

Types of Igloos

Although the word "igloo" refers to any building to the Inuit, it is generally understood by the rest of the world to mean a snow-house made out of blocks of snow. There are different types of snow houses and some are closer to being man-made snow caves. That type of snow house is often constructed by making a pile of snow that is first packed down and then hollowed out. Some people place objects such as backpacks in the center, pile snow up in a large mound over them and then dig in from the bottom side to hollow the center out. Sometimes the pile is left for a few days so the outside can harden thus giving the shell more strength. While this can be a fast and easy way to make a shelter out of snow, it doesn't have the strength of an igloo made from snow blocks which, if properly constructed, can withstand hurricane-force winds for long periods of time.

The small hunting-style, emergency or survival igloo

The small hunting size is intended only for one or two nights use. When the hunters are after seals, whales or other sea critters these are often built out in the open on sea ice! Imagine going to sleep in one place and waking up far away! This is the ideal size of igloo for winter camping (short term), winter backpacking trips involving snowshoeing or cross-country ski excursions, and emergency or survival requirements. If you see that you are about to be hit by an unexpected snowstorm this type of igloo may be the perfect way to protect yourself fairly quickly. One of these types of igloos can be built in as little as forty minutes by a single person.

The standard family home igloo

The next largest size is big enough to house one or two families and are sometimes built in clusters to form small villages. These are usually intended to be more semi-permanent and generally comprise one large room. These are the style of igloo most of us imagine when we think of one. This is good size for longer term winter camping excursions or longer term survival requirements than just a night or two. Even though one can be built in only an hour or two, it is not uncommon to spend a day or two building one of this type of igloo. Much greater care is taken in getting the blocks cut with precision.

The large community style igloo

The largest standard igloo type is usually the type of igloo described above but built in groups of two or more. One may be a temporary structure built for special occasions, and the other built nearby to serve as permanent living quarters. They may have five rooms (or

more) and can house as many as twenty people. A large igloo constructed from several smaller igloos uses tunnels for interconnection between them and there is often one common access tunnel to the outside. This type of igloo is used to hold community feasts and traditional dances.

MADE IN CANADA

...Where Igloos Were Invented