



Mount Langley Ascent

We all have to start our mountaineering somewhere and often we do not yet have the skills for technical climbing. Perhaps you do not want to acquire the skills for technical climbs or perhaps you just want to get out and experience the high mountains and climb a 14,000 foot peak.

If so then an ascent of Mt. Langley is a great place to start.

Mount Langley at 14,042 feet is the southern most of the California fourteen thousand foot peaks and the last major summit as one heads south in the Sierra Nevada. The ascent from Cottonwood Lakes is straightforward and a lot of elevation is gained via a trail before a talus scramble over large blocks to the summit.

Langley has had a checkered history and the peak's close proximity to Mt. Whitney led to much confusion amongst early ascensionists. The redoubtable Clarence King made what was probably the second ascent in 1871 in clouds and poor visibility believing that he had made the first ascent of Mt. Whitney. He left the area and returned to the east coast before his mistake was discovered. Frantically returning west King returned too late and found that a group of local Lone Pine fishermen had beaten him to the highest point in the lower 48.

We assure you that we will not be making similar mistakes!

Itinerary: The ascent of Mt. Langley is not technically difficult at all and does not require ropes or technical climbing equipment. However the elevation is a major concern and it is easy to get high on the peak without allowing sufficient time for the body to acclimatize to the elevation. So we recommend a careful timing of the ascent to avoid altitude related illness. The Horseshoe Meadows road allows us to drive to over 10,000 feet making this one of the higher trailheads in the Sierra Nevada. From the trailhead the trail climbs steadily, but not steeply to our basecamp at "Lake Four" in the Cottonwood Basin. The area makes up for the unimaginative naming with stunning high alpine scenery and meadows. We leave early in the morning and follow the disused Old Army Pass Trail to the Pass. From here the route is cross country across a high alpine plateau with sparse vegetation amidst rocky tors. The final five hundred feet involve Class two scrambling to the summit plateau from where we get spectacular views of Mt. Whitney, Lone Pine Peak and north into the heart of the Sierra Nevada. We generally plan upon returning to the trailhead in the late afternoon of Day Two.

Meeting place and time: We will meet in Lone Pine. If we are making an early morning meeting it will be at the Mt. Whitney Restaurant for breakfast at 8.00 a.m. The restaurant is at the traffic light in the center of town on the west side of the highway. We will confirm details when we talk with you prior to the trip.

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: This is a straightforward ascent, but we keep the ratio to about 1:5 maximum so that everyone gets appropriate levels of care.

Notes and other information: For maps look at the Mt. Langley and Cirque Peak 7.5 minute maps. Guide books include Secor's "The High Sierra; Peaks, Passes and Trails" and "Climbing California's Fourteeners" by Porcella and Burns.

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 the trailhead at Cottonwood Meadows

Prerequisites: You do not need to have prior climbing experience. Good physical condition and the will to climb is the main thing.

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 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

This may only be required in early season. We will let you know if you need this gear.

- Ice Axe*. A standard 70 cm. General purpose axe will suffice for most routes.
- 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.

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.
- 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 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°C 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 undesirable holes.
- Bivvy Sac. Only if using a Megamid or sleeping out under the stars.

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. Synchronia 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 clothing 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.
- Shorts for on the trail.
- Tee shirt for on the trail.
- Polypropylene or similar gloves.
- Warm hat. Synthetics are less itchy than wool.
- Sunhat.

Etc.

- Sun glasses. Good quality with side shields.
- 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..
- 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 enough. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen.
- Bug repellent. Only needed in the early season.
- Camera/film/spare battery.
- Plastic Trash Sac. Handy for keeping in outside the tent should it rain.
- 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.
- Optional reading material etc.
- Food. We provide the main meals on scheduled trips. You need to bring drinks (hot and cold) and your favorite snacks. Food is not included on custom trips but can be provided at additional cost. We will discuss this when arranging the trip.

Shared 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. 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.
- 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 items 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.