



**Middle Palisade**

**Trip Notes**

# Middle Palisade

Just clearing the 14,000' bar at 14,040', Middle Palisade is a lot less well known than many of the other peaks in the Big Pine area. However this is certainly one of the more tricky peaks to summit. The climbing is not too hard, but it is consistent with 1500 feet of third class with the odd fourth-class move thrown in. So it was no wonder that the peak was not climbed until 1921, 17 years after the first ascent of North Palisade.

## Itinerary

The approach to camp is shorter than the trail up the North Fork of Big Pine Creek and is not accessible to pack stock, which gives it a very different feel with a bit less traffic.

**Day One:** We will meet at the Glacier Lodge trailhead, pack, do an equipment check and head up the South Fork Trail. Our packs are going to be trimmed to the bare minimum and we should be able to head up the trail fairly easily. Our goal will be to camp at Finger Lake or even above. This camp will be above 10,000', making for a solid first day of travel.

**Day Two:** We travel around Finger Lake and head up towards the Middle Palisade Glacier, perhaps using crampons. If there is snow covering the moraines it actually makes travel a lot easier. We leave the crampons and ice axe where we step onto the rock. The route traverses into the central gully and we take this to the top, zigzagging up ledges and terraces. We descend the same way and return back to camp.

**Day Three:** We wake up and have breakfast, then pack up our gear and begin hiking out. We plan to arrive at the trailhead around midday.

If you're interested in climbing Norman Clyde as well, talk to us before your trip to plan accordingly. Both peaks can be climbed in one long but satisfying day.

## Elevations and Distances

Trailhead to camp	4.75 miles	3400' of gain	390' of descent
Camp to summit to camp	2.9 miles	3460' of gain	3460' of descent
Camp to trailhead	4.75 miles	390' of gain	3400' of descent

## Meeting place and time

The course meets at the parking area at the end of the Glacier Lodge Road at 8:00 a.m. on the first day of the trip. Follow Glacier Lodge Road west out of the town of Big Pine. We will meet in the day-use parking area at the end of the road (A road turns left into Glacier Lodge and we may move vehicles there after meeting). Most vehicles will take about 20 to 30 minutes to get here from Big Pine as it's a gain of 3,500'. We will do a gear check here and distribute group equipment.

## 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.

## Prerequisites

You should be in good physical condition, have prior backpacking experience and the ability to traverse broken uneven slopes with an overnight pack. Prior experience at altitudes above 10,000' is recommended. You should feel comfortable traveling in 3rd and 4th class terrain. Previous experience with travel on snow and talus is highly recommended, including the use of crampons and ice axe.

## 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

Guidebooks include Secor's "The High Sierra; Peaks, Passes and Trails", "Sierra Classics" by Moynier and Fiddler, "Climbing California's Fourteeners" by Porcella and Burns and Peter Croft's "The Good, The Great, and the Awesome". Get the latter from Maximus Press. <http://www.maximuspress.com>

## **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 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.

## **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.



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# Equipment List for Middle Palisade

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

- Boots\*. Lightweight mountaineering or heavy duty hiking boots are required, but also a pair that is compact enough to fit in the climbing pack for the descent. Trail runners or tennies are not acceptable since there may be hard snow to cross. If you have any concerns as to the adequacy of your footwear contact us. We rent mountaineering boots.
- Ice axe.\* A general purpose axe appropriate to your height. Required only in early season. We will inform you if this is needed.
- Crampons.\* These must be compatible with your boots. Required only in early season. We will inform you if these are 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.
- Rock shoes\*. Regardless of what anyone tells you they need to be comfortable! You'll be wearing them most of the day.

## Other essentials

- Internal frame backpack of 50-60 L. This must fit all of your personal gear and group equipment. If your pack compresses down you do not need the following item.
- Small day pack for climbing. 20-25L with attachment points for ice axe and crampons.
- 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.
- 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 pair of heavier 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.
- Plastic Trash Sac. Handy for keeping gear in outside the tent should it rain.
- Trekking poles\*. These are not essential, but can be handy on the trail. It is your choice, but they do save the knees on long descents.
- Optional reading material, journal, Kindle, etc.

## Food

- We include meals from lunch on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 3. 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. 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 provide MSR Whisperlite 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.

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