



The Fourteeners

There are fifteen peaks in California that exceed fourteen thousand feet in height. We won't try to climb them all in the course of these five days, but we will certainly ascend the most technically difficult of them, namely those along the Palisade Crest. We start from the South Fork of Bishop Creek, cross Bishop Pass, and set up camp high above beautiful Palisade and Dusy Basins at Thunderbolt Col. From here we will choose between Thunderbolt, Sill, Starlight, North Palisade, or Polemonium peaks and ascend two or three of these over the next three days. This is a fairly busy schedule and while not technically difficult it does require stamina and fitness. The technical crux of several of these mountains is the tiny summit block, but with a pair of rock shoes you will be standing on the very top of the Sierra's most spectacular peaks.

For North Palisade we generally choose the Le Conte route, first ascended by Joseph Le Conte in 1903, and which involves a spectacular and exciting traverse across a steep slab. From North Palisade we can traverse to Polemonium, which from the top of the U-Notch offers low fifth class climbing for two hundred feet to the summit and a rappel descent. The climb of Thunderbolt starts directly from camp at Thunderbolt Col and ascends a steep snow gully to the crest before tackling the summit block via a well-protected and safe fifth class face. Starlight is perhaps the most involved with a devils climb of the west chute to the "Milkbottle" summit and the various rope shenanigans necessary to reach the summit. From camp Mount Sill is perhaps the easiest peak to climb in the technical sense, but involves a long approach around the head of Palisade Basin to the low angle class two slopes of the west side, making for a very long day.

Meeting place and time: We will meet the first day at 7.30 a.m. 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. You should have had breakfast and be ready to do a pack check before carpooling to the trailhead

Itinerary: Day One: We will meet in Bishop, drive to the South Lake trailhead and head for the Bishop Pass. With a 2,000' gain over four miles the walk to Bishop Pass is moderate, but the high altitude makes the difference. We leave the main trail at the Pass and travel cross-country to Thunderbolt Col. This will take most of the day and travel here can be difficult with some large talus to cross. We can camp at the Col or we can drop down to a small tarn a few hundred feet below. (This is the place to be if the weather is iffy since the Col, while beautiful is very exposed to bad weather and wind).

Days Two through Four: These days are similar in that they share an early start for any of the attractive objectives in the area, described above. Depending on the weather and objectives of the group we may make the third day a rest day, or we may put the pedal to the metal and try to climb three big peaks in three days, a quite ambitious objective for anyone.

Day Five: We pack up and head out, aiming for a mid afternoon arrival back at the vehicles.

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: These are long climbs so we keep the ratio of one guide to two participants to ensure speed and efficiency climbing. We need to be off the peaks early to avoid encounters with afternoon thunderstorms

Notes and other information: Other than the summit blocks none of these peaks are extremely difficult but they all require roped travel and possibly the use of crampons and ice axes.

Guidebooks include Secor's "The High Sierra; Peaks, Passes and Trails" and "Climbing California's Fourteeners" by Porcella and Burns.

This trip requires spending most of five days above 12,000 feet so 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.

Prerequisites: Prior backpacking and hiking on and off trail. This is a physically demanding trip and you should have the ability to traverse broken uneven slopes with a multi-day pack. Other than the summit blocks none of these peaks are extremely difficult but they all require roped travel and possibly the use of crampons and ice axes.

Equipment List for The Fourteeners

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 may vary according to the time of year, and your individual requirements. Items on the list with an * may be rented from SMC.

Climbing equipment

- Ice Axe*. A standard 70 cm. general purpose axe will suffice.
- Crampons*. These should be matched to the boot. We suggest for very flexible boots the Charlet Moser G10 or Black Diamond Contact Clip; for stiffer boots the Black Diamond Sabretooth, the Moser G12 or Rambo.
- Harness.* An adjustable type such as a Black Diamond Alpine 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.
- Two locking carabiners and a couple of non-lockers.*
- Belay/rappel device*. An ATC style is preferred.

Other essentials

- Footwear. A pair of boots that can climb rock are needed and a medium-weight pair of leather mountaineering boots will be sufficient. In general you should wear the lightest boot you can get away with. We like the Sportiva Trango or Trango Plus for this route.
- Camp Shoes. A lightweight pair of tennies or Tevas to wear in camp. This will reduce vegetation damage at our campsites.
- Rock Shoes: optional but nice to have on the summit blocks.
- Large 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 is best since this 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'll need a separate climbing pack if your main pack won't compress sufficiently.
- Sleeping Bag. Summer trips are warm and a bag rated to about 25° will be sufficient except in the spring and late fall.
- Sleeping pad. A 3/4 or full length closed cell foam or Thermarest. If you bring a Thermarest also bring a repair kit.

Clothing

- 2 pair synthetic liner socks.
- 2 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks.
- Gaiters.
- Long underwear top. Capilene or some other synthetic is best.
- Long underwear 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. 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.
- Heavyweight gloves.
- Warm hat. Synthetics are less itchy than wool.
- 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.
- 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. 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, mild pain killer such as Advil and bandaids.
- Camera. Bring film and a spare battery to record the summits.
- 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.

Group 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 and cookwear.
- Climbing gear.
- Water purification. A sad but true fact of life is that much Sierra water is contaminated. Iodine may be used individually or the group will 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 since the area warrants their use.

You specifically don't need

- Cell phones. They rarely work 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.