



Backcountry Hut Trips

A guided hut trip is an ideal introduction to enjoying the winter backcountry. Some times midwinter camping can be just plain cold, but a hut gives a perfect basecamp and a place to come back to and relax and warm up other than a tent. Our new hut is a Weatherport structure 14x20 feet in size. Constructed of plasticized fabric stretched over a steel frame and with a wood floor it provides sturdy shelter from the elements. Inside is a wood fired stove to keep things warm and to warm up boots in the morning, a gas lantern to provide light during those long winter nights and a gas stove to keep the hot chocolate coming in the evenings or coffee to start the morning. Outside we have tents to provide private sleeping accommodation at night. The hut will comfortably seat 10 to 15 people; with small group sizes (4 - 6 people) everyone is welcome to sleep in the hut but it can be more comfortable to sleep in your own tent outside.

Ski trips:

The hut area has a great range of options for skiing nearby. There is great run just out the door on the south side of Bishop Bowl or there are some narrow steep gullies further up Paiute Creek. But it is not just steep skiing and touring opportunities abound. A great high alpine tour is to head up to Wonder Lakes and loop back into the Paiute drainage. Lamarck Col is another ideal objective and gains us a view out over the incomparable Evolution drainage with Mounts Darwin and Mendel dominating the view.

Snowboard trips:

We have found that the hut is ideal for taking those first backcountry board adventures. The approach on a pair of snowshoes or a split board is straightforward. We can select terrain that is primarily up or down and so minimize the flats on the way back. The valley has a variety of aspects so we can always find something that is in condition.

Snowshoe trips:

We have found the hut is a great place for a family and kids who want to get out and experience the winter wonderland. For kids we can minimize the load on the back getting to the hut and then once there, there are plenty of hidden places to explore. We often build an igloo adjacent to the hut and give everyone the chance to sleep in it. How often does anyone get that chance these days?

What you need to bring: Skis, poles, skins, boots (if you do not own it ask us about where and what to rent), sleeping bag, warm clothing, and perhaps a camera and personal items. Consult the equipment list for more details.

What We Provide: The meals, avalanche beacons, snow shovels, the hut with sleeping pads and equipment.

Itinerary: The first night is at Cardinal Village Resort, up above Bishop, near Aspendel and at about 8,500'. The resort is an old style backcountry resort and the ideal place to start the vacation. Owners Shale Ann and Ken will house in one of their 100-year old (but now comfortably winterized) cabins and treat you to a hearty breakfast to start the day.

Day 1: We meet at Cardinal Village Resort at 8:30 am for a final equipment check and last minute packing. It is an easy but steady climb up the closed and snow covered Sabrina Lake Road, where we leave "civilization" behind and head the final couple of miles to the hut. The hut sits near North Lake near the Paiute Pass Trailhead, a half-mile short of the John Muir Wilderness boundary. This is an area of tranquil beauty with open meadows and lodgepole forest, offering a wide variety of skiing with wonderful downhill runs through the trees. Touring options include all day trips to Lamarck Col or Paiute Pass or more turn focused tours of pretty much any length or difficulty. It is about three miles tour to the hut all of which are done on a closed snow-covered road. We usually reach the hut with time for a good afternoon tour.

Day Two: We spend the morning touring around the area, getting as many turns in as possible before packing up and heading down the quick return to our cars.

On holiday weekends we generally schedule a three-day version of this trip, which allows a full day to tour around the area and get a little farther a field.

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). Shared accommodation the first night at Cardinal Village is included. Private cabins are available at a separate rate. Ask for more details on this.

Notes and other information: We have designed these trips for backcountry users of all abilities. For beginners we pick our route to make it as easy as possible for those who are not yet fully comfortable on skis but we can accommodate more proficient skiers. Since your guides are accomplished skiers and instructors there will be opportunity to get tips and instruction on backcountry technique as the tour progresses.

If you do not own ski, board equipment or snowshoes consult us about where and what to rent. You'll also need a sleeping bag, warm clothing, and perhaps a camera and personal items. Not much – using the hut make sit really easy. With careful selection of gear your pack should be no more than about 20 pounds for the ski to the hut.

Skiing Ability and Prerequisites: "SMC Backcountry Level I" and upwards and "SMC Intermediate Ski Skills" and upwards. You do not need to have prior winter camping experience and many participants have not slept out in a tent in the snow before taking this program. You do need to be in reasonable physical shape to make the trip to the hut and once again we suggest that you spend a much time as you can acclimatizing, letting your body adapt to the high elevation.

Equipment List for Hut trips

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 marked with a * are items that we rent or we can coordinate rentals with a local shop.

Essentials

- Skis*. Metal edge telemark mountaineering skis or alpine touring skis are essential. Better too short than too long. Get them tuned and waxed and check the bindings for tightness and boot fit prior to the trip. We can coordinate telemark and alpine touring rentals from Wilson's Sports (760) 873-7520 or Mammoth Mountaineering (760) 934-4191.
- or
- Snowboard*. Get it tuned and waxed and check the bindings for tightness and boot fit prior to the trip. We can coordinate board and split board rentals from Mammoth Mountaineering (760) 934-4191.
- and/or
- Snowshoes*. We use the lexan framed MSR style, but any modern snowshoe works well. We have these available for rent.
- Boots*. Stiff, high top ski boots in good condition and waterproofs. Black Diamond T-2 and 3 are some examples of acceptable telemark boots. For Alpine touring we recommend the Scarpa Lasers, Garamont or Dynafit boots. Make sure your boots are a comfortable fit for walking and skiing. For boarders there is a lot of choice, but a stiffer backcountry type boot will work better in the snowshoe binding, enable you to kick steps up hard snow and keep the feet drier than a soft boot. For snowshoers a heavy duty hiking or mountaineering boot is best. You must have warm dry feet! We can coordinate boot rental from Wilson's Sports (760) 873-7520 or Mammoth Mountaineering (760) 934-4191.
- Poles*. Telescoping probe type are best
- Climbing skins*. Close to the width of the skis' waist. Make sure the glue is in good shape. Same for split board skins.
- Internal frame backpack of about 2000 cubic inches
- Sleeping bag. This should be rated to about 10°F or for mid winter trips to about 0°F

Clothing

- 2 pair synthetic liner socks
- 2 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks
- Gaiters are not always necessary, depending on your boot system. If in doubt, please ask.
- Long underwear top and bottom. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable
- Warm pants. Tights or Expedition weight Capilene
- Warm shirt. Expedition Capilene or light Synchilla
- Another fuzzy sweater top of some sort
- Light down jacket; synthetic fill is second choice. This is optional & replaces the previous item (don't bring both)
- Good quality rain/wind pants and rain jacket. Must be water proof and jacket must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- Warm hat
- Visor hat (for sun)
- Bandanna, surgical mask; something for facial and neck sun protection
- Liner gloves
- Shell gloves
- Light weight down booties for evenings in the hut

Etc.

- Sunglasses, high quality with keeper leash. The type with side shields are recommended. If you wear corrective glasses you might want a second pair
- Ear plugs for noisy tents/sleeping partners.
- Personal kit; tooth brush, etc.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen. A 1oz bottle will be sufficient
- Two 1-quart plastic water bottles with insulating jackets
- Personal first aid kit, foot care, and any required medications. We will have a large group medical kit; go light on your own kit. Bring plenty of blister treatment items.
- Headlamp with extra batteries and bulb
- Camera, film and spare batteries

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 gear that will be provided and divided amongst the group prior to starting the trip

- One shovel for each person
- Avalanche transceiver for each person

You specifically don't need

- ⊙ Cell phones. They do not 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.