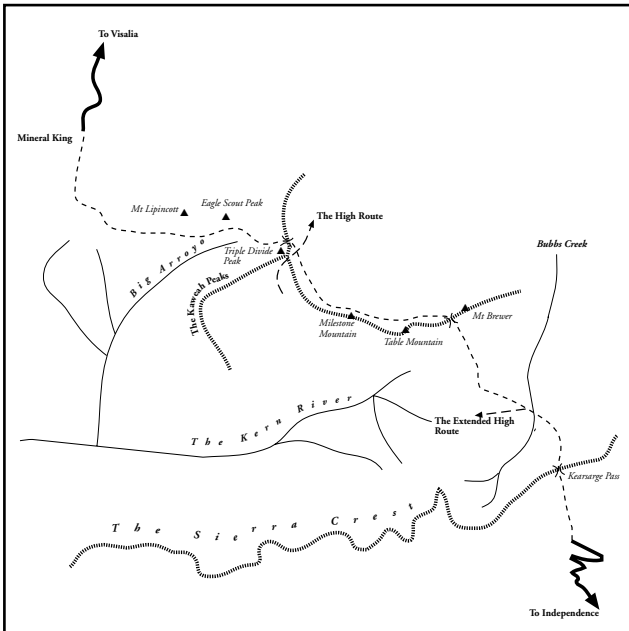




The Great Western Divide



This is our ultimate trip: the rarely skied Great Western Divide. Since this our most difficult tour requiring solid skills and confidence on all sorts of terrain we will work closely with participants to ensure that the group is strong and competent. This route takes on all the terrain that the High Route avoids and then keeps on going ending in beautiful Mineral King, the site of a major environmental battle in the 1960's when the Disney Corporation wanted to build a downhill ski area. If this trip does not give you the best ski tour experience in the Sierra Nevada we just do not know what will!

Itinerary: After shuttling to the road head in Onion Valley we head up and over Kearsarge Pass the first of a dozen or more passes we will cross over the next nine days. We drop down into Bubbs Creek and follow East Creek up to Ouzel Creek. From here we climb towards spectacular Mount Brewer via Brewer Col. If conditions, and energy allow, a descent via the broad south slopes of Mt. Brewer is possible before we head south, linking high technical pass crossings along the western side of the Great Western Divide. Thunder Mountain, Milestone Mountain, Midway, Table Mountain and other peaks here will be familiar to those who have done the High Route but this time we are on the opposite side of the divide. We intersect the High Route (at its most difficult pass crossing, but one of our easiest!), cross Triple Divide Pass and traverse into Cloud Canyon.

Now we enter Sequoia National Park via Lion Lake Pass and travel south paralleling the Kaweah Range with spectacular views to its jagged peaks. We enter Big Arroyo which must be one of the most wonderful gentle skis the Sierra has to offer. Miles of gentle downhill where you can relax and simply watch the scenery slip by. Beyond this we enter complex terrain and cross three passes in quick succession before finally descending below Sawtooth Peak and the final run down Monarch Creek to Mineral King. Just where the road head is will depend upon snowfall, but we will anticipate skiing out to the settlement of Silver City but hope to be pleasantly surprised by finding the road is plowed to Mineral King itself.

Either way we will meet the shuttle below Silver City and head out to Visalia and our return flight into Bishop.

Length: 37 miles **Duration:** 8 days **Difficulty:** SMC Level III

Meeting place and time: We will meet in Independence at 7.00a.m. on the morning of the trip at the Pines Cafe. This is in the center of town on the east side of Highway 395. We will do a complete equipment check here and park some vehicles at the Independence Airport. If at all possible you should plan on arriving in the area a day or two ahead and camp at one of the higher trailheads to get some altitude in prior to the trip.

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).

Notes and other information: For an overview see the Inyo National Forest John Muir/Ansel Adams Wilderness map (but 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 with 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. This is a long tour and pack weight needs to be kept as low as possible. We will be carefully selecting equipment to reduce weight and we will work with you to ensure that packs do not weigh more than about 45 lb plus the weight of your skis when we start out. For those coming from the Bay area, or nearby, we will try to arrange a flight prior to the trip. If there are enough people to warrant this you will drive to Visalia and meet the plane the evening before the trip starts. Proper acclimatization to the elevation with 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 for a day or two just before the trip.

Prerequisites: You need advanced ski skills for this tour. You should be able to ski advanced ski area runs confidently and be proficient at kick turns, traversing on 40 degree slopes, side slipping and parallel or telemark turns all while carrying a pack of about 40 pounds. Prior winter camping and mountaineering skills are required. You will be travelling up to seven miles a day and gaining up to 3000 feet a day so an excellent level of aerobic fitness is required.