



The Palisades Traverse

Feeling strong? Had some good solid alpine experience and wanting to done of the great Sierra traverses? Want to spend a couple of days above 13,000 feet and able to climb technical terrain with a multi-day pack?

If you can say yes to all of these questions then is traverse will be a great one for you. And along the way you will tag the summits of five of California's fourteen thousand foot peaks without having to descend down off the main Sierra Crest.

Meeting place and time: The course meets at the parking area at the end of the Glacier Creek Road at 8.00 a.m. on the first day of the trip. Follow Glacier Lodge Road west out of the town of Big Pine. A road turns left into Glacier Lodge and we may park vehicles in there, but we will meet in the day-use parking area. Most vehicles will take about 20 minutes to get here from Big Pine as it's a gain of 3,500'. We will do a gear check here and distribute group equipment.

Itinerary: The longer a trip is in the mountains, the more vague the itinerary need be. We have built some slack into the program to accommodate changes in weather etc. It is possible to complete the climb in a shorter time but in the mountains it is always to have more time than less. And if we have extra time there are other peaks to climb and views to enjoy.

Day One: We will meet at the Glacier Lodge trailhead, pack, do an equipment check and head on up the trail to the Palisade Glacier. Our packs are going to be trimmed to the bare minimum and we should be able to head up the trail fairly easily. Our goal will be to camp at the moraine camp on the edge of the Palisade Glacier. This is a climb from about 7800 at Glacier Lodge to 12,400 so you had better arrive to the program well acclimatized.

Day Two: we start climbing from the north end of the traverse, ascending Thunderbolt first. Our route here is via the North Couloir where the crux may be getting over the bergschrund. Moderate snow leads to the 'Lightning Rod' sub summit of Thunderbolt. The summit block on T'bolt (14,003') is the hardest rock climbing on the whole traverse but we do not need to carry packs up and over this so it will not be too bad. Then it is down the ridge to the top of the Underhill Couloirs. There is room here to spend the night and if the weather turns this also gives us a good point to get off the ridge. (No, we do not want to be here if there is any chance of an electrical storm)

Day Three: The ridge heads on up to Starlight Peak with a few sections of 5th class climbing, but primarily 4th class. The summit "Milkbottle" ultimate point of Starlight (14,200') is also a little tricky to gain, but we know the tricks here. The summit of North Palisade looks not far off and it is not. But unfortunately we have to drop several hundred feet over technical terrain and then reascend to get there So what on flat ground would be a one minute stroll will take us a couple of hours. North Palisade's summit (14,242') is no problem at all and then we traverse, downclimb and rappel into the head of U-Notch. The wind always seems to whistle though this notch making it a less than pleasant place to spend the night so we head on up Polemonium. Out of the notch gives us some 5.6 climbing and then we can drop packs and scramble to the exposed summit. (14,100') Once again easy ground is 'just over there' but we have to put in a lot of work to get there by retracing our steps rappelling into a gully and re-ascending. Now we can relax and look for a spot for the night.

Day Four: This day is easy. We traverse above the top of V-notch and over to the top of Mt. Sill's North Couloir. We can drop packs here and head up to the top of Mt. Sill (14,153') This peak has perhaps the best view of anywhere in the Sierra and we can see from the Mammoth area to south of Whitney. But too soon it is time to go down so we pick up packs and head to the glacier below.

Day Five: Head out, arriving at the trailhead by early afternoon.

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 long climb so we keep the ratio of one guide to two participants to ensure speed and efficient climbing.

Prerequisites: You should be able to comfortably follow multi-pitch 5.6 with a daypack and mountaineering experience with ice axe and crampon use. This is a physically demanding trip and you should be in good condition and have the ability to traverse broken uneven slopes with a moderate pack.

Special Notes: The best guidebook is Peter Croft's "The Good, The Great, and the Awesome". Get it from Maximus Press. <http://www.maximuspress.com> You can also get our unpublished SMC Guide to The Palisades on-line. 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 one of the campgrounds in Big Pine Creek for a night just before the trip. Glacier Lodge is also a good lodging option. Please refer to our Planning for Success info sheet for more info.

Equipment List for Mt. Sill, Swiss Arete

The following list is a general guide and will assist you in packing for the program. Remember that this is an alpine climb and you want to pare everything down to the minimum since you have to carry it up on technical climbing. 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 * can be provided by SMC.

Climbing equipment

- 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/rappele device*. An ATC style is preferred.
- Comfortable rock shoes sized large enough so that you can wear them all day. See below.

Other essentials

- Footwear. A pair of boots that can climb rock are needed and a medium-weight pair of leather mountaineering boots will be sufficient. In general you should wear the lightest boot you can get away with. We like the Sportiva Trango or Trango Plus for this route. You can also climb in rock shoes but that means you will have to carry your bigger boots.
- Pack*. A 3000 cubic inch will hold everything for the climb. It should be well cut and hug the body. A narrow profile will be best for climbing with. Use the smallest pack that you can get away with.
- Sleeping Bag. A bag rated to about 25° will be plenty warm enough except in the spring and late fall.
- 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

- 1 pair synthetic liner socks.
- 1 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks.
- Long underwear top and bottom. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable.
- 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 clothing is unnecessary. Side zips on the pants should be long enough to slide on over boots. Must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- Tee shirt for on the trail
- Polypropylene or similar gloves and shells.
- Warm hat.
- 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
- 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.
- 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 enough. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen.
- Camera. Bring film and a spare battery to record those summit moments.
- Plastic Trash Sac. Handy for keeping gear in outside the tent should it rain.

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. A bivvy sac will be appropriate. Talk to us if you do not have one.
- 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.