



Introduction to Backcountry Touring

The Sierra Nevada backcountry in winter and spring is a truly wonderful place and a very different experience from summer. The spring ski tours in the Sierra are the best to be found anywhere in the world. And with long days, great snow, spectacular settings, and fantastic skiing it's no wonder these are our favorite trips. But it's important to acquire some backcountry travel skills before heading out to truly enjoy it all. Perhaps you have skied before or have some backpacking experience and are looking to extend your season. Or maybe you are an experienced downhill skier seeking to move beyond the resort but are not yet sure about how you will like being out in the winter and snowy spring. This three day, two night course is designed to give you the skills and confidence to head out on longer trips. If you have not done an extended trip, but want to get out on some of our longer trips we highly recommend this program first.

The trip ventures into the lovely Glass Creek area north of Mammoth and west of Highway 395, just south of the June Mountain ski area. Here the snow covered Glass Creek Meadow offers rolling terrain with beautiful vistas of high peaks, volcanic cones and lava flows, and the opportunity to tour through the largest old-growth forests outside of designated Wilderness in the Eastern Sierra; an ideal place for your first winter camping experience.

Itinerary: After meeting for breakfast we will car-pool (some vehicles can be left at the Forest Service visitor center in Mammoth) to the parking area and take the rest of the day to travel up old roads and open slopes to camp alongside Glass Creek. Along the way we'll cover the basics of travelling on skis with a full pack and also learn and practice basic backcountry skiing techniques including use of climbing skins and doing kick turns. Two nights camped in the backcountry will allow plenty of practice in the all-important art of snow camping. The balance of the time we'll work on skiing skills with lots of practice on how to ski with a pack, succeed at icy traverses, become proficient with avalanche beacons, as well as working on all a round survival skiing skills.

We anticipate being back at the roadhead the last day by late afternoon.

Topics covered include:

- Campsite selection
- Snow camping tips and tricks
- Kitchen and cooking skills
- Skiing with an overnight pack
- Uphill skills and setting a track
- Backcountry ski skills: traverses, kick turns, downhill skills
- Avalanche awareness
- Staying comfortable and having a good time

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 first 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. After breakfast we'll have a equipment check with tips on appropriate equipment for winter backcountry travel, packing your pack, and general backcountry skills.

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 gear, avalanche beacons, tents, kitchen gear and dinners, lunches and breakfasts (you bring snack items).

Notes and other information: For a map look at the Mammoth Mountain 7.5 minute map.

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.

Gear and equipment: SMC does not rent ski equipment, but we work with Mammoth Mountaineering (760 934 4191) to get you set up on the correct equipment. MMS has a very wide range of rental equipment that is probably the best you will find anywhere in California. All gear is current state of the art, well tuned and rental fees are deductible if you buy a set up from them. (We highly recommend renting before you buy so as to find what suits you best, since a full setup is pretty pricy). We can coordinate the rental but suggest that you arrive Mammoth the night before and get fully set up since boot fitting can take some time. If this is not possible we will take time to get gear the morning of Day One but if it is already taken care of we can get out and ski sooner.

Introduction to Touring Skills Equipment List

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 will vary according to the time of year, and your individual requirements.

Items on the list with an * may be rented from SMC 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 check the bindings for tightness and boot fit prior to the trip. We can coordinate telemark and alpine touring rentals from Mammoth Mountaineering (760) 934-4191.
- Boots*. Stiff, high top boots in good condition and waterproofs. Asolo Extreme and Snopine, Merrell Ultra, and ScarpaT-2 and T-3 are some examples of acceptable telemark boots. For Alpine touring we recommend the Garmont, Lowa or Dynafit boots. Make sure your boots are a comfortable fit for walking and skiing. We can coordinate boot rental from Mammoth Mountaineering (760) 934-4191.
- Climbing skins.* These should be close to the width of the ski's waist. Make sure the glue is in good shape.
- Poles. * Telescoping probe type are best.
- Internal frame backpack. 4000-4500 cubic inches is the minimum and if your gear is compact is a good size, 3000" for basecamp trips.
- Sleeping bag and pad. A good set up is a 10 degree down bag, full length foam pad and an Ultralite 3/4 Thermarest. A compression stuff sack for your bag will buy you some room in the pack especially if you have a synthetic bag. Wilsons rents these.

Clothing

- 2 pair synthetic liner socks
- 2 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks. Some people like to use using vapor barrier or neoprene socks.
- Gaiters.
- 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 & can replace the previous item
- Rain/wind pants & rain jacket. Preferably Goretex or similar and of good quality with a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- Warm hat that covers the ears.
- Visor hat (for sun).
- Bandanna, surgical mask; for facial and neck sun protection.
- Liner gloves. Midweight capilene, windstopper or similar is best.
- Shell gloves or mittens.
- Down booties or similar for in camp. These should come as high as possible to avoid getting snow down inside them.

Etc.

- Sunglasses, high quality with keeper leash. Side shields are recommended. If you wear corrective glasses you might want a second pair.
- Ear plugs for noisy tents.
- 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.
- Eating utensils. Bowl, cup (insulated types work best), fork & spoon.
- A Swiss Army type knife.
- Large black plastic trash bag for gear storage outside of tents

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
- One probe per two people
- First aid kit
- Ski repair kit

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.