from the cold,

remove wet clothes and warm the child and affected areas immediately. Moderation is a must. Take frequent breaks from the cold or heat.

It is wise to layer your clothes, no matter what the season. A t-shirt, wool sweater, nylon windbreaker with hood and a bottle of water are basics for just about any summer activity. Winter sports enthusiasts should wear warm, water-resistant clothing and goggles or sunglasses with adequate UV protection. Local sporting goods stores carry outdoor wear which is both wind and water resistant, an ideal choice for unpredictable mountain weather.

Eat lightly and drink plenty of liquids

You may tend to become dehydrated more quickly at high altitude than at sea level, so drink plenty of water and other fluids (8-10 glasses daily). You should also avoid drinking alcoholic beverages for the first 24 hours of your stay.

Protect your eyes from snow-blindness

It is also important to use proper UV protection for your eyes. The surface of the snow or water can act as a reflector of UV rays and can generate a great deal of UV exposure to the eyes. Equip yourself and your children with UV sunglasses or goggles. Failure to wear proper eye protection can result in an actual burn of the eye's surface— a painful condition requiring medical treatment.

Listen to your body

If you experience symptoms such as headache, insomnia and/or fatigue, you may have a mild form of "altitude sickness." These symptoms are a warning to decrease your activity level. If symptoms persist or begin to worry you, don't hesitate to come to the emergency department or Sierra Park Family Medicine Clinic.

What to Know

Know your ability level

Moderate your level of activity to your physical condition. Skiing, snowboarding, hiking and mountain biking require muscular strength and flexibility for control. The more control you have, the safer you will be.

If you are an inexperienced skier or first time snowboarder, take a lesson. It doesn't cost much and could make the difference between an enjoyable day on the slopes and an unexpected trip to the Emergency Department.

Hikers, mountain bikers and backpackers should stop by the Mammoth Visitor Center and Ranger Station for trail maps, permits and other information.

Know your equipment

Prior to any activity, have all of your equipment checked. Be sure everything is compatible and is properly adjusted for your ability, height and weight to fit properly. This applies to skis, bikes, backpacks, and climbing equipment.

Elements of risk are involved in any sport; using the proper safety equipment such as pads, wrist guards, helmets, etc., can help reduce the risks.

Know the slopes

Take time to learn your way around the ski slopes. Review the trail maps. Be aware of the ski slope rating system. A black diamond run at one ski resort may have a different degree of difficulty than at another ski area. Review the trail maps thoroughly prior to making your first run. For your convenience, the ski area provides "SKI HOSTS" who can provide information on the degree of difficulty of the ski runs.



Know the conditions

Be aware of trail conditions. A stiff wind can blow the powder snow, exposing an unexpected patch of ice which can send your skis or snowboard sailing. Hikers and mountain bikers should keep in mind that creek crossings during spring runoff can become impassable due to high water levels.

Warm up

Drink plenty of liquids prior to any activity. Performing a few stretches before engaging in strenuous physical activity can help your muscles respond to the challenges ahead.

Moderation

It's wise not to have an alcoholic drink at lunch if you plan to return to the slopes afterwards. Most ski accidents occur in the afternoon, as muscles begin to fatigue. The effects of muscle fatigue are increased by the consumption of alcohol.

Your Medical Home in the High Sierra



Mammoth Hospital is a modern, 17-bed facility designated by the federal government as a Critical Access Hospital supported by first-rate equipment. We pride ourselves on personalized care, and boast of our full-time board certified medical staff and highly qualified nursing staff.

Since illness and injury don't always occur between the hours of eight and five, Mammoth Hospital is always prepared to meet your health care needs with 24-hour emergency care. Our outpatient clinics include: behavioral medicine & psychiatry, family dental, family medicine (Bridgeport & Mammoth), internal medicine, general surgery, neurology, orthopedics/sports medicine (Bishop & Mammoth), pediatrics, physical & occupational therapy, urology, and women's health.



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