



# **The North Ridge of Lone Pine Peak**

## **Trip Notes**

6.18

# The North Ridge of Lone Pine Peak

A superb classic ridge climb. If you have never done a multi-day route with an en-route bivouac this is an ideal start. The ridge is only rated 5.6 in difficulty, but carrying a pack makes all the difference. This ridge involves continuously interesting climbing on impeccable Sierra granite with exhilarating exposure and fantastic views of the Whitney region. It can be done with a low bivvy or a high, en-route one. The en-route bivouac is worth the trip in itself: from the sleeping bag at night one can gaze the length of Highway 395, all the way past Bishop, 60 miles to the north. This makes for a great weekend climb with a straightforward approach and an easy, non-technical descent.

## Itinerary

The approach is via the Meysan Lake Trailhead, just down the road from the Mt. Whitney Trailhead (The Whitney trail sees hundreds of people a day and we'll be lucky to see another group on this trip). We leave the trail around 10,000', several hours after leaving the cars. If we are making the climb with the low bivvy this is where we camp.

Gaining the Northeast Ridge proper takes several more hours and is via steep second and third class terrain. Early season ascents will encounter significant snow on the approach, which can make for tough going. Eventually the terrain becomes predominantly third and fourth class and we rope up, usually where we join the main ridge. The un-roping point is the summit. The difficulties are generally towers that must be either climbed and descended, or traversed around. Some of these offer short sections of easy fifth class.

Shortly before the high bivvy two solid fifth class pitches are encountered. One often wonders just what guidebook authors are thinking when they rate these as 5.4; we've always been happy to call both pitches solid 5.6, especially with the weight of an overnight pack. The first pitch is more difficult with a tough layback and the second has several hard crack moves. If spending the night here the bivvy is the reward for climbing these pitches though and one of the highlights of the day is watching the afternoon shadow of the Sierra creep across the Owens Valley. The bivvy has room for three people and is small enough that we usually remain tied into the rope for safety. Snow is our water source on early season trips (before mid July) and on mid or late season trips we carry all our water up the route.

From here the ridge continues on around more towers and pinnacles. There are a couple of hard moves out of the final notch and then the last ridge section is five pitches long and we pop up over the final block and the summit register is about ten feet away. We'll be happy to be off the rope for the first time in a while. Then we descend into the Meysan Creek drainage and back to the trailhead.

## Climbing Options

**The Low Bivvy Option** - Here we camp in the Meysan drainage and do the ridge in a day, pick up camp and return to the trailhead. This is a very long day, but involves less pack carrying over technical ground.

**The High Bivvy Option** - This splits the climb over two days and gives one the opportunity for an incredible high bivvy. But then you have to carry that pack! Both options are great and we will talk with you to decide which one will be best.

## Elevations and Distances

Trailhead to low bivvy	2.25 miles	1300' of gain	280' of descent
Trailhead to high bivvy	3.15 miles	4300' of gain	280' of descent
Low bivvy to summit and return to trailhead	7.30 miles	4450' of gain	5360' of descent
High bivvy to summit and return to trailhead	6.50 miles	1520' of gain	5360' of descent

## Meeting place and time

We meet at the Meysan Lakes Trailhead. This is a mile below the parking lot for the main Whitney trail with roadside parking above the campground. For the high bivvy option we meet at 9.00 a.m. For the low bivvy option we meet at 2.00 p.m.

## 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, 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 long climb so we keep the ratio of one guide to two participants to ensure speed and efficiency climbing.

## **Prerequisites**

You should be in good physical condition, have some backpacking experience and have the ability to traverse broken uneven slopes with a moderate pack. Prior experience at altitudes above 10,000' is recommended. You need to be able to follow at the 5.7 level and have experience on multi pitch routes.

## **Notes**

The best guidebook is Peter Croft's "The Good, The Great, and the Awesome". Get it from Maximus Press.

The climb description can also be found in Supertopo's "High Sierra Climbing".

You can get our very detailed unpublished SMC Guide to Lone Pine Peak online.

## **Preparing for Success**

If it has been a while since you have climbed outdoors or you are unsure of your current skill level relevant to the climb you wish to undertake, we strongly suggest a "warm-up" day of multi-pitch climbing, such as Crystal Crag. This allows you and your guide to work on systems and communication, increasing your efficiency on the overnight climb. You will do better on the main climb with this day.

Mountain climbing requires endurance. Your objective may be remote (miles in with substantial elevation gain) and you need the stamina to approach, climb, and descend all day (12hrs+). The day prior to the climb consists of an approach with overnight packs. The climbs are often long and sustained with a gully descent. This means long days requiring all day endurance so incorporating endurance training into your fitness regimen is essential.

## **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 are a major problem at the Portal Trailhead. Do not leave food or other scented items (deodorant, soap etc.) in your vehicle. There is limited food locker storage at Whitney Portal 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. If possible, please car pool up to the trailhead, leaving unnecessary vehicles at the Portal Store parking.

## **Porters**

Want to do the trip but concerned about carrying the overnight pack through the rough terrain or want to save the knees from the steep descent back down? We can provide the services of a porter to carry the heavier and bulky items, leaving you with a lighter day pack for the trip. Porters can be used for just the up or the down as well. Contact the office for more information.

## **Lone Pine Accommodation and Showers**

The Dougs from the Portal Store operate the Whitney Portal Hostel and Hotel. This is a great place to stay in Lone Pine after the trip. Prices are reasonable.

They also offer showers so if you want to clean up before heading home; stop by and grab one for a few dollars.

Contact them at 760-876-0030 and look on line at [www.whitneyportalstore.com](http://www.whitneyportalstore.com).

# Equipment List for The North Ridge of Lone Pine Peak

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 marked with a \* are items that we rent. When packing **THINK LIGHTWEIGHT!**

## Climbing equipment

- Boots\*. Lightweight mountaineering boots are a must for this route. Trail runners or tennies are not acceptable. If there is snow you will need a heavier duty more waterproof boot. Ideally a boot that will also climb rock. We prefer to climb in the mountain boot and not use rock shoes but if you wish you can climb in rock shoes, but this means carrying the bigger boots that will be needed for the descent.
- Ice axe.\* A general purpose axe appropriate to your height. Required only in early season. We will inform you if this is needed.
- Harness.\* We recommend a comfortable rock climbing style harness.
- Helmet. Should be 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.\*
- A 120cm nylon sling.

## Other essentials

- Internal frame backpack of 50-55 L. This must fit all of your personal gear and group equipment; you will carry this on the climb.
- Sleeping bag. This should be rated to about 32°F.
- Sleeping pads. A Thermarest and foam pad. A 3/4 Thermarest on a foam pad makes a good combination. Bring a repair kit along with a Thermarest in case of holes.

## Clothing

- 2 pair synthetic or wool socks.
- Gaiters. Shorties are handy to avoid rocks in the boots on descent.
- Long underwear top and bottom.
- Warm pants, to layer between base and waterproof layer, such as softshell fabric.
- Another fuzzy sweater top, such as fleece or Polartec.
- Pile/fleece/softshell fabric jacket.
- Light down jacket; synthetic fill is second choice. This is optional & can replace the previous item. For in camp or in cold weather.
- Good quality rain/wind pants and rain jacket. Must be water proof and jacket must have a hood. Don't skimp on your rain gear.
- Shorts for on the trail.
- Climbing pants. We like the softshell type fabrics.
- 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. Better to cover up than just rely upon sunscreen.

## Etc.

- Sun glasses. Good quality. If you wear corrective glasses you might want a second pair in case of breakage.
- Water carrying system with a capacity of 2-3 liters. We recommend a 2 liter bladder for daily trail use and an additional Klean Kanteen insulated bottle for drink flavoring, coffee, etc. This can be your thermos and additional water bottle.
- Headlamp. With a spare set of batteries.
- Eating and drinking equipment. An insulated mug with a lid. This can double for a bowl. Fork and spoon.
- Pocket knife. Small Swiss army style, not a large Leatherman.
- Personal toiletries. Toothbrush and toothpaste. TP & a ziplock bag to carry out the used.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. 30+ SPF. A 1oz. bottle will be enough. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen.
- 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.
- Camera/phone camera. Small enough to fit in a pocket; please no giant cameras with multiple lenses.

## Food

- We include meals from lunch on Day 1 through lunch on Day 2. Bring your own snack items like cliff bars, power bars, or gorp concoctions for all days. Also bring your favorite hot drinks (tea, hot chocolate, cider etc.) 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

- First aid kit
- Food
- Shelter. Whether we use the high bivvy or the low one we will be sleeping out and a lightweight bivvy sac is required.
- Stove. We provide MSR Whisperlite stoves or bivvy stoves.
- Group climbing equipment.
- 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 gravity style purifier.

## You specifically don't need

- ⊖ Big first aid kits (we have a comprehensive one).
- ⊖ Deodorant or any toiletries beyond those listed above.
- ⊖ Items that are not on this list.

## Additional Thoughts

- Some people, particularly women, tend to run colder than others. If this is the case add another layer or two, a warmer sleeping bag, warmer boots and extra handwarmers
- Women – see our "Women on the Trail" information sheet at the Women's Trips pages on the website.