



Crystal Crag via the North Arete

After getting bitten by the climbing bug and perhaps having done some top rope climbing on small crags it is time to get experience on longer routes and get further off the ground into what we think is the true climbing experience. Of course this is a big step and you want to choose an appropriate objective.

Situated above Mammoth in the Lakes Basin, to the west of town, Crystal Crag is a well known local landmark. A gleaming white band of quartz cuts across the peaks and must surely have attracted the attention of miners. But to their dismay it was bare of gold, but for us climbers it adds a unique and interesting feature. The route combines, steeper technical climbing with roped ridge traversing and a classic peak traverse, climbing one side and descending via the other.

This is a perfect introduction to multi-pitch climbing. Not too difficult, but definitely challenging enough to keep you thinking and enjoying a new experience.

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 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. If needed the phone there is 934-6944. After breakfast we will do an equipment check before driving to the trailhead.

Itinerary: We park at Lake George and hike the well graded and maintained trail for about forty five minutes to Crystal Lake, nestled next to the Crag. Leaving the trail here we traverse a short distance through open forest to the base of our chosen route, the North Ridge. The difficulties of the climb are concentrated into the first four pitches on the steepest portion of the ridge and lead us to the crystal band. We climb a small gleaming white corner in the band where the rock is cool and slippery, but straightforward, leading to a good spot to take a break and a snack.

Above this we move roped together along a narrow exposed ridge to the summit and then descend the easier side before traversing back towards the start of the route.

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 and all necessary group climbing gear. We can assist with hotel reservations should you require them.

Ratios: We undertake this climb with a maximum of three participants. This allows for better instruction and enhances safety.

Instructors: Our guides are American Mountain Guides Association trained so you can expect the highest level of climbing and safety knowledge combined with solid instructional skills and professionalism.

Prerequisites: Our Rock I or equivalent. You should be familiar with belaying and be able to tie into the rope without assistance. You should be in fair to good physical condition. We will cover the following topics: review of placing and removing artificial climbing protection, equipment handling skills, the multi pitch system, managing belays, simple anchoring techniques, energy conservation and climbing efficiently on multi-pitch routes

So come prepared for a challenging but safe adventure.

Equipment List Crystal Crag

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*. An adjustable leg loop type such as the Black Diamond Bod or Wild Things Espresso will accommodate layering changes, but a sewn leg loop design is also acceptable.
- 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.
- Carabiners.* Two locking carabiners (Screwgates are more secure than twist lock style and easier to manipulate) and two regular carabiners are required.
- Belay/rappel device*. An ATC, Tuber or Figure-eight
- Rock climbing shoes*. These should be sized large enough to wear comfortably all day. We have a selection of rental rock shoes available or can help arrange rentals from Wilsons's Eastside Sports or Mammoth Mountaineering Supply.

Other essentials

- Footwear. The approaches to the climbs are rough so you need a pair of sturdy approach shoes. However you will be putting them into the pack to carry up and over the climb so a heavy bulky pair is best avoided.
- Day Pack. Enough to hold everything for the day. About 1200 cu in.

Clothing

Days will probably be warm and sunny, but be prepared for anything. A long pair of climbing pants rather than shorts will avoid scraping up the legs too much and prevent sunburn. Bring a windjacket in case the wind picks up and remember a sun hat.

Etc.

- Sunglasses. Good quality.
- Water Bottles. Two quart (1 liter) wide mouth bottles and or a hydration system holding up to 50oz. (2 liters).
- Camera. Bring film and a spare battery to record those moments.
- Lunch and snacks for during the day.
- Personal toiletries. Include some TP and a bag to pack out the used from the crags.
- 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.