



U and V Notch Palisade Ice Climbs

We offer these climbs as a custom program. The scheduled version of this is our Palisades High Peaks Camp and we often find that it is worth adding in another climb and maximize the climbing to hiking ratio.

These are the two most well known gully climbs in the Sierra. Mainly snow climbs in early season, they turn to ice as summer progresses and offer great challenges. U-Notch averages about 45 to 50 degrees in steepness, and V-Notch is a little steeper at 50-55 degrees, especially near the top. On both routes the crux can often be crossing the large crevasse at the start of the routes that in some years can cut off access totally. V-Notch leads to the top of Polemonium Peak and from the top of U-Notch there are two short, steep pitches of climbing and a long traverse to the top of North Palisade, the high point of the region at 14,242 feet.

Meeting place and time: The course meets at the parking area at the end of the Glacier Creek Road at 8:00 a.m. on the first day of the trip. Follow Glacier Lodge Road west out of the town of Big Pine. A road turns left into Glacier Lodge and we may park vehicles in there, but we will meet in the day-use parking area. Most vehicles will take about 20 minutes to get here from Big Pine as it's a gain of 3,500'. We will do a gear check here and distribute group equipment.

Itinerary: Day One: Our goal will be to camp on the edge of the Palisade Glacier. This is a climb from about 7800 at Glacier Lodge to 12,400 so you had better arrive to the climb well acclimatized.

Day Two: Climb our Notch.

Day Three: Head out, arriving at the trailhead by late afternoon.

U Notch - The bergschrund is often the biggest obstacle and in some years can be very overhanging, sometimes requiring aid late in the season. But we usually cross easily on the right. We emerge into the main gully and move up this along the right side generally belaying on rock. The gully widens and divides and we often do a couple of ice screw belays before the gully again narrows and we are back to rock belays. Once we reach the top of the chute there is a chimney/dihedral on the right, rated 5.4. We take the chimney to the summit ridge, dropping into a small bowl and up boulders to the summit of North Palisade. The crux is a gap to cross just before the summit. The traverse to the summit can be tricky especially in early season if there is snow or

V Notch - Again the bergschrund is thought to be the crux of the climb and mostly we take it slightly left of center but be prepared to climb a short section of near vertical neve or ice. We follow the left side of the couloir for the first 4 pitches, then cross to right side heading to the top. There are around 8 pitches in total. Once at the top we can scramble along the ridge to the summit of Polemonium Peak. Now we have a long traverse towards Mt. Sill we gain the Starr Route of Sill. We descend the ridge some and then turn east onto the shadowed North Face. Some downclimbing and a rappel or lower takes us to the sub peak of Sill, known as Apex Peak. This is the peak that projects from Mt. Sill to Sill's north, just under 14,000' in height. A ledge system quickly brings us to the top of the L-shaped Snowfield. The L-shaped snowfield has melted out over the years and is often more properly names the L-shaped snowfield. We pick up gear and head on down back over Glacier Notch to camp.

Dates and Prices: Check the latest brochure, call us or go to our web site for dates and rates. 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). Private programs do not include USFS trail fees.

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

Notes: Guidebooks include Secor's "The High Sierra; Peaks, Passes and Trails", "Sierra Classics" by Moynier and Fiddler. Peter Croft's "The Good, The Great, and the Awesome". Get the latter from Maximus Press. The best of course is "Eastern Sierra Ice" by SP Parker. Get it from Maximus Press You can also get our unpublished SMC Guide to U and V Notch 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 would do the trick or better yet, camped at an even higher trailhead, such as one of the campgrounds in Big Pine Creek for a night just before the trip. Glacier Lodge is also a good lodging option. Please refer to our Planning for Success info sheet for more info.

Prerequisites: Climbers must be in good physical condition for these routes and have the ability to climb 5.6 rock in mountain boots and have some experience on moderately technical ice and snow. U-Notch to the top of North Pal is often a sixteen hour round trip from a high camp.

Equipment List for U and V Notches

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.