



## North Ridge of Conness

There are a handful of backcountry climbs that are reasonable to do in a day car to car and this is one of our favorites of those. A beautiful initial hike to the start of the route past sparkling lakes and high alpine tundra and meadows takes us to the saddle between North Peak and Conness. Once on the route great climbing, and a moderate return add up to one of the classic local ridge climbs. All the better that you get a hot shower and a cold drink at the end of it all. And if we are in time a opportunity to sample the legendary Fish Tacos at the Mobil Mart in Lee Vining.

**Meeting place and time:** We will meet at 6.00 a.m. at the trailhead parking area for Saddlebag Lake. The turn off to Saddlebag Lake is off Highway 120 just before the Tioga Pass Resort. Take this a couple of miles to the parking area on the right-hand side near the end of the to Saddlebag Lake Road opposite the dam. If you get to the Marina you have gone too far. You should be fed, packed, and more or less ready to go.

**Itinerary:** This is a one day climb. We meet early and plan on a 10 to 12 hour round trip. We meet at the Saddlebag Lake parking area, trying to get going pretty early for the climb, often at first light, depending on the time of year. The parking area is a couple of miles down the spur road that leads off Highway 120 between Lee Vining and Yosemite Valley just before the Tioga Pass Resort.

We approach via the Saddlebag Lake Trail as it traverses around the lake for a mile before flattening out at the head of the lake near Greenstone Lake. We continue past small lakes and tarns, steadily climbing towards a pass between Conness and North Peak. As we near the pass the route steepens and becomes loose and sandy. We only need to put up with this for about twenty minutes though as soon we're at the pass and at the start of the north ridge.

Once on the ridge the going gets progressively more difficult until finally we rope up, staying that way until the top. We first top out on a small tower and then do a short rappel to gain the main ridge section. Much of this portion is fourth class but several sections in the middle offer mid fifth class, as well as some interesting possible variations near the top. Overall, plan on several hours of fourth class and half a dozen pitches of fifth class climbing. A use trail from the summit leads back to our trailhead. The round trip can take anywhere from eight to twelve hours.

**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.

**Ratios:** These are technical ascents and we undertake them at a maximum ratio of 1:2 for this route.

**Notes and other information:** 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.

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 would do the trick or better yet, camped at an even higher trailhead, such as the Sawmill Creek Campground on the Saddlebag Lake Road or in Tuolumne, for a night just before the trip. Please refer to our Planning for Success info sheet for more info.

**Prerequisites:** Technical climbing skills are required: you should be able to comfortably follow 5.6. This is a physically demanding day and you have the ability to traverse broken uneven slopes with a light pack.

# **Equipment List for the North Ridge of Conness**

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 or 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 with an \* may be rented from SMC.

## ***Climbing equipment***

- Harness.\* A step-in type works best such as a Black Diamond Alpine Bod.
- 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.
- Two locking carabiners and a couple of non-lockers.\*
- Belay/rappel device\*. An ATC style is preferred.
- Comfortable rock shoes sized large enough so that you can wear them all day. (See below also).

## ***Other essentials***

- Footwear. A medium-weight pair of leather mountaineering boots or heavyweight hiking boots will be sufficient. The Sportiva Glacier is a good example of an appropriate mountain boot. Plastic boots are fine but will tend to be somewhat hot and uncomfortable on the approach so, if space in the pack permits, these can be carried and a lightweight pair of hiking boots used on the walk in.
- Day Pack. Enough to hold everything for the day. About 1200 cu in.

## ***Clothing***

- 1 pair synthetic liner socks
- 1 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks.
- Climbing pants
- 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. Jackets must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- Lightweight gloves
- 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).
- 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, mild pain killer such as Advil and bandaids.
- Lunch and snacks for during the day.
- Personal toiletries. Include some TP and a bag to pack out the used from the routes.
- Camera. Bring film and a spare battery to record those moments.

## ***You specifically don't need***

- ⊗ Cell phones. They rarely work anyway.
- ⊗ Big first aid kits (we have a comprehensive one).
- ⊗ Items that are not on this list.