



Mendel Couloirs

Mt. Mendel, 13,710', sports the two best known gully ice climbs in the Sierra. Logically known as Mendel Left and Mendel Right, the couloirs split the impressive north face of the mountain and offer two tantalizing choices to the summit. First climbed in the late 1950's this remains one of the most highly coveted ice climbs in the range and Mendel Right is regarded "the" classic Sierra ice route - legend has it that Chouinard invented the curved pick on this climb. The route offers up to ten pitches of climbing that approach 65 degrees at their steepest with a final 5.6 rock pitch completing the climb. Often midway up there is a chockstone that melts out of the couloir creating the crux of the climb.

The left gully, also known as Ice Nine, was first climbed ten year later than Mendel Right, in 1967, and offers a more challenging climb. You may see Mendel Left and Ice Nine described as two separate routes but they are indeed one and the same. Conditions vary tremendously but at its best the climb is a narrow twisting gully, inclined at up to 80 degrees (and some vertical sections) and often little more than two feet wide of continuous ice to nearly the top of the. In drier years the vertical sections are steep rock chimneys and are very challenging.

Following a winter with plenty of snow September is the prime time for these routes but in drier years July and August are best.

We usually guide the right hand climb but the choice is yours. In either case the climb is sure to be a great adventure to the top of one of the High Sierra's great summits.

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: The approach hike begins west of Bishop at the North Lake trailhead, elevation 9,300'. Lamarck Col is the destination and at over 13,000' it's a grind. Only 6 miles from the cars, it takes most of the day. Lamarck Col is one of the gateways to Kings Canyon National Park but we seldom see other parties on the trail. There are several choices of camp spots; sometimes we camp on a sandy bench partway down from the Col. Other times we drop all the way to the canyon bottom and camp at some of the tiny lakes in upper Darwin Canyon.

The second day sees us out of camp before first light, climbing up a steep, loose moraine bound for the bergschrund at the base of the couloirs, which are only a few hundred feet apart. Either choice of route takes us to the summit and our descent is via second and third class scrambling to the east.

We reverse our steps on the third day, taking a final grand view from Lamarck Col.

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: We undertake this at a maximum ratio of 1:3.

Notes: 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. Get it from Maximus Press.

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 would do the trick 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 in Bishop Creek near North Lake is also a good lodging option. Please refer to our Planning for Success info sheet for more info.

Prerequisites: Technical ice climbing skills are required: you should be able to comfortably follow 60-80 degree ice with a day pack at 13,000 feet of elevation.

Equipment List for Mendel Couloirs

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.
- 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.* A step-in type works best such as a Black Diamond Alpine Bod.
- 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°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 if you choose to sleep 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. 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. 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.
- 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 1oz. 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 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.