

## Winter Trek Presentation Script (Revised 12/18/15)

### 1. Winter Trek (introduction)

“Welcome to Winter Trek. Your Winter Trek experience will be led by US Forest Service Rangers and Volunteers. Heavenly Mountain Resort graciously donates all the gondola tickets for this experience. The Tahoe Heritage Foundation pays for your cocoa and snow shoes. The City of South Lake Tahoe offers us free use of the beautiful facility at Explore Tahoe for the introduction and conclusion of this Conservation Education program. (Also, the best place for a bathroom break)”

### 2. What to Expect

“Here’s a brief outline of our Winter Trek program. After a brief introduction, we break into groups to ride the gondola. We’ll get off at the mid-station to discuss our view of Lake Tahoe. Then we’ll head all the way to the top of the mountain where we’ll receive our snow shoes. During our snow shoe adventure, we’ll learn many different facts about the winter wonders around us and have lunch. We’ll return our snow shoes, ride down the gondola and have cocoa at Explore Tahoe while concluding the program. Then the adventure ends and you head back to school on the bus.”

### 3. Gondola Ride

“For the gondola, we break into groups of 5-6 students with one adult per car. Students receive their complimentary tickets and walk to the gondola base station. While in the gondola car, please sit on the benches—standing is ok for a brief period to take a picture. Occasionally the gondola stops to allow people with strollers, wheel chairs or supplies extra time to get on. This is nothing to worry about. The cars will start moving soon. Keep voices low in the car. Enjoy the view answering the Scavenger Hunt questions and looking for animal tracks in the snow. If you are afraid of heights, you’ll still probably enjoy the ride. Just sit facing the mountain rather than the lake. This gondola is very safe with a strong cable holding up the cars. There have never been any major problems with the gondola since its conception in 2000.”

### 4. Mid-station Stop

“At the mid-station, be sure to take all your belongings off the gondola car. Gondola tickets are your souvenirs. They won’t be scanned again so keep them in a zipped pocket. It can be very windy on the viewing deck, so bundle up and walk carefully in case it is icy.”

### 5. What is a Basin?

“Why do we call this the Lake Tahoe Basin? Here are some clues to consider for our discussion on the viewing deck.”

### 6. What to look for

“Along with defining a Basin, we will discuss the lake’s water, the geological processes that formed the Lake Tahoe basin and the three states of matter as they pertain to water.”

### 7. Made it to the Top

“With so many skiers around, we need to be careful with where we walk. After getting off the gondola, we’ll walk as a group in a single file line down the stairs while using the handrail. We then gather into two lines to receive our snow shoes.”

8. Putting on Snowshoes Requires Patience

“After handing you the snow shoes, a ranger will lead the group to a hard packed snow area where we will listen carefully to directions and put on the snow shoes together.”

9. Proper Procedure

“Notice the features of the snow shoes including the toe, heal, window and bindings. Remember this is just a preview of how to put on the snow shoes. We will instruct you with your snow shoes step by step until you successfully have them secured to your feet.”

10. Ask for Help

“We will all put on the snow shoes together. So don’t worry about it now. We will help you at the top of the mountain. This requires patience and good listening skills. Be respectful of the group and ask for help if you need it.”

11. Safety Rules for Snow Shoeing

“We want everyone to stay safe while we’re snow shoeing so we can really enjoy our trek. Be careful to not step near tree wells where there’s a large gap around the trunk of the tree. Don’t walk under widow makers which are dead trees that are leaning and could fall down. Mounds of snow are usually rocks or logs covered with a thin layer of snow. Stepping on these snow covered rocks or logs could break the wooden snow shoes. Stepping on other snowshoes could cause students to get hurt or delay the trek while a student deals with broken snow shoes. These traditional wood snow shoes are expensive to replace so please use them in a safe manner. We’ll stay together as a group—always within eyesight of another adult. At all times during the trek, we’ll have a Ranger Sandwich—where we have a ranger in the front and in the back with all the students and adults in the middle. Keep your gloves on while we’re moving so you don’t fall and hurt yourself. Let an adult know if you are not feeling well.”

12. Let the Adventure Begin

“With all these safety messages in mind, we are ready to enjoy the winter wonders of nature. As we take our first steps on our trek, it’s tempting to scoop of snow and take a bite. Never eat snow. We will have plenty of opportunities to take water breaks during our trek.”

13. What Animals will I See?

“Will we see hibernating animals? No, these animals are in a deep sleep. How about migrators? No, these animals have already left for the winter. How about adaptors? We could see these animals if we are quiet and alert.”

14. Won’t Find Hibernators

“Hibernating animals include ground squirrels, reptiles and amphibians.”

15. True Hibernators

“True hibernators enter a deep, dormant state. Their heart rate drops. Their nervous system basically shuts down. Their body temperature drops close to the outside temperature. These animals do not urinate or defecate at this time. They are dormant for six week cycles until the days get longer, temperatures rise and they can wake up for spring. However, bears are not true hibernators.”

16. Our Black Bears Experience Torpor

“Black Bears find dens and enter a state of torpor for the winter. This is a deep sleep in which they wake up periodically. Bears give birth to their cubs in their den between January and March. A true hibernator doesn’t feel their surroundings and are unable to give birth in the winter. Bears need to be able to feel. Their body needs to be warm and functional to nurse and keep their cubs warm through the cold winter months. Torpor is not as deep a state as hibernation. So the Bears periodically wake up and explore their territory by mark their territory by scratching into the trees.”

17. Won’t Find Migratory Animals

“Migrators in Tahoe include mostly birds. Some mammals like the Little Brown Bat and the Mule Deer also migrate out of the Lake Tahoe Basin.”

18. Migratory Animals get out of Town

“Migrators travel to a mild climate to survive the winter. From Tahoe, many animals head to the Central or Carson Valley where the elevation is lower and the weather is better. Many migratory birds fly close to the equator to survive the winter. Migrating, however, is not an easy task. This requires a great deal of energy.”

19. May Find Winter Adaptors

“Adapting animals include tree squirrels with bushy tails, deer mice and the American Marten or the newly named Pacific Marten which is specific to the Sierra Nevada region. The Pacific Marten is a carnivore in the weasel family which is an important species that scientists study throughout the west.”

20. And More Adaptors

“A few birds and coyotes are also active throughout the winter. Mountain Chickadees are also known as the “Cheeseburger Bird” because of their distinctive mating call in the spring. Mountain Chickadees also have a territorial call that can be heard throughout the year that sounds like its name: chick-chick-chickadee. The Clark’s Nutcracker is a high elevation bird similar to a Jay with a loud “squack” call. Ravens are high elevation scavengers.

21. Signs of Adaptors

“If we don’t see the actual animals, we could find signs of animal activity. Black Bears will scratch trees to mark their territory. We could also find animal homes such as holes in the snow, trees or downed logs.”

22. Foot Prints in the Snow

“We can also see the activity of animals by looking for their tracks in the snow. Coyote tracks are seen in the snow looking very similar to dog tracks. The American or Pacific Marten bounds through the snow leaving a set of two small round prints spaced about a foot apart. Squirrel tracks have long back prints near two small round front prints. These may look like rabbit tracks however squirrels are much more common than snow shoe hares at the top of the mountain.”

23. Adaptors Change to Survive

“Adaptors make changes to survive the winter. They can add layers of fat or fur to survive the cold temperatures. Some adaptors change their behavior in the winter such as the marten in order to find food. The snow shoe hare and other adaptors change their color to blend into

their changing environment. Other adaptors may stock up and store food for the winter or eat in excess in the fall to bulk up and store body fat.”

24. Let's Explore and Have Some Fun

“Keeping all of our safety messages and animals in mind, we are now prepared to start our Winter Trek adventure.”