



## **The Third Pillar of Dana**

### **Trip Notes**

# The Third Pillar of Dana

This is one of the most aesthetic and difficult Sierra climbs - perfect granite high above Mono Lake, with spectacular views out into the Nevada desert. This route has an almost European feel to it, with an easy hike to the top where extra gear is cached before the climb. A short descent leads to the base of a huge sweeping slab of rock. The route gets steadily more difficult until you reach the final pitch, which has been understatedly described as "the best 5.9 in the universe". A final mantle puts you on the summit a scant few feet from the cached gear.

We also combine this route along with The Incredible Hulk into our Third Hulk Linkup giving two of the best hard climbs in the Eastern Sierra in three days.

## **Itinerary**

This is a one-day trip. We also combine this with the Red Dihedral on the Incredible Hulk to give two of the best routes in the Sierra in three days with our Third Hulk Linkup.

The day starts with you getting well fed in Lee Vining before meeting your guide at the trailhead. The approach hike takes about two hours and is initially through pleasant timberline forest and later above the tree line on the Dana Plateau.

With good views all the way, the hike to and from the climb are worth the day in and of themselves. If we keep our eyes open we might even see the endangered bighorn sheep that sometimes pass over the plateau.

The climb is great too, though. After caching unnecessary items on the summit we descend to the base via third, and briefly, fourth class terrain. Early season ascents also have the added excitement of a short snow slope to cross in order to reach the start. Six or seven pitches lead to the top.

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The first pitch is a good warm up and is 5.8, with a layback crack. A fourth class pitch follows, then the big fun begins. The third pitch is tricky with some route finding issues that slow down parties lacking our familiarity with the route, but is consistently 5.9 and features an awkward wide crack. The fourth pitch also has variations, the easiest having a great 5.8 layback and a chimney. The fifth pitch is usually considered to be the crux, a poorly protected (that's what we're there for...) 5.10 move leads from the belay to easier climbing, making for a short pitch.

The route gets steadily more difficult until you reach the final pitch, which is "the best 5.9 in the universe".

The climb ends abruptly as one pulls over the top onto the horizontal a few feet away from the cached gear. We relax in the sun some before heading back to the trailhead.

The only remaining question is 'where are the First and Second Pillars'?

## **Elevations and Distances:**

Round-trip	5.6 miles	3000' of gain	3000' of descent
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## **Meeting place and time**

We meet at the parking lot for Tioga Lake at 7.00 a.m.. The trailhead is at Tioga Lake on Highway 120, just short of a mile from the Tioga Pass entrance station to Yosemite National Park and 11 miles from Lee Vining and Highway 395. Park at the Tioga lake pullout (with bathroom) at the north end of the lake (9440 feet).

## **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 breakfast, lunch and dinner daily (you bring hot/cold drinks and snack items). Scheduled dates include USFS trail fees. Private programs do not.

## **Prerequisites**

You need to be able to follow at the 5.10 level and have experience on multi pitch routes.

## **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 Croft's "The Good, The Great, and the Awesome". Get them from Maximus Press.

## **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 better yet, camped at an even higher trailhead, such as the Sawmill Campground off the Saddlebag Lake Road. This is a first-come, first-served walk in campground. 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.

## **Lodging**

This is a day trip but we suggest either camping out up high such as Saddlebag Lake or if you want more comfort then staying in Lee Vining and be prepared for an early start.

# Equipment List for The Third Pillar of Dana

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. The list may be a little overkill, but better to have everything and then to leave extra gear at the top of the climb before we descend to the base.

## 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.
- 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

- Small day pack for climbing. 20-25L with attachment points for ice axe and crampons.

## Clothing

- 1 pair synthetic or wool socks.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

## Food

- Bring your own snack items like cliff bars, power bars, or gorp concoctions for all days.. Don't over do it.

## Shared Equipment Provided by SMC

- First aid kit

## You specifically don't need

- Deodorant or any toiletries beyond those listed above.
- Items that are not on this list.

## Additional Thoughts

- Women – see our "Women on the Trail" information sheet at the Women's Trips pages on the website.