



White Mountain Crest Hike

This is easily one of the most amazing hikes of its length in the country. This is also a rugged cross country trip since it's trailless except for a couple of miles on a closed road and it takes place at elevations above 11,000' for more than 95% of the distance. The White Mountains are the first of the Great Basin desert ranges and rise to over fourteen thousand feet on the east side of the Owens Valley. The Whites are home to some of the oldest known living things, the bristlecone pine, which can live to over four thousand years old. For a while White Mountain was rumored to be higher than Mt. Whitney causing many a peak bagger to have conniptions. It is not, but is only 250 feet lower and is perhaps the "easiest" four-teener in California. The Whites are remote and little traveled and fit into virtually anyone's definition of wilderness and were designated as California's newest wilderness areas in 2009 bill introduced by California Senator, Barbara Boxer. We hope that you will join us to explore this area with its fantastic views of the whole Sierra Nevada range from Olancho to the Tahoe area. Golden eagles, mountain lions, and groups of desert bighorn sheep are amongst the wildlife here and we hope to be lucky enough to sight them.

Itinerary: Camp elevations are high (Higher even than the Sierra Nevada) on this trip so it is *essential* that you get at least one night and preferable three nights sleeping at 9,000' or higher prior to this trip.

Day 1: We will meet at the world headquarters of Sierra Mountain Center for the pre trip meeting. Directions are below. Here we will conduct a full pack check prior to getting shuttled up to the trailhead near Crooked Creek in the Whites. The shuttle takes nearly three hours and we may stop for a short hike en route. From there an easy hours walk will bring us to our first camp at just below 10,600' in Cottonwood Meadow.

Day 2: About 2/3 of this day is on informal use trails and ancient Indian trails as we make our way to an unnamed pass near Mt. Barcroft. Camp this night is at 11,600 and snow will be our water source. This is a relatively short day but is important for acclimatization to the high elevation. It does allow time for a walk unencumbered by our large packs to get the outstanding views back to Cottonwood Basin and to the east out to Fishlake Valley.

Day 3: This is a very long day and requires a pre dawn start. Now we start to get into the heart of the range. Ascending animal and Indian trails towards Mt. Barcroft we may come across a group of desert bighorn sheep. We'll certainly see signs of these animals as we're now entering their habitat above tree line on open rocky slopes. We briefly intersect the now closed White Mountain road. Breathing hard, we ascend to the summit of White Mountain Peak and enjoy the last vestiges of civilization at the old research cabin on the summit. Now leaving the developed world for the next three days we head north off the peak to a short 3rd class ridge which traverses from the summit. This is the most difficult section of the hike but before long we are on the stunning wide open slopes and plateaus of the range. We travel along the ridge crest to a camp (elevation 11,200') at the headwaters of Cabin and Birch Creeks, where springs provide water for the night.

Day 4: The hike today begins with a long but gentle uphill through improbable grasslands and wide open meadows, with lots of running water. The five mile walk along Pellisier Flats is one of the many highlights of the trip. The area is entirely above 12,000' and is alpine tundra, with miniature wildflowers and remarkably flat terrain. Our final camp is just past Mt. Dubois at over 13,000'. The campsite will depend upon the condition of the springs and snow patches since we are dependent upon locating a water source.

Day 5: We have some options here but either way it's a big day with a lot of elevation loss. We may go over Montgomery and Boundary Peaks and drop east into Trail Canyon. Or we may choose to avoid the peaks and head due east off the "Jump Off". Much of this is second class so be prepared for scrambling.

Meeting place and time: We are at 174 W. Line Street, in Bishop and will meet at 8.00 a.m. the morning of Day 1. 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. Vehicles can be left in Bishop. We will have a thorough pack check so don't finalize your packing until then.

Dates and Prices: Check the latest brochure, call us or go to our web site and locate on the first page the pull down menu for downloadable schedules 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).

Ratios: Five participants to one guide.

Notes and other information: For maps look at the Mount Barcroft, White Mountain Peak and Boundary Peak 7.5

minute map for most of the route. Chalfant Valley, Benton, Juniper Mountain and Blanco Mountain are needed for complete coverage of the range. Please do not bring the maps on the trip! The photo section of our website has an extensive selection of photos from previous hikes.

This is a pristine and little travelled area. We must do our utmost to minimize our impact on the land and leave no evidence of our presence. This means a higher than normal awareness of our potential impacts and doing what we can to leave no trace of our passage. Your guide will brief you thoroughly on our "Leave no Trace" practices.

This is a trip to extreme high elevations and lack of acclimatisation to the elevation is the primary reason that hikers do not do well on this trip. Our itinerary takes this into account but the terrain limits where we can reasonably hope to camp. We've done our best to place camps in the lowest spots available but we still will wind up with a camp above 13,000'. It is essential that you have at least one night and preferably three nights immediately prior to the trip at high elevation. Look at this as an investment in your trip and in your health; and as a good way to spend more time enjoying the mountains. One option to accomplish this goal is for you to camp a day or two down at Cottonwood Basin, near Mt. Whitney. There they have a free walk in campground that is at 10,200'. Another option is to camp the night before we meet up at South Lake, up the Bishop Creek Road. A free, informal walk-in camp site is located just above the trailhead parking area for the Bishop Pass Trail. Call for details.

Prerequisites: This will be a primarily off trail hike sometimes in rugged terrain. one could well call it "technical backpacking" You need to feel comfortable carrying a five day pack across this type of terrain, but prior cross country experience is not necessary. Daily travel will be about 7-8 miles and while this may not sound much it is at 12,000 or more feet of elevation.

Since this is a very high elevation trip and prior altitude experience is advised. Some people may acclimatize better using diamox. Talk to us and to your doctor about this option. This range is also subject to thunderstorms if we have a moist weather pattern set up with tropical moisture moving up from the south. We would be very exposed to the storms and this is not the place to be in an electrical storm. An adverse weather pattern may require cancellation of the trip. So please keep in touch as the trip approaches so that we can update you.

Equipment List for the White Mountain Crest Hike

The following list is a very specific guide that will assist you in packing for the program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have specific questions regarding equipment and if you need assistance prior to making a purchase. The less weight you carry, the better and this list is our suggestion for doing so. Remember that you'll be receiving your share of the group equipment prior to departure.

Big Stuff

- Footwear. A good sturdy pair of hiking boots. These must be broken in to your feet and need to be sealed with a waterproofing treatment. Your selection of boots may mean the difference between pain and comfort on the trip so be very careful with what you wear on your feet. But also be aware that the heavier the boot the more vegetation damage you can do so try to avoid very heavy clunky boots. Even a pair of comfortable "approach" type shoes will be good for this trip.
- Camp Shoes. A lightweight pair of tennies or Texas sandals to wear in camp. This will reduce vegetation damage at our campsites and help you be more comfortable in camp.
- Pack. A 4,000 cubic inch pack will hold everything for the trip. Internal frame packs are recommended for their comfort and balance when hiking. The Gregory Banshee or Chaos are about the right size.
- Sleeping Bag. Days are warm but nights may dip down to about freezing and a bag rated to about 25°F will be plenty warm. Pair this with a compression stuff sac to reduce volume. We recommend a down bag rather than a synthetic since it will be less bulky.
- Sleeping pad. A 3/4 length Ultralight thermarest paired with a Ridgerest foam pad is the best combination. Bring a Thermarest repair kit to fix pesky leaks.

Clothing

- 2 pair synthetic liner socks.
- 2 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks.
- 1 light long underwear top. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable.
- 1 light long underwear bottom.
- 1 warm shirt. Synchilla or 200 weight works well.
- 1 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. Jacket must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- 1 pair of shorts for hiking.
- 1 pair of long pants for hiking. The high alpine vegetation can be rough and scratchy.
- 1 sunhat.
- 1 Tee shirt for on the trail.
- 1 pair of polypropylene or similar gloves.
- 1 warm hat. Synthetics are less itchy than wool.

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.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. A 1oz. bottle will be enough. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen.
- Bug repellent.
- 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 and any altitude medications your physician has prescribed.
- Camera. Bring film and a spare battery to record this hike of a lifetime
- Optional reading material, etc.
- Ski poles. These are not essential, but can be handy on the trail. It is your choice, but they do save wear on the knees.
- We will provide the main meals. You need to bring drinks (hot and cold) and your favorite snacks.
- Binoculars, if you're into the natural history aspect of the hike.

Shared Equipment

- Shelter. We will provide lightweight, but storm worthy tents.
- Stove. We will provide MSR Whisperlight stoves
- Cookwear.
- Water purification. The group will carry a light weight pump or iodine.

You specifically don't need

- ⊗ Cell phones. They rarely work 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.