



Crystal Crag via the North Arete

Trip Notes

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After getting bitten by the climbing bug and perhaps having done some top rope climbing on small crags it is time to get experience on longer routes and get further off the ground into what we think is the true climbing experience. Of course this is a big step and you want to choose an appropriate objective.

Situated above Mammoth in the Lakes Basin, to the west of town, Crystal Crag is a well known local landmark. A gleaming white band of quartz cuts across the peaks and must surely have attracted the attention of miners. To their dismay it was bare of gold, but for us climbers it adds a unique and interesting feature. The route combines, steeper technical climbing with roped ridge traversing to a classic, climbing one side and descending via the other.

This is a perfect introduction to multi-pitch climbing. Not too difficult, but definitely challenging enough to keep you thinking and enjoying a new experience.

Itinerary

We park at Lake George and hike the well graded and maintained trail to Crystal Lake, nestled next to the crag. Leaving the trail here we traverse a short distance through open forest to the base of our chosen route, the North Ridge. The difficulties of the climb are concentrated into the first four pitches on the steepest portion of the ridge and lead us to the crystal band. We climb a small gleaming white corner in the band where the rock is cool and slippery, but straightforward, leading to a good spot to take a break and a snack.

Above this we move roped together along a narrow exposed ridge to the summit and then descend the easier side before traversing back towards the start of the route. We continue back down the trail to our cars.

Throughout the day we will cover the following: review of placing and removing artificial climbing protection, equipment handling skills, the multi pitch system, managing belays, simple anchoring techniques, energy conservation and climbing efficiently on multi-pitch routes.

Elevation and Distance

Trailhead to summit to trailhead	3.4 miles	1320' of gain	1320' of descent
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Meeting place and time

We meet at the Mammoth Welcome Center in Mammoth Lakes at 7:30 am. From 395 take the Mammoth Lakes exit and follow the signs into town. The Mammoth Lakes Welcome Center is a few miles from the highway on your right (along with the US Forest Service). The address is 2510 Main St, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546. If you get to the first traffic light you have gone too far. We will do a gear check then carpool to the trailhead.

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 canceling. Price includes guiding, permits, and all necessary group climbing gear. Scheduled dates include USFS trail fees. Private programs do not.

Prerequisites

Our Rock I or equivalent. You should be familiar with belaying and be able to tie into the rope without assistance. You should be in fair to good physical condition and feel comfortable climbing 5.7.

Ratios

This is a technical climb and we limit the ratio to two climbers to one guide. This enhances safety and ensures a timely arrival at the summit before potential weather changes.

Notes and other information

The best guidebooks are Supertopo's "High Sierra Climbing" by Chris McNamara and Peter Croff's "The Good, The Great, and the Awesome". Get them from Maximus Press.

Acclimatization

The higher in elevation you go, the less oxygen there is in the air. This, combined with very dry air, means you will work harder to do the same activities, get dehydrated faster and recover more slowly. It takes days for your body to adjust to these changes. 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 the Mosquito Flats trailhead. Please refer to our Planning for Success info sheet for more info.

Bears

Bears can be a problem at the trailhead. Do not leave food or other scented items (deodorant, soap etc.) in your vehicle. There is limited food locker storage at the trailhead so do not bring extra items with you to the trailhead. Clean up all trash prior to your trip. Failure to take precautions can cause the vehicle to be ripped apart by a bear and the added insult of a fine from the Forest Service.



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Equipment List for Crystal Crag via the North Arete

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. When packing **THINK LIGHTWEIGHT!** Items with a * can be rented from SMC.

Climbing equipment

- Harness.* Comfortable rock climbing style.
- Helmet. Comfortable and lightweight. We provide these for the program if you do not have your own.
- Two locking carabiners and a couple of non-lockers.*
- A lightweight belay/rappel device, ATC style.*
- Rock climbing shoes.*

* These items can be rented from SMC. Use our PDF or online form.

Other essentials

- Footwear. A climbing-specific approach shoe or a hiking shoe.
- Daypack. 25-35 L pack.

Clothing

We will discuss exactly what to bring when we meet. Have these items with you so you are prepared for any possible weather conditions.

- 1 pair of socks.
- 1 mid-weight long-sleeve top. Capilene, Merino or other synthetic.
- 1 pair of long-johns or tights. Capilene, Merino or other synthetic.
- 1 warm pair of pants.
- 1 warm shirt. Synchilla or 200 weight works well.
- 1 warm jacket. A down jacket is preferred with around 800 fill.
- Waterproof Jacket and Pants - Lightweight and non-bulky. Side zips on the pants should be long enough to slide on over boots. Jacket must have a hood.
- 1 pair of climbing pants.
- 1 long-sleeve sun shirt. We recommend a "hoody" style though anything that covers your arms and is synthetic is great.
- 1 short-sleeve T-shirt. Synthetic, not cotton, so it can dry quickly and wick sweat from your body on sweaty, but windy, days.
- 1 lightweight pair of polypropylene or similar gloves.
- 1 warm hat/beanie. Synthetics are less itchy than wool.
- Sunhat.

Etc.

- Sunglasses. If you wear corrective glasses you might want a second pair.
- Water Bottles. Two 1L bottles or a hydration system holding up to 2L.
- Camera/phone camera.
- Personal toiletries. Include some TP and a bag to pack out the used from the crags.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen.
- Bug repellent. Only needed in spring and early summer.

Food

- You are responsible for water, snacks and lunch for the day.

Shared equipment provided by SMC

- Ropes
- Climbing equipment
- First aid kit