



Charlotte Dome

Charlotte Dome is a large granite dome rising out of the Bubbs Creek drainage, a tributary of the Kings River, in Kings Canyon National Park. Reminiscent of the famous rock of Tuolumne Meadows the dome is legendary for the quality of its climbing and amazing setting. With views out to much of the southern High Sierra, including Mt. Brewer and much of the Great Western Divide it is indeed a spectacular and rewarding climb. Some twelve pitches in length, the route has but a couple of 5.8 moves with the majority of pitches in the 5.7 or easier range. SMC guide and partner, Todd Vogel believes the Charlotte Dome climb to be the best route at its grade in North America.

Meeting place and time: We will meet the first day at 8:00 a.m. at the Onion Valley Trailhead. This is out of the town of Independence and is the end of the Onion Valley Road, the turn for which is well marked in the center of town. You should be fed and ready to go other than minor packing adjustments.

Itinerary: The approach is via Kearsarge Pass; perhaps the easiest of East Side passes (which doesn't make it "easy"). In five miles the trail gains just under 2,000 feet as it climbs to the pass. We usually arrive at the pass late morning. Views are stunning as the trail descends past Bullfrog Lake to Charlotte Lake, with a lunch stop on the way. Travel becomes more difficult after Charlotte Lake as the trail is un-maintained from this point. Usually there's a pretty good use trail up to the last forty-five minutes of travel, which can be bushwhacking. Camp is in a beautiful spot though, right at the base of the descent route with a small creek nearby and great views across Bubbs Creek Canyon to the peaks of the southern High Sierra.

The second day sees us up before light and crossing huge granite slabs to the base of the climb early. It's second-class to the rope up point. The route itself is twelve or so pitches in length, never too difficult but also with no easy pitches. Average difficulty is probably 5.7. Route finding is a challenge and we'll definitely be earning our keep as we wander up the great south face of Charlotte Dome. Some stances are small and semi hanging, although hanging on a slab is not too bad. The ominously named "Slot" is not too bad and the penultimate pitch called the 'Furrows' is certainly unique, with deep solution pocket and fins offering distinctly weird climbing to the final wandering slab. The summit is surprisingly tiny, room for two, and offers stunning views in all directions of the Kings Canyon region. The descent back to camp takes about an hour and has a short section of third class off the top but is otherwise very easy. Often we rest at camp for an hour or so but then pack up and head to Charlotte Lake, arriving just in time for dinner and early to bed. This takes the hard part of the return hike out of the way and makes the last day a cruise. We're usually out to the cars on the third day by lunchtime.

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 climbing gear, tents, kitchen gear and breakfasts, lunches and dinners (you bring hot/cold drinks and snack items). Scheduled dates include USFS trail fees. Private programs do not.

Ratios: This is a long climbs so we keep the ratio of one guide to two participants to ensure speed and efficiency climbing.

Notes: The best guidebooks are Supertopo's "High Sierra Climbing" by Chris McNamara and Peter Croft's "The Good, The Great, and the Awesome". Get them from Maximus Press. You can also get our unpublished SMC Guide to Charlotte Dome on the website.

We highly recommend that you spend at least one night at moderate altitude (higher than 8,000') just prior to the trip. Spending a night in Mammoth or camped at the trailhead campground would do the trick. Please refer to our Planning for Success info sheet for more info. Bears are also a major problem at the trailhead. Do not leave any food, scented items (deodorant, soap etc.) in your vehicle. Clean up all trash and do not leave food, coolers, or food packaging in your vehicle. Failure to take precautions can cause the vehicle to be ripped apart by a bear and the added insult of a fine from the Forest Service. It is necessary to carry bear proof food storage containers on this trip. We provide these.

Prerequisites: You need to be able to comfortably climb 5.7/5.8 and have done multi pitch climbing before. This is a physically demanding trip and you should be in good condition and have the ability to traverse broken uneven slopes with a 40 pound pack.

Equipment List for Charlotte Dome

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.

Climbing equipment

- Carabiners*. Two locking carabiners (Screwgates are better than twist lock style & are easier to manipulate).
- Belay/rappel device*. An ATC type.
- Comfortable rock shoes that are sized large enough so that you can wear them all day.
- Harness*. An adjustable type such as the Black Diamond Bod works best.
- Helmet. New models such as the Petzl "Helios" or the Black Diamond Half Dome are comfortable and light weight. We provide these for the program.

Other essentials

- Footwear. This is always a hard one. You want a pair that will provide adequate support while hiking with a pack into camp. But you also need some that are light enough to put in a pack and carry up the route for the descent. Lightweight tennies are too light; a heavy mountaineering boot too much!
- Camp Shoes. A lightweight pair of tennies or Tevas to wear in camp. This will reduce vegetation damage at our campsites.
- Pack*. A 4000 cubic inch will hold everything for the backcountry. Internal frame packs are recommended for their comfort and balance when climbing. A pack that allows plenty of compression allows it to be carried on climbs without the need for a smaller day pack. The Gregory Makalu or Reality are about the right size. You will need a smaller day pack if your big pack won't compress adequately.
- Climbing pack. A separate pack is recommended.
- Sleeping Bag. Most summer trips are warm and a bag rated to about 25° will be plenty warm enough except in the spring and late fall.
- Sleeping pad. A 3/4 length Ultralight thermarest paired with a Ridgerest foam pad is the best combination. Bring a Thermarest repair kit to fix any leaks.

Clothing:

- 2 pair synthetic liner socks.
- 1 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks.
- Gaiters-usually required only on spring trips.
- Long underwear top and bottom.
- Warm pants. Tights or Expedition weight Capilene.
- Warm shirt. Synchilla or 200 weight works well.
- Another fuzzy sweater top or pile jacket of some sort.
- GoreTex Jacket and Pants - A lightweight set is sufficient and heavy bulky rainwear is unnecessary. Side zips on the pants should be long enough to slide on over boots. Jacket must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- Shorts for on the trail.
- Tee shirt for on the trail.
- Polypropylene or similar gloves and shells.
- Warm hat.
- Sunhat.

Etc.

- Sun glasses. Good quality with side shields.
- Water Bottles. Two quart (1 liter) wide mouth bottles and or a hydration system holding up to 50oz. (2 liters).
- Headlamp. With a spare set of batteries.
- Iodine for water purification.
- Eating and drinking equipment. Forget the traditional Sierra cup, instead use an insulated backpacking mug, with a lid. This can double for a bowl. Fork and spoon.
- Pocket knife. Swiss army style.
- Personal toiletries. It is not necessary to smell like a rose each day so do not over do it. Personal toiletries. It is not necessary to smell like a rose each day so do not over do it. Remember toilet paper and a small zip-lock bag to carry out the used in.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. A 1oz. bottle will be enough. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen.
- Bug repellent. Only needed in the early season.
- Personal Medical Kit. The guide will carry a large kit so yours will predominately consist of foot repair items and mild pain reliever such as Advil and bandaids.
- Camera, film, spare battery.
- Plastic Trash Sac. Handy for keeping gear in outside the tent should it rain.
- Optional reading material etc.
- Ski poles. These are not essential, but can be handy on the trail. It is your choice, but they do save wear on the knees.

Food

- We will provide breakfast, dinner and lunch but bring some snack items like cliff bars, power bars, gorp concoctions. A days worth for most people would be 2 bars, 3 ounces of gorp, and perhaps a candy bar. Don't over do it.

Shared Equipment Provided by SMC

- Shelter. We will provide lightweight, storm worthy tents. If you have your favorite, by all means bring it, but we do want to pair people up where possible to reduce weight.
- Stove. We provide MSR Whisperlite stoves.
- Cookwear.
- Water purification. A sad but true fact of life is that much Sierra water is contaminated. Iodine may be used individually or the group can carry a pump style purifier.
- Bear Canisters. Sierra bears have fallen into bad habits and learned that backpacker's food is tasty and easy to obtain. We provide these bulky items since this area certainly warrants their use.

You specifically don't need

- ⊗ Cell phones. They rarely work in the mountains anyway.
- ⊗ Big first aid kits (we have a comprehensive one)
- ⊗ Deodorant or any toiletries beyond those listed above.
- ⊗ Items that are not on this list.