



## Mt. Whitney Winter Ascent

At 14,495 feet Mt. Whitney is the high point of the lower forty eight states and the goal of virtually every mountaineer. The eleven mile long Trail Route offers the easiest route to the summit and is ascended by countless hundreds of climbers each year. In summer the summit is often crowded with excited climbers calling home on their cell phones and marmots cadging scraps from those lolling in the warm sun.

Winter however is a totally different story!

In the "off season" Mt. Whitney becomes a remote and difficult ascent with few people willing to take the chance of putting in a lot of work trying to climb, only to be turned back by weather, avalanche conditions and deep snow. But for those who want to test themselves and see how they do in this difficult environment Mt. Whitney offers a great climb and in a lot of ways a fun venture that is unique in California.

**Itinerary:** We climb the Mountaineers Route on the east side of the peak, starting from Lone Pine. Exactly where we start depends upon the road closure which may be well below the regular parking at Whitney Portal. In fact it might just take a day to get to the parking area! We also have to consider retrieving the vehicles should the weather change for the worse. Above the Portal we follow up the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek to Lower Boy Scout Lake and then on to Upper Boy Scout. We may camp here or place high camp at Iceberg Lake at 12,400 feet. Above Iceberg Lake rises the Mountaineers Gully proper. In winter this will be a snow filled gully of about 35 degrees and at the top, three hundred feet of snow covered rock lead to the summit plateau and the culmination of the climb.

**Meeting place and time:** We plan to meet at the Mt. Whitney Restaurant at 7.30am for breakfast. There is only one traffic light in Lone Pine and the Restaurant is on the south west corner of the intersection. We will do an equipment check and divide up group equipment before car pooling 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 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.

**Notes and other information:** For maps look at the Mt. Whitney and Lone Pine 7.5 minute maps. Guide books include Secors "The High Sierra; Peaks, Passes and Trails" and "Climbing California's Fourteeners" by Porcella and Burns.

We will be travelling on snowshoes so if you have your own bring them or you can rent from us.

The SMC web site has photos, a map 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.

**Prerequisites:** This is a major ascent so come prepared for hard work. Prior climbing experience is essential. You need not have camped before under winter conditions, but you do need appropriate cold weather equipment and a positive mental attitude helps enormously. Have your systems down so that once we get to camp you know what to get organized and into the tent and out of the cold. Packs will be heavy and the snow may be deep. Avalanche hazard assessment will be essential and success will depend upon safe conditions.

There are no guarantees of success in winter and a big storm may well put all of our careful planning into disarray. Do not be summit oriented but go out with the goal of gaining skills and enjoying a very different climbing season.

# **Equipment List for Mt. Whitney in Winter**

This list provides you with minimal lightweight and compact equipment. This is one of those trips where every ounce counts so bring only what is essential since you will be carrying it to the top and back. If you have any questions don't hesitate to call and ask our advice. Every trip will start with a pre-trip session to fine tuning our packing. There will be a thorough equipment check at this session so don't plan on finalizing your pack until then. In order to help you maximize your performance and enjoyment on your trip we will be eliminating as much non essential gear as possible; please try to pack carefully and stick to the gear list.

Items marked with an \* are items that we rent.

## **Essentials**

- Boots: A high quality mountaineering boot is essential to keeping your feet warm. We recommend a plastic boot such as an Asolo or Scarpa. Leather boots such as the Sportiva Nepal are also good, but leather is much more difficult to dry out should they get wet.
- Skis. You must be an expert skier to be able to use skis on this trip. You need probably an alpine touring setup with skins. These can be rented from Wilson's Eastside Sports (760) 873-7520 or Mammoth Mountaineering (760) 934-4191.
- Snowshoes\*. If you are not comfortable on skis take snowshoes. We recommend the MSR type or similar with a climbing claw and metal side rails to prevent slipping when on sidehills. We rent these if you do not have them.
- Poles, telescoping probe type are best.
- Ice axe.\* A general purpose mountaineering axe of 70cm or so.
- Crampons\*. These must be compatible with your boots. A step in type is a lot easier to manipulate in cold conditions.
- Harness.\* A step-in type works best such as a Black Diamond Alpine Bod.
- Two locking carabiners and a couple of non-lockers.\*
- A belay/rappel device of some type.\*
- Internal frame backpack of about 4000 cubic inches.
- Sleeping bag. This should be rated to about -20°F.
- Sleeping pads. A Thermarest and or Ridgerest. A 3/4 Thermarest on a Ridgerest makes a good combination. Bring a repair kit along with a Thermarest in case of holes.

## **Clothing**

- 2 pair synthetic liner socks
- 2 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks
- Gaiters. These should fit snugly over the top of the boots.
- Long underwear top and bottom. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable
- Warm pants. Tights or Expedition weight Capilene
- Warm shirt. Expedition Capilene or light Synchilla
- Another fuzzy sweater top of some sort
- Pile jacket. The Windstopper fabric works well and is not too bulky.
- Light down jacket; synthetic fill is second choice. This is optional & can replace the previous item
- Good quality rain/wind pants and rain jacket. Must be water proof and jacket must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.

- Warm hat that covers the ears.
- Visor hat (for sun).
- Mid to heavyweight capilene or Windstopper gloves.
- Shell gloves or mittens.

## **Etc.**

- Sunglasses, high quality with keeper leash. The type with side shields are recommended. If you wear corrective glasses you might want a second pair.
- Ear plugs for noisy tents.
- Personal kit; tooth brush, etc.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen. A 1oz. bottle will be sufficient.
- Two 1-quart plastic water bottles with insulating jackets
- A pee bottle is far more pleasant than getting out of the tent in the middle of the night. Mark it well though to avoid confusion!!
- Personal first aid kit, foot care, and any required medications. We will have a large group medical kit; go light on your own kit. Bring plenty of blister treatment items.
- Headlamp with extra batteries and bulb.
- Camera, film and spare batteries.
- Eating utensils. Bowl, cup, fork and spoon.
- A Swiss Army type knife.

## **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.

## **Group gear that will be provided and divided amongst the group prior to starting the trip**

- One shovel for each person
- Avalanche transceiver for each person
- Food
- Tents
- Cooking equipment

## **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.