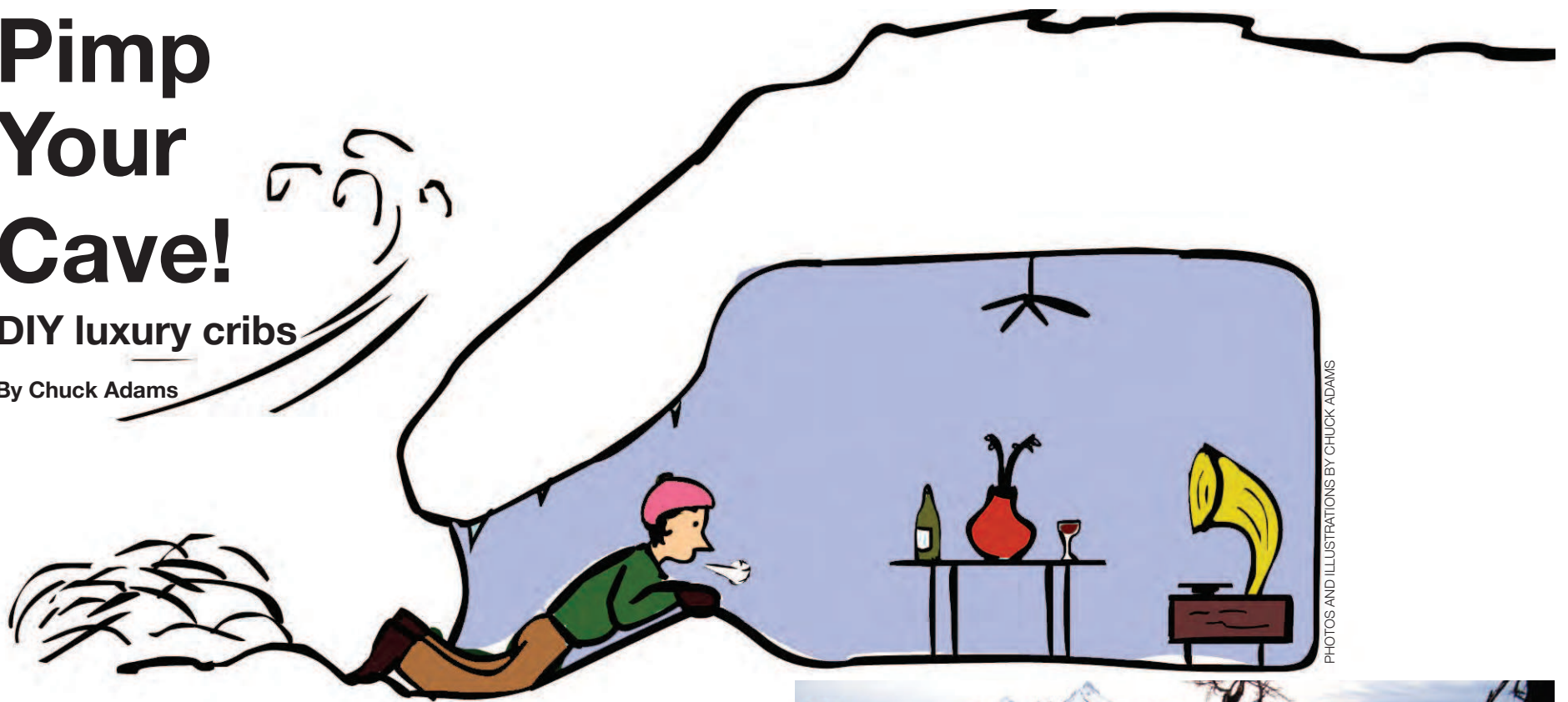


winter getaways

Pimp Your Cave!

DIY luxury cribs

By Chuck Adams



PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHUCK ADAMS

So you're tired of hauling the three-person tent on your snowshoe or cross-country ski adventure (and nearly freezing your nuts off, despite your down-filled bag) but aren't content with tunneling a crude, claustrophobic wormhole for your great winter's night snooze in the backcountry? The solution is simple: Pimp your cave! But, first start with the basics.

Location, Location, Location

Try to find a spot on the wind-free crest of a small hill or snowdrift for your snow cave. Place your cave at the base of a long slope, and you're asking for full avalanche submersion. Place your cave on the windward side, and you'll spend the entire time digging up a wind-blocking shield. Not worth it.

Proper Tools

Mostly you'll just need a sturdy backpacking snow shovel. Smaller instruments like a spade, ice ax or a large hunting knife help with the crafty flourishes like cup holders and air vents that make your snow cave truly lavish.

The Fire Ring

Lick your finger and test the wind.

Then test it again. Does it feel like the wind is coming from all directions, tickling your finger like a delicate feather? That means you'll have a whirlpool of smoke spewing from your blaze; in this case, consider whether a fire will be worth the effort of gathering the ultra-rare materials (dry, dead wood) to build it — because it's just going to smoke you out.

The Perfect Sleeping Pod

Ever wish you could mold the place you roll out your sleeping bag to conform to your body? Well, it's possible in snow caves (and recommended, since you'll be sleeping on ice). Use your shovel and ice ax to gently carve out niches for your head and posterior, making the area for your head slightly uphill to get much-needed blood flow to your feet. (Warding off the frostbite is so luxe!)

The Kitchen Area

What would a sumptuous snow cave be like without a well organized cooking and cleaning area? Not very deluxe, let us tell you! So take that shovel and bench out an area about 3' x 3', big enough to fit your propane



stove, a pot, a few bowls, cutting board and all the food packets of freeze-dried mashed potatoes you'll be eating cause you forgot the tortillas and cheese for backcountry quesadillas back in the Subaru.

Some Flair Required

Even the most bitchin' snow cave would be just another empty, cold place without décor, so remember to pack colorful, natural items to make your space all homey and cozy. (I suggest pine boughs, wreaths and big pine cones.) ■

[Disclaimer: While this handy guide may be used to stoke your cold-weather creativity in the comfort of your home, the most plush option would be to seek out professional guidance in all matters of personal risk in extreme outdoor conditions.]



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