



Mt. Gilbert Couloir Climb

This little-known route has become our favorite fall ice climb over the past few years. The approach from South Lake is reasonably short and takes but half a day. The gully we ascend is about 1,500' long and up to 65° steep before it ends with a pitch and a half of mid fifth class rock climbing. The summit view is outstanding featuring peaks of the Evolution region and beyond to Mt. Goddard and environs. The descent is not unpleasant and goes fairly quickly back to camp. What more could one ask for in a fall gully climb?

Meeting place and time: We will meet the first day at 8.00 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. We will meet for breakfast and will have a thorough pack check so don't plan on finalizing your packing until then.

Itinerary: Day One: The South Lake Trailhead west of Bishop in the South Fork of Bishop Creek is our starting point. We start on the Bishop Pass trail and then after 30 minutes take the Treasure Lakes trail for an hour or so. We then climb up slabs and circle around into the cirque below Thompson and Gilbert. The approach to camp is about 3-4 hours and we will have time to set up camp and review skills.

Day Two: We will get off to an early start and ascend the gully. The gully is pretty obvious, ending up just west of the actual summit. The bergschrund generally presents little problem but often the slopes below the gully are quite icy and, despite the low angle.

The first few rope lengths are best belayed from the right side of the gully and fixed anchors will usually not be found. After several rope lengths the gully narrows and belays will be better protected from falling ice if they are placed on the left side of the gully. Often the ice is good enough to provide ice screw belays and we use these since advised as the rock is often poor quality. The crux ice pitches are at the top of the gully and in good years these last two pitches approach 600 and are smooth, green, and narrow.

At the top of the gully we drop down twenty feet and then climb a fourth class corner and gully to just west of the summit. If you want more adventure we'll take the chimney directly above the couloir's top with some 5.6 climbing.

After doing this route a number of times we decided that a better route to camp was needed. So we pioneered a direct descent back down the NE ridge and then make a series of short rappels back into the cirque 20 minutes from camp.

We intend to return to the trailhead late in the afternoon of our climbing day.

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 is a technical ascent and we undertake it at a maximum ratio of 1:2.

Notes and other information: Guidebooks include Secor's "The High Sierra; Peaks, Passes and Trails", and "Sierra Classics" by Moynier and Fiddler. The best of course is "Eastern Sierra Ice" by SP Parker.

The SMC web site has photos, a map 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 better yet, camped at an even higher trailhead, such as the South Lake/Bishop Pass trailhead for a night just before the trip.

Cardinal Village Resort near North Lake is also a good lodging option. (760) 873.4789.

Please refer to our Planning for Success info sheet for more info.

Prerequisites: You do not need to have climbed steep ice before but basic snow travel skills are necessary as is an ascent of one of the moderate snow/ice gullies such as the Dana couloir or North Peak. Alternatively, if you've had a waterfall ice climbing course that will work, too.

Equipment List for Mt. Gilbert

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

- Ice Axe*. A standard 70 cm. general purpose axe will suffice for this route. A shorter tool is optional.
- Second Tool*. This should be an ice hammer and we recommend a straight shaft rather than a bent.
- 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 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.
- Camp Shoes. A lightweight pair of tennies or Tevas to wear in camp. This will reduce vegetation damage at our campsites.
- Large Pack. A 3000 to 4000 cubic inch will hold everything for the two days in 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.
- Sleeping Bag. Most fall trips are warm and a bag rated to about 20°F will be plenty warm enough.
- Sleeping pad. A 3/4 or full length closed cell foam or Thermarest. If you bring a Thermarest also bring a repair kit to fix pesky leaks.

Clothing

- 2 pair synthetic liner socks.
- 2 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks.
- Gaiters.
- Long underwear top. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable.
- Long underwear bottom.
- Warm pants. Tights or Expedition weight Capilene.
- Warm shirt. Synchronilla 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. The jacket must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- 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.
- 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.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. A 1 oz. bottle will be sufficient. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen.
- Camera/film/spare battery.
- Plastic Trash Sac. Handy for keeping in outside the tent should it rain.
- Optional reading material etc.

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, but 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.

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.