



W winter ardrobe

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FROM CALIFORNIA TO POINTS NORTH — A WINTER WARDROBE PREPARATION

I am a fourth generation Southern California girl whose parents enjoyed our moderate climate and had little use for any place that had low temperatures below 50 degrees. In my youth, I did not know much about winter or a 'Winter Wardrobe.' Winter to me meant that I could choose to go to the snow, about an hour and a half drive from my home. Otherwise I could go to the beach or lie by our pool and get a tan while enjoying the serenity of snowcapped mountains in the distance.

In 1985, I had my first undergraduate course in Winter Wardrobe Preparation. That year, I attended a university located in a state which had winter – a real winter. There was no driving involved to see the snow.

I could not leave it behind when I was finished playing in it. I learned about shoveling snow from around my car and scraping ice from the windshield. I also learned that the winter coat that fit me beautifully when I purchased it in California while wearing a t-shirt, shorts and flip-flops was not at all comfortable with a bulky sweater, cords and boots... oops! I suffered all winter in a very ill-fitting coat.

My master's degree was completed in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in the winter of 1988. I left the safe haven of shoveling snow and scraping windshields and landed in a place where one had to plug in their car (block heater) everywhere they went. This was done to keep the oil from freezing. I did not know that there were places colder than Siberia. There are. I was living in one of them. I am pleased to say that I am a very quick study and that in one winter's time I graduated from that education with flying colors.

Fortunately, while in Saskatoon, I had the great privilege of working for the finest men's and women's boutique in that part of the world. I had access to the finest winter apparel and a team of men and women that took me under their wings and taught me what preparing a proper winter wardrobe was all about. This is also when I learned what 'wind-chill factor' meant.

THE CHALLENGES OF DRESSING FOR GLOBAL TRAVEL AND CLIMATES —

5 KEY PRINCIPLES

From my experience living in a harsh climate, I was able to glean some relevant principles which can be translated into our more moderate California climate. This experience has also proven invaluable in the consulting that I do with a global clientele who often travel within several different climate zones in one trip and one carry-on.

Lesson 1 – Very Fine Natural Fibers

Natural fibers are breathable and regulate the body's temperature. Silk, wool, cashmere, cotton and linen are examples of natural fibers. All natural fibers are not created equal. The process involved in harvesting raw product and creating fibers that will be woven into textiles is complex and involved and also not created equally. Several stages are involved while separating finer fibers from the less desirable fibers. Many textile houses create lesser quality fabrics and knitwear by taking the first combings of the raw product which will produce shorter thicker fibers. In essence, these shorter thicker fibers are the waste products created in the process of harvesting the highest quality fibers used to create textiles for fine luxury apparel. There are fewer fine fibers in a batch of raw product than there are the less desirable fibers. This is one factor in the higher cost of the finer fabrics.

The longer, finer strands of wool and cashmere are twisted together to create finer, stronger yarns that are less susceptible to breakage and pilling while also offering a soft hand and more supple drape. Most importantly these super fine fabrics offer the highest degree of warmth with the finest micron counts.

Lesson 2 – Layering

In my 'post-graduate studies' of winter wardrobes I was taught that thin layers are warmer and more comfortable than thick bulky items. Imagine my skepticism as I was looking at the weather reports showing temperatures with and without wind-chill factors that ranged between the 50 to 70 below zero marks.



I was resistant to wearing layers because I had coats and sweaters that were bulky and cumbersome. I did not know that by pairing lightweight yet comfortable fabrics, you can achieve style, comfort and warmth. Long gone are the days of bulky uncomfortable sweaters that leave you feeling hot and itchy. If you are someone that hates to wear sweaters because they are too hot, you most likely have not met the right sweater.

While living in Saskatoon where the wind-chill factor was unbearable, I learned that layering with silk was key to my survival. Layering fine wind cutting silks with cashmere, shearling and fur did wonders.

Lesson 3 – Color

Light and color affects our moods. During the winter months we have less daylight than we do in the summer months. While in Saskatoon, during the shortest days we did not see daylight until after 9:00 am. The sunset was at 3:30 pm. Most of us went to work in the dark and came home in the dark. Using color during the winter months helped boost my spirits and offered some 'photo therapy.' There is a clinical form of depression triggered by light deprivation. Selecting colorful items such as scarves, jackets, hats and gloves that reflect your personality adds a pop of levity and may help stave off the winter doldrums!



Lesson 4 -Technology Fabrics

Technology within the textile industry continues to revolutionize fashion. How about a silk or cashmere raincoat? You can have clothing that is exquisitely crafted, highly fashionable and functional too. Multi-tasking items are must haves. Technology fabrics today offer comfort stretch in our suiting and allow our water repellent clothing to breathe.

Many fine apparel pieces are created to take a beating while looking like delicate pieces of art. The light weight fabrics that keep us warm also keep us cool. This allows us to create wardrobes that can transcend all climate situations. Purchase key articles of fine clothing. You will achieve more functionality in your wardrobe.

Lesson 5 – Keep Your Extremities Warm and Dry

It does not matter how warmly you dress your body. In terms of keeping warm, you must address the head, hands and feet first.

The head: I felt very awkward wearing hats. I resisted at every turn. The boutique I worked at had amazing hand crafted hats. Finally, the owner of the boutique bought me a hat and insisted that I wear it. Once I experienced the difference between wearing a hat and not wearing a hat I was sold.

The face and neck: I kept my face and neck protected from the elements by layering silk scarves with fur or cashmere wraps.

The hands: fur lined leather gloves were my lifeline.

The feet: silk socks layered with fine wool or cashmere socks and great boots were essential. I used these accessories to play with color and light. It was a great opportunity to create some whimsy and interest during those long, dark days.

FIVE WINTER WARDROBE TIPS

1. When purchasing a coat, try on two to three layers underneath to be sure that the coat will fit comfortably. If purchasing a top coat, trench coat or 'dress coat' be sure to put on a suit jacket with the coat to ensure that the fit is proper and functional.
2. Apply "snow cote" on your leather boots and shoes to prevent water from seeping into seams and joints between the sole and upper of your footwear.
3. Alter your clothing to fit properly. Properly fitting clothing will feel better and look better. It is uncomfortable to layer clothing that does not fit well.
4. Do NOT store your leather, fur or any other clothing in plastic. If you want to protect from dust or other elements, store clothing and furs in canvas garment bags that breathe.
5. If you have items that have been ravaged by moths or silver fish; first eradicate them by using an insecticidal agent such as Moth Gone (available at The Container Store). Follow up with organic nontoxic repellent remedies like lavender and cedar. Then take your damaged items to a specialist that can reweave and or reknit. Your clothing will look like new. I recommend The Knitwear Doctor in Costa Mesa.

FIVE TOP MUST HAVE ITEMS THIS SEASON FOR MEN AND WOMEN

1. Anything from the Loro Piana Storm System™ collection.
2. An amazing quality light-weight, colorful cashmere scarf that can be worn with multiple color stories.
3. A fabulous hat, beret or knit cap. These are great for when you have a bad hair day!
4. Gloves. It does not have to be subzero temperatures for you to don gloves.
5. A spectacular pair of boots, or better yet, a full boot wardrobe.



The world has changed since the mid-eighties. Travel for work and for pleasure is more accessible to the general populace. Airliners now charge for checked luggage etc. Although you live in sunny Southern California, you may likely travel to cooler climates. These lessons and top five items will keep you comfortable while taking you to any climate. If you plan smart, your carefully selected winter wardrobe will be functional while leaving plenty of space in your luggage and your closet. ●

