



Mt. Thompson Couloir Climbs

Mt. Thompson is Mt Gilbert's neighbor not too far from South Lake in Bishop Creek. Although pretty close (by Sierra standards) to the road this fine climbs sees very little traffic and offers several short fun gully climbs that end some distance from the summit. We sometimes pair one of these gully climbs with an ascent of Gilbert and this program is our scheduled Fall Ice Seminar. As well any the ascent also makes for an ideal two-day ascent to a good central Sierra viewpoint in a pristine alpine valley.

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: Day One: The South Lake Trailhead west of Bishop in the South Fork of Bishop Creek is our starting point. We start on the Bishop Pass trail and then after 30 minutes take the Treasure Lakes trail for an hour or so. We then climb up slabs and circle around into the cirque below Thompson and Gilbert The approach to camp is about 3-4 hours and we will have time to set up camp and review skills.

Day Two: We will get off to an early start and ascend one of the gullies. There are three obvious couloirs on the north face. Recently modern climbers seem to have wanted their piece of the action and the couloirs have been called (named from the east) the Knudtson, Smrz and Harrington Couloirs. However Norman Clyde is said to have climbed Thompson over twenty times and it seems unlikely that this prolific first ascensionist and climber of most of the Palisade couloirs would have missed out on these, especially since they would not have tested his skills excessively.

All are about the same level of steepness with the presence or absence of water ice determining the difficulty. So we will take our pick.

Once at the top we leave the snow and ice gear at the top and hike for about 30 minutes up the easy slopes to the summit and a great view of the Goddard and Paiute areas.

Descent is pretty easy and we have recently made it easier by upgrading the rappel anchors down the couloir. Before long we are back in camp and packing up to head out.

We intend to return to the trailhead late in the afternoon of our climbing day

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 technical ascents and we undertake them at a maximum ratio of 1:2.

Notes and other information: 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.

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, 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 near North Lake is also a good lodging option. (760) 873.4789.

Please refer to our Planning for Success info sheet for more info.

Prerequisites: You do not need to have climbed steep ice before but you need basic ice climbing skills combined with overnight backpacking experience with off trail travel.

Equipment List for Mt. Gilbert

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. A shorter tool is optional.
- 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°F 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 pesky leaks.

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.
- 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 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 in the mountains 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.