



Williamson & Tyndall Ascents

Williamson (14,375 feet) is the second highest peak in California, behind Mt. Whitney (14,495 feet), but the few feet it lacks in elevation it more than makes up for in difficulty and the work involved to climb it. There are no easy ways up this peak, nor are there any easy ones on Mt. Tyndall (14,015 feet), Williamson's neighbor just to the west. That's the bad news...The good news is that both these peaks are much less often climbed than their higher brother to the south and both offer astounding views and an enjoyable amount of moderate mountaineering. Williamson's west face route was first climbed in 1903 by a group led by the redoubtable Joseph Le Conte. The route is primarily class two and three, but just below the summit plateau a short steep headwall blocks the way. A short rope length takes us through this and on to the summit. We descend the same way. Tyndall is a far more graceful peak than its neighbor and our chosen route, the North-west ridge, is a perfect fourth Class ridge. Often in the Sierra the easier routes tend to be loose and very talusy. This ridge however offers great scrambling over huge blocks and narrow ridge traverses on wonderful rock. For trivia buffs the peak is named for the scientist who first developed a theory as to why the sky is blue. This whole area lies within the habitat of the California bighorn sheep and so the area is closed to access from July 15 to December 15. We schedule our trips around this to give the last remaining individuals of these magnificent animals their best chance for survival.

Meeting place and time: We will meet for breakfast the first day at 7.30 a.m. at the Winedumah Hotel in Independence. The hotel is on the west side of the highway at the north end of town. Town is only 1/2 mile long so it should be easy to find)

Itinerary: We have built one extra day into this itinerary because of the length of the approach. It would be a shame to do this approach and then have to leave without completing the two climbs. Even worse would be to do the approach again! So we can use this as a rest day between the climbs if we need one, as an additional day on the approach to break up the long climb or as a weather day should we be in a pattern of afternoon thunderstorms.

Day One: The approach is a long steady haul up over Shepherd Pass. The trailhead is one of the lowest in the Eastern Sierra and the trail to the pass is about ten miles long. But once at the pass we set up a basecamp adjacent to Summit Lake under the eastern slopes of Mt. Tyndall. The trailhead is 6400 feet and the Pass is 12,030 feet. Plus one has to drop 550 feet crossing over from Symmes Creek to Shepherd Creek. So you see why we might want an extra day to split this up.

Day Two: We head off to Mt. Williamson. We have to climb up and drop down into Williamson Bowl and it's small lakes. (For the fishermen among you, one of the lower lakes is the only stock of pure Colorado cutthroat that were transplanted here in the 1930's to avoid cross breeding with other species which has occurred in their native habitat.) We have to negotiate complex terrain around the lakes and then head up towards the rock band mentioned. Once through this the summit is 10 minutes off.

Day Three: We head off to Tyndall and this is not such a long day as Williamson.

Day Four: Our backup day.

Day Five: Descend the trail back to the parking lot where we hope to arrive early in the afternoon. Even if this is an out day it is still a long day and there is the 550-foot climb back out of Shepherd Creek (Did we mention this before?)

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 climbing gear, tents, kitchen gear and breakfasts, lunches and dinners (you bring hot/cold drinks and snack items). Scheduled dates include USFS trail fees. Private programs do not.

Ratios: This is a straightforward ascent, but we keep the ratio to about 1:3 maximum so that everyone gets appropriate levels of care.

Notes and other information: Guide books include Secor's "The High Sierra; Peaks, Passes and Trails" and "Climbing California's Fourteeners" by Porcella and Burns. 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 or camped at the trailhead campground would do the trick. Please refer to our Planning for Success info sheet for more info

Prerequisites: You do not need to have prior technical climbing experience. The difficult sections are short and we will run through the skill needed as we go. However comfort with some level of exposure is advisable. Good physical condition is however essential.

Equipment List for Tyndall and Williamson

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 and 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 on the list with an * may be rented from

Climbing equipment

- Ice Axe*. A standard 70 cm. general purpose axe will suffice. In late season this may be unnecessary.
- 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. In late season these may be unnecessary.
- Harness*. An adjustable leg loop type such as the Black Diamond Bod or Wild Things Expresso will accommodate layer changes.
- 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.
- Carabiners.* Two locking carabiners (Screwgates are more secure than twist lock style and easier to manipulate).
- Belay/rappel device.* An ATC type or similar.

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.
- Camp Shoes. A lightweight pair of tennies or Tevas to wear in camp. This will reduce vegetation damage at our campsites.
- Pack. A 4000 cubic inch will hold everything for 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. You will need a smaller day pack if your big pack won't compress adequately.
- Sleeping Bag. Most summer trips are warm and a bag rated to about 25° will be plenty warm enough except in the spring and late fall.
- 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 leaks.

Clothing

- 2 pair synthetic liner socks.
- 1 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks.
- Gaiters-usually required only on spring trips.
- Long underwear top and bottom. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable.
- Warm pants. Tights or Expedition weight Capilene.
- Warm shirt. Synchronilla 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. Jackets must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- Shorts for on the trail.
- Tee shirt for on the trail
- Polypropylene or similar gloves and shells.
- Warm hat.
- 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.
- Iodine for water purification.
- 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 1 oz. bottle will be enough. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen.
- Bug repellent. Only needed in the early season.
- Personal Medical Kit. The guide will carry a large kit so yours will predominately consist of foot repair items and mild pain killer such as Advil and bandaids.
- Camera. Bring film and a spare battery to record those moments.
- Plastic Trash Sac. Handy for keeping gear in outside the tent should it rain.
- Optional reading material.
- 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.

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, 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 use 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 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.