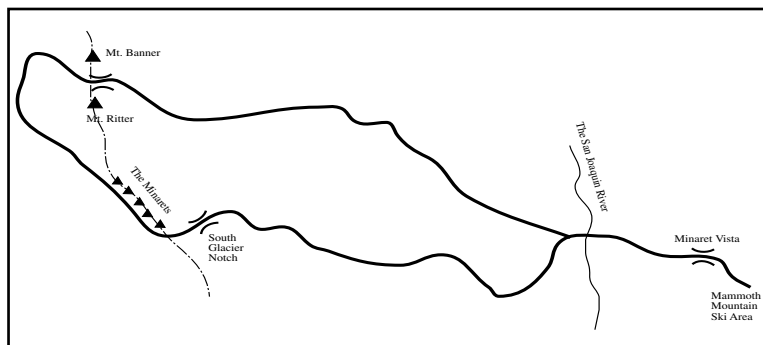




The Ritter Range Circumnavigation



Anyone who has driven Highway 395 towards Mammoth has seen the Ritter Range on the skyline with the large bulky peaks of Ritter and Banner alongside the serrated spires of the Minarets. Even better is the view from up on Mammoth Mountain where the range and its peaks dominates the skyline and in winter the snow covered slopes and valleys just ask to be skied. This is a new trip for us and one that is not traveled at all by others despite the proximity to Mammoth and the ease of access into this area. Our goal is a loop starting in Mammoth and along the way hopefully summiting the main

peaks of the range. The travel itself is not particularly difficult and so this trip will appeal to all levels of skier. If you want to explore the area and travel through one of the most beautiful areas of the Sierra this is an ideal trip. If you also want to ski a couple of the most spectacular peaks in the range as well then this opportunity is yours as well and not to be missed. This is a fast paced tour but with straightforward skiing and only one steep pass crossing, it is not as extreme as some of our longer trips. Packs will also be as light as we can make them so we can travel smoothly and efficiently.

Itinerary: After meeting and sorting gear and equipment we travel to Mammoth Mountain and park in the backcountry parking at the Mammoth Inn. We take the snow covered road to Minaret Vista and then start our long descent down towards Agnew Meadows heading up the San Joaquin River, turning up the steep (and probably melted out) Shadow Lake Trail. Day Two sees us taking a spectacular shortcut across Volcanic Ridge and then climbing beneath the steep south face of Clyde Minaret into the heart of the Minarets. A short steep pass takes us to the little visited west side of the range and to camp at Amphitheater Lake. From here we link together small passes and head to camp at Lake Catherine. We ski across Thousand Island Lake visiting a few of the islands and then drop into the head of the San Joaquin River near Agnew Pass. We could ski straight down the Rush Creek drainage, but to keep things interesting and the views expansive we cut over San Joaquin ridge and drop down Fern Creek to our shuttle pick up at on the June Lake Loop.

Meeting place and time: We will meet in Mammoth at the Breakfast Club for breakfast, introductions, and trip outline at 7:30 a.m. the first morning of the trip. The Breakfast Club is located on Highway 203 (the access road to Mammoth from Highway 395) at the first traffic light you encounter, adjacent to the Shell Station. This is the intersection of Highway 203 and Old Mammoth Road and the restaurant is on the south side of 203. After breakfast we will do an equipment check before driving to the end of Minaret Road at Mammoth Ski Area at 9000 feet. So don't plan on doing a final pack until after breakfast.

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: 25 miles **Duration:** 5 days **Difficulty:** SMC tour rating II/III

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 parallel or telemark turns all while carrying a pack of about 35 pounds. Prior winter camping and mountaineering skills are advised but not required. You will be travelling up to seven miles a day and gaining up to 3000 feet a day so a good level of aerobic fitness is required.