



John in his Bergens sleeping bag By Tyler Fish

I have been a wilderness professional for over 15 years now, and I can tell you that camp counselors, guides, instructors and technical experts alike spend time contemplating something called “systems.”

When it comes to an expedition, these “systems” become very important--food and gear packing systems, sleeping systems, hauling systems, rescue systems, cooking systems, cleanup systems, travel systems. What is a system?

According to the dictionary a system is a: set of connected things or parts forming a complex whole. A bunch of related ideas are a system. Examples include a cookie recipe, or a public transportation network. Both of these have a number of independent elements that together form a system. A good system, like a good team, is greater than the sum of the parts.

Winter camping systems can be complex and simple, but almost all winter camping systems aim to do the following:

- Keep something warm
- Keep something dry

- Make something easier to use in the cold
- Increase efficiency

John and I enjoy the challenge of being resourceful and making adaptations to our systems and equipment during the expedition. However, carefully planning and testing our systems before hitting the ice can save us a lot of time and make us more comfortable. In many ways planning is the expedition.

One of our most important systems is our sleeping system. It consists of two sleeping bags, two sleeping pads and a vapor liner. Here is how it fits together from the outside to the inside:

- [Bergans of Norway](#) Sleeping Mat Extreme, 1.4 cm thick
- Bergans of Norway big custom synthetic sleeping bag (rated to -20°F)
- Bergans of Norway Senja Ice Down sleeping bag (rated to -10°F)
- Bergans of Norway Sleeping Mat Extreme, 1.4 cm thick
- Custom made vapor liner bag from Sjur Mødre of Norway, this uninsulated water proof nylon sleeping bag liner prevents moisture from accumulating and freezing in the sleeping bag insulation fibers
- Person dressed in long underwear and fleece

In preparing for this endeavor, John and I have spent a lot of time discussing systems with some of the most successful and experienced polar explorers in the world. We consider these discussions an invaluable portion of our training. Each of these wonderful people has had their systems for everything. Some were the same as others, some similar, and some were wildly different. During next week's training expedition we will be testing a few different systems.