



The Third Hulk Linkup

If you have done the classic hard routes on Temple Crag and are ready for the next step up in difficulty this is it. The Third Pillar is one of the most aesthetic and difficult Sierra climbs - perfect granite high above Mono Lake, with spectacular views out into the Nevada desert. This route has an almost European feel to it and is one of the most aesthetic and difficult Sierra climbs - perfect granite high above Mono Lake, with spectacular views out into the Nevada desert. But this is only the appetizer for the main course – the Red Dihedral on the Incredible Hulk. Ten pitches of stellar cracks, mainly 5.7 to 5.9 with a short 5.10b section that is over before you even start to get pumped.

Meeting Place and time: We meet at the parking lot for Tioga Lake at 7.00 a.m.. The trailhead is at Tioga Lake on Highway 120, just short of a mile from the Tioga Pass entrance station to Yosemite National Park and 11 miles from Lee Vining and Highway 395. Park at the Tioga lake pullout (with bathroom) at the north end of the lake (9440 feet).

Itinerary: This is the easiest day. We meet in Lee Vining and head to the parking area at the trailhead near Tioga Lake around 7:30. The approach hike takes about two hours and is initially through pleasant timberline forest and later above the tree line on the Dana Plateau.

The plateau is a wide expanse of high alpine tundra and finding the top of the route can be tricky, but we have been here many times before. After caching unnecessary items on the summit a short descent takes us to the base of a huge sweeping slab of rock.

Early season ascents also have the added excitement of a short snow slope to cross in order to reach the start.

The first pitch is a good warm up and is 5.8, with a layback crack. A fourth class pitch follows, then the fun begins. The third pitch is tricky with some route finding issues that slow down parties lacking our familiarity with the route, and is consistently 5.9 and features an awkward wide crack. The fourth pitch also has variations, the easiest having a great 5.8 layback and a chimney. The fifth pitch is usually considered to be the crux, a poorly protected (that's what we're there for...) 5.10 move leads from the belay to easier climbing, making for a short pitch.

The route gets steadily more difficult until you reach the final pitch, which has been understatedly described as "the best 5.9 in the universe".

The climb ends abruptly as one pulls over the top onto the horizontal a few feet away from the cached gear. We relax in the sun some before heading back to the roadhead.

Day Two. A kind of rest day after yesterday's exertions, we take a leisurely start to the day and then drive to to the trailhead parking area at Twin Lakes. This parking area is private land and there is a \$5.00 per night fee to use it. With less than 2,000' of gain the walk to the base of the Hulk is moderate, and we should arrive in camp by lunch. The last bit of the approach involves some talus, brush and a beaver swamp but considering it's less than four hours from the car to camp we're doing ok.

Day three: We get up early and head for the climb. Expect 8-10 hours on route and an hour back to camp where we'll rest a bit and hike out, which should take less than three hours.

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 technical climb and we limit the ratio to two climbers to one guide. This enhances safety and ensures a timely arrival at the summit before potential weather changes.

Notes: The best guidebooks are Supertopo's "High Sierra Climbing" by Chris McNamara and Peter Croft's "The Good, The Great, and the Awesome". Get them from Maximus Press. <http://www.maximuspress.com>
You can also get our detailed unpublished SMC Guide to The Third Pillar 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 or camped at the trailhead campground would do the trick. Please refer to our Planning for Success info sheet for more info.

Prerequisites: You need to be able to follow at the 5.10 level and have experience on multi pitch routes.

Equipment List for the Third Pillar of Dana

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.

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

Other essentials

- Light approach shoes. Tennies are too light and since it is off trail travel a pair of shoes/boots with sufficient ankle support are recommended.
- Climbing pack. Something to put it all in. You will have a share of the group climbing equipment so allow for this as well as your personal gear.

Clothing:

- Clothing for warm or cold, wet or dry
- 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. Jacket must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- Lightweight gloves
- 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).
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. A 1oz. 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.
- Ski poles. These are not essential, but can be handy on the trail. It is your choice, but they do save the knees.
- Snack food for on the climb and maybe some treats to leave at the top to celebrate with.