

Cycle And Ski in downtown Georgetown for the past three years. She recommends the brand Tubbs for those looking to buy their first pair of snowshoes.

"Generally, what we sell is something that accommodates your weight," Abercrombie said. "The more you weigh the bigger the snowshoe. Getting the proper fitting and sizing is important. Snowshoeing is becoming more popular, and we've been lucky to have great snow these past seasons."

For a pair of brand new snowshoes at Ollie's, expect to pay upwards of \$100. But despite the price tag, those who pay will be receiving a quality product.

"From a consumer's point of view we don't have to worry about quality issues anymore," said Sean McSweeney, manager of the Mountain Equipment Co-op at 400 King West in Toronto.

"Anybody still left in the manufacturing business of building snowshoes are building a good product. It's a great scenario for the consumer, they can reach out and grab any product out there on the market and have a good experience with it."

McSweeney has tried many of the snowshoe brands available on the Canadian market, and recommends purchasing the correct snowshoe based on how frequently it will be used.

"At the lower price points, you have snowshoes that are designed for more recreational use," he said.

That means occasional use in the season six to 10 times a year on flat to undulated terrain. As you move up in the price point, generally, the snowshoes will tend to start adding features that will make them more suitable for extensive use up to 40 to 50 times a year. They could be used in much steeper conditions like alpine terrain, and that's where you see the changes of price on the higher-



end products.

Mountain Equipment Co-op carries a variety of different snowshoe brands including MSR and Atlas, as well as a Canadian brand called GV.

McSweeney suggests budgeting between \$100

and \$200 for a quality pair of snowshoes from his store.

"It's really a fantastic accessible outdoor winter activity," he said.

"I think a lot of people are looking for things they can do in the wintertime. The great thing is that once you have the snowshoes there are no fees, or places that you have to drive to. If you have snow in the park, you can go snowshoeing.

"It's extremely affordable when you think of other sports out there like downhill skiing. Your minimum entry point for skiing would be anywhere between \$700 to \$1,000, plus the fees and transportation to get you to a downhill ski area.

"Snowshoeing doesn't take any special equipment," McSweeney said. "It's real easy to do and you get to see some things in the winter that you normally wouldn't have access to. It's a great activity and we're really happy to see it getting back on the map.

"We rent snowshoes here in the store," McSweeney said. "They are one of our most popular rental items for folks who just want to try out the sport for the first time. It doesn't take any special equipment. You can wear your regular winter boots and you're ready to go."

Snowshoe rentals are available to customers at the Mountain Equipment Co-op starting at \$20. McSweeney also encourage first timers to try out and rent a pair before purchasing.

A winter adventure is just around the corner, and snowshoeing is one of the many ways to enjoy your own backyard without breaking the bank.

Make sure to get out and enjoy nature this winter. Lace up those boots, keep warm, and enjoy the winter scenery.

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