



Ionian Basin

The Ionian Basin sits in the heart of Kings Canyon National Park, above the rugged gorge of Le Conte Canyon. Mt. Goddard dominates the region and the gentle slopes on its southeast side offer one of the great ski descents of the Sierra, but so remote that it is seldom skied (except by us!). We plan on at least two nights camped in the heart of the Ionian, allowing several days skiing with only a day pack. Remote and little known, this is a wonderful loop trip that should be on everyone's wish list.

Itinerary: We start our tour easily and with little stress by spending the first night at our North Lake hut allowing time for easy acclimatization. Starting early from the hut we climb steadily, and cross the Sierra Crest at 13,000' Lamarck Col, making our second nights camp near Evolution Lakes, overlooking northern Kings Canyon National Park. The next day we continue to travel through what many people consider to be the most beautiful area in the Sierra, Evolution Canyon. The traveling is generally easy as we wander up the valley, crossing frozen lakes and slowly gaining altitude as we head towards Muir Pass. Rather than taking the Muir Pass, though, we head through a little known col that guards the north entrance to the Ionian Basin. At this point the itinerary can be varied as what we do exactly depends on the weather and the desires of the group. Our best option is to establish a base camp in the Ionian Basin and day tour for days three and four. This would allow us plenty of time to climb and ski Mt. Goddard and other nearby peaks. The ski off the south side of Mt. Goddard is one of the best peak descents in the Sierra, but one not often done, because of the peaks remote and hard to get to location. We'll finish the trip by our returning on day five, crossing the Sierra Crest at Echo Col and skiing down to Lake Sabrina. Along the way the fantastic descent of the Black Giant beckons if time, snow and energy permit.

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: 29 miles **Duration:** 6 days **Difficulty:** SMC tour rating II/III

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 parallel or telemark turns all while carrying a pack of about 40 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 an high level of aerobic fitness is required.