



Introduction to Backcountry Randonnée Skiing

Skiing at the lift served areas is fun and a great way to improve your technique but as far as we are concerned getting into the backcountry is the best thing in the world; thigh deep powder, fresh tracks and no crowds...that's the promise of backcountry skiing.

Perhaps you are a resort area skier who wants to get out and to try something new and different. Perhaps you have skied the same area and runs for years and gazed off at those not-to-far off bowls and chutes just outside the ski area boundary. If you want to expand your skiing into this world randonnée equipment is the easiest way.

Randonnée equipment has been popular in Europe for many years now, but is only in the recent past has it become more available in the USA. Unlike freeheel telemark skiing you do not have to relearn skiing again and after a few runs the equipment will feel familiar. The binding allows you to release your heel and, with climbing skins on the skis, climb uphill. Once at the top, lock the heels and ski just like you're used to. With the bindings in down mode you are locked by the toe and heel to the ski as normal. The boots are a little softer than you might be used to since all around comfort is the most important thing rather than ultimate control on the downhill. The skis vary a lot, but most these days are a shaped ski and for use in backcountry a short ski we prefer shorter rather than long.

So get off the groomed runs and experience the freedom and beauty of "off piste" skiing.

Itinerary: This trip is designed to fit into a weekend away from home. We have a lot of choices where to go and will see where the best conditions are. In the Mammoth area the Sherwins are a popular spot. Just down Highway 395 are the slopes of McGee Mountain and the "Batch Plant Bowls" Further north is Chicken Wing and White Wing all offering awesome skiing. Too many choices and too little time!!!

Meeting place and time: We will meet in Mammoth at the Breakfast Club for breakfast, introductions, and trip outline at 7:30 a.m. the first morning of the trip. The Breakfast Club is located on Highway 203 (the access road to Mammoth from Highway 395) at the first traffic light you encounter, adjacent to the Shell Station. This is the intersection of Highway 203 and Old Mammoth Road and the restaurant is on the south side of 203.

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 and avalanche rescue equipment.

Notes and other information: The SMC web site has photos 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 at Tom's Place between Mammoth and Bishop. Let us know if you want us to help arrange accommodation.

Gear and equipment: SMC does not rent ski equipment, but we work with Mammoth Mountaineering (760 934 4191) to get you set up on the correct equipment. MMS has a very wide range of rental equipment that is probably the best you will find anywhere in California. All gear is current state of the art, well tuned and rental fees are deductible if you buy a set up from them. (We highly recommend renting before you buy so as to find what suits you best, since a full setup is pretty pricy). We can coordinate the rental but suggest that you arrive Mammoth the night before and get fully set up since boot fitting can take some time. If this is not possible we will take time to get gear the morning of Day One but if it is already taken care of we can get out and ski sooner.

Prerequisites: Prior backcountry ski experience is not necessary and this program is designed for intermediate and advanced alpine skiers.

Equipment List for Introduction to Backcountry Randonée Skiing

The following list is a general guide and will assist you in packing for the program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have specific questions regarding equipment and if you need assistance prior to making a purchase. The following list will vary according to the time of year, and your individual requirements.

Items on the list with an * may be rented from SMC.

Essentials

- Skis.* Metal edge alpine touring skis are essential. Better too short than too long. Get them tuned and check the bindings for tightness and boot fit prior to the trip. We can coordinate ski rental from Mammoth Mountaineering (760) 934-4191.
- Boots.* We recommend the Garmont, Lowa or Dynafit boots. Make sure your boots are a comfortable fit for walking and skiing. We can coordinate boot rental from Mammoth Mountaineering (760) 934-4191.
- Poles*. Telescoping probe type are best.
- Climbing skins*. Close to the width of the skis' waist. Please make sure the glue is in good shape.
- Day pack of about 2,500 cubic inches.

Clothing

- Clothing for all conditions.
- Gaiters are not always necessary, depending on your boot/pants system. If in doubt, please ask.
- Good quality rain/wind pants and rain jacket. Must be water proof and jacket must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- Warm hat
- Visor hat (for sun)
- Liner gloves
- Shell gloves
- Goggles

Etc.

- Sunglasses, high quality with keeper leash. The type with side shields are recommended.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen. A 1oz. bottle will be sufficient
- One 1-quart plastic water bottle (full of water...)
- A small and light thermos of tea/coffee is a nice treat.
- We will have a group medical kit but some foot repair items such as moleskin and Compeed are good.
- Camera, film and spare batteries

Food

- Bring a lunch and your favorite snacks.

Group gear that will be provided and divided amongst the group prior to starting the trip:

- One shovel for each person
- Avalanche transceiver for each person
- One probe per two people
- First aid kit
- Ski repair kit