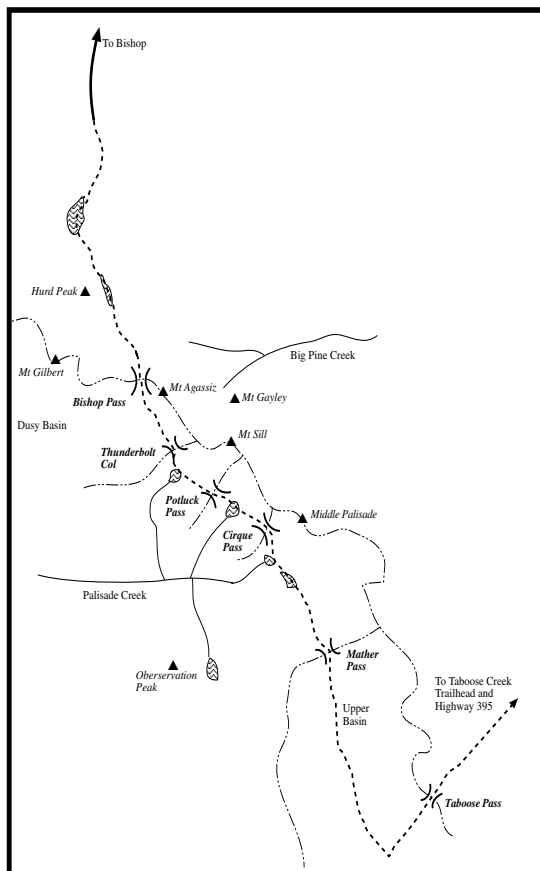




Beneath the Palisades

Sometimes there is a tour we discover and do time and time again, sharing a little known wonder with others. The Palisades tour is one of these.

This tour is not well known, except by locals, and in some years no one ventures into this part of the Sierra during the winter and spring. The crossings of the passes are short, steep, and high linking together two of the most beautiful areas in the Sierra – Dusy and Palisade Basins. Staying on the west side of the divide for most of the tour, the jagged crest of the Palisades is never more than a mile away as we hug the slopes of some of the Sierra's highest peaks. Days are not too long and we try to find time to ski some of the fantastic slopes along the way.



Itinerary: We enter via the South Fork of Bishop Creek and cross the gentle slopes of Bishop Pass. To the south lies the first of our major crossings, Thunderbolt Col, which accesses Palisade Basin and Barrett Lakes. Next comes Potluck Pass before we drop to a camp next to an unnamed lake at the head of Glacier Creek. If time and weather allows there is the opportunity to ascend the 14,153 foot Mt. Sill which offers one of the best view points in this part of the Sierra. From here we cross Cirque Pass and drop to Palisade Lakes via a wonderful descent. Beyond this rises the steepest pass climb, Mather Pass. The north side is a steady, but not too steep, ascent. The south side can be somewhat corniced and steep for the first few hundred feet so a short hike down is often the best option. Once past this the valley opens up into the gentle slopes and perfect cruising of Upper Basin. A long steady downhill towards the south fork of the Kings River takes us to the final pass of the trip: Taboose Pass. We say good-bye to the west side of the Sierra at the pass as we take in the expansive views to the west down the glacial canyon of the Kings and start the descent down into the warmth of the brown desert just out of Big Pine. This is a tour for anyone who enjoys wilderness and solitude.

Meeting place and time: We will meet the first day at 7.00 am at the world headquarters of Sierra Mountain Center, 174 W. Line Street, in Bishop. Line Street is an east/west street marked by the southern-most traffic light on Main Street/Highway 395, in town. We're west of the light, on the south side of the street next to the health food store. A large parking lot is located on the south side of the building. We will meet for breakfast and will have a thorough pack check so don't plan on finalizing your packing until then.

Dates and Prices: Check the latest brochure, call us or go to our web site for dates and rates. Should minimum participant numbers not be reached you will be given the option of paying our private rate, rescheduling, or cancelling. Price includes guiding, permits, all necessary group gear, avalanche beacons, tents, kitchen gear and dinners, lunches and breakfasts (you bring snack items).

Length: 26 miles

Duration 5 days

Difficulty: SMC Tour Rating II

Other information: For a good overview see the Inyo National Forest John Muir/Ansel Adams Wilderness map (but please don't bring it on the trip...). The SMC web site has photos, our own topo map, trip profile and more information. Proper acclimatization to the elevation will greatly increase your pleasure and enjoyment of the trip. We highly recommend getting at least one day and night at altitude immediately prior to the trip, for instance, by staying in Mammoth, or better yet, camped at an even higher trailhead, such as the South Lake/Bishop Pass trailhead for a day or two just before the trip.

Prerequisites: You need intermediate ski skills for this tour. You should be able to ski intermediate ski area runs confidently and be proficient at kick turns, traversing on 30 degree slopes, side slipping and Christie turns all while carrying a pack of about 35 pounds. Prior winter camping and mountaineering skills are advised. You will be travelling up to seven miles a day and gaining up to 3000 feet a day so a very good level of aerobic fitness is required.