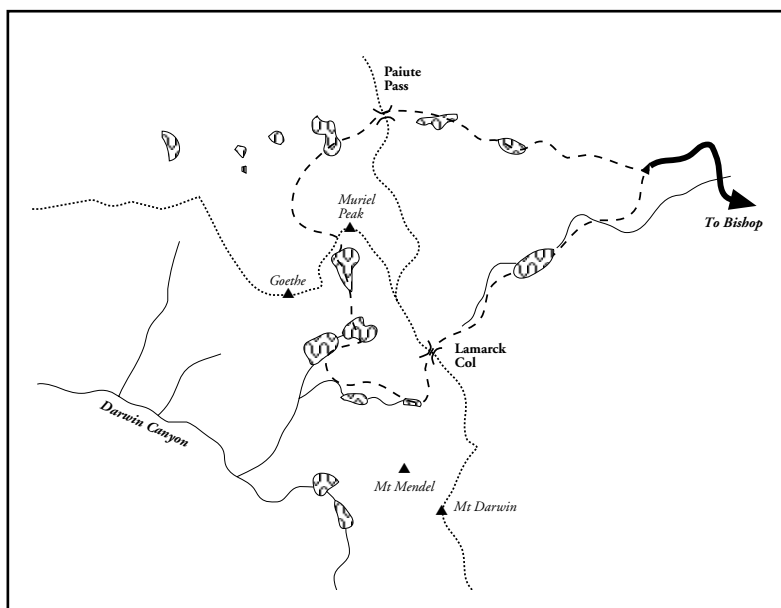




Tour de Darwin; Paiute to Lamarck



A great loop tour, this trip starts and finishes near North Lake, above Bishop Creek. We ascend Paiute Creek up into the wonderful ski terrain in the Alpine Col region. If time allows we can drop packs to enjoy long runs on nearby Goethe Peak or perhaps Mt. Darwin. Highlights include great views of the entire Evolution area and northern Kings Canyon National Park. With two major pass crossings we find it to be a great introduction to more complex backcountry tours. It is also a great tune up for the longer harder trips such as the High Route and we have skiers who do this tour first as a warm up before the High Route.

Itinerary: Our first day is an easy day to aid in acclimatization as we take the road from Aspendell to our hut at North Lake. We review avalanche rescue procedures that day and on the second day we head up the North Fork of Bishop Creek leaving

behind the trees and cross Paiute Pass, camping the second night above treeline near Alpine Col, in the great glacial cirque below Mt. Goethe. The third day starts with a short and steep haul over Alpine Col but then brings us to our home for the next night, the Darwin Bench. Situated right at treeline this area has incredible views of the Mt. Goddard region to the west, down precipitous Evolution Canyon. The last day climb up and over Lamarck Col, passing below the giant peaks of the region: Mounts Mendel and Darwin and a great couple of thousand foot run, generally on perfect corn snow carving wide turns back to our starting point near North Lake.

Though it's only thirty miles in length this trip packs a lot into its distance. Whether you've skied other tours or if you are aspiring to do some of the longer, more difficult routes like the Monarch Divide tour or High Route, this is a great trip through some of the most spectacular terrain in the Sierra.

Meeting place and time: We will meet the first day at 8.00 am 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.

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 gear, avalanche beacons, tents, kitchen gear and dinners, lunches and breakfasts (you bring snack items).

Length: 20 miles **Duration** 4 days **Difficulty:** SMC tour rating II

Other information: For a good overview see the Inyo National Forest John Muir/Ansel Adams Wilderness map (but please don't bring it on the trip...). The SMC web site has photos, our own topo map, trip profile 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 day or two just before the trip.

Prerequisites: You need intermediate ski skills for this tour. You should be able to ski intermediate ski area runs confidently and be proficient at kick turns, traversing on 30 degree slopes, side slipping and Christie turns all while carrying a pack of about 35 pounds. Prior winter camping and mountaineering skills are advised. You will be travelling up to seven miles a day and gaining up to 3000 feet a day so a very good level of aerobic fitness is required.