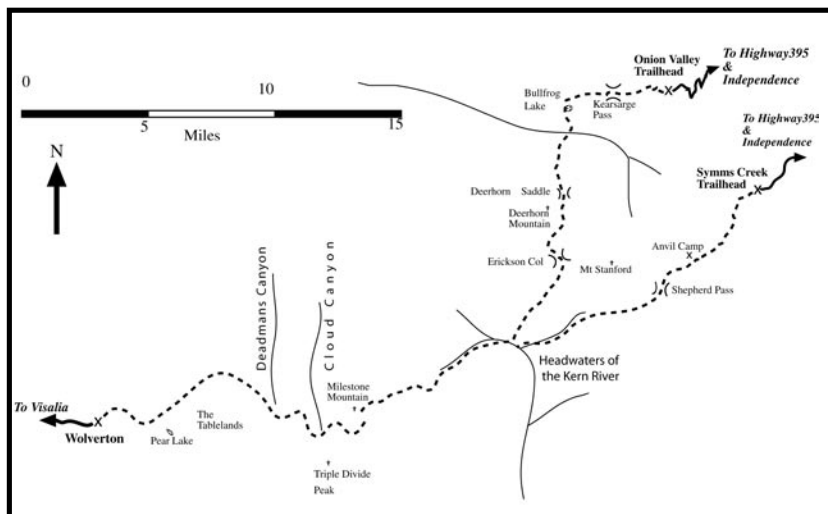




Sierra High Route



This is "it"; the ultimate Sierra Classic ski tour. First skied in its entirety in 1975 by Sierra veteran Dave Beck, this subtle line linking high passes and long contours around huge snow filled bowls has become the goal of many a backcountry skier. Starting in the low desert of the Eastern Sierra and crossing some of the more rugged parts of the Sierra Nevada this is not a tour for the beginning skier. Often compared to the famous "Haute Route" of the European Alps or Colorado's Tenth Mountain Trail, this is a true extended wilderness ski tour, with no huts, few other people and no nearby roads. For the experienced backcountry skier with good backcountry skills it will be a truly outstanding venture; the essence of ski mountaineering.

Itinerary: We offer two variation starts to this wonderful route:

- The classic and original route starts from the sagebrush and pines west of Independence and ascends Symmes Creek spending the first night at Anvil Camp. The next day we cross Shepherd Pass before descending Tyndall Creek to the Kern River and camp alongside Milestone Creek.
- For those with a little more time we offer our favorite variation start that offers uniquely remote travel and steeper pass crossings than the regular route. For this we start at Onion Valley and cross Kearsarge Pass, dropping down past Bullfrog Lake to Bubbs Creek. Travelling up Vidette Creek we crossing Deerhorn Saddle and Erickson Col before rejoining the regular route at Milestone Creek.

Both variations join in the upper reaches of the Kern River where we climb up Milestone Creek, climbing to just below the summit of imposing Milestone Mountain as we follow the divide between the Kings, Kern and Kaweah Rivers. Steady contours lead us around vast bowls of prime snow and the legendary slopes of Cloud and Deadmans Canyons. The problem here is resisting the overwhelming temptation to drop the packs and ski a several thousand foot run to the valley floor below; and then be faced with the long haul back up.

Miles of gentle downhill takes us through the amazing undulating Tablelands, below Alta Peak, and down to the giant sequoias at Wolverton. From here we are picked up by our shuttle van and head to Visalia airport, where a charter flight will take us back over our tracks to Independence in a scant 45 minutes.

No matter which start variation you choose, this is one of the finest ski tours in the world and one to be long remembered.

Meeting place and time: We rendezvous at 7.00 am trip at the Winnedumah Hotel in beautiful downtown Independence the first morning of the trip. The hotel is in the center of town on the west side of Highway 395 - not hard to find since Independence extends barely a half mile. We leave some vehicles at the Independence airport before doing a through equipment check and shuttling to the roadhead.

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: 36 or 37 miles **Duration in days** 6 or 7 days

Difficulty: SMC tour rating III

Notes and 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, a 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. This is a long tour and pack weight needs to be kept as low as possible. We will be carefully selecting equipment to reduce weight and we will work with you to ensure that packs do not weigh more than about 45 pounds plus the weight of your skis when we start out. For those coming from the Bay area, or nearby, we will try to arrange a flight prior to the trip. If there are enough people to warrant this you will drive to and meet the plane the evening before the trip starts.

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Prerequisites: You need advanced ski skills for this tour. You should be able to ski advanced ski area runs confidently and be proficient at kick turns, traversing on 40 degree slopes, side slipping and parallel or telemark turns all while carrying a pack of about 40 pounds. Prior winter camping and mountaineering skills are required. You will be travelling up to seven miles a day and gaining up to 3000 feet a day so an excellent level of aerobic fitness is required.