



Spring Ski Descents

Trip Notes

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Any skier who has driven Highway 395 has probably looked up at the hundred miles of peaks stretching from Lone Pine to Tioga Pass and marvelled at the abundance of opportunities to get out and ski long runs from the mountain tops to the valley floor. Spring is the high point of our ski season and one of our favorite times of the year. These descents range from mere thigh burners to all day undertakings with predawn starts and late afternoon finishes. You choose the length: a good day gets us 4,000' of vertical and longer runs are possible.

Itinerary:

We keep the itinerary open until we see how conditions are and which aspects are in the best shape, then make our selection based on this information, and the group's experience and objectives. There is certainly no shortage of lines to choose from. One of our favorites is the legendary Elderberry Canyon. The driven among you can go all the way to the summit for a very long day with 7,000' of descent. Most mortals however are content with four or five thousand feet of what at a ski area would be an intermediate "blue square" run. Or how about Basin Mountain: starting from just below the summit and down 6,000' into the sage desert. More technical are the Wahoo Gullies on Mt. Locked or Morphine Canyon above Tom's Place. Or how about Jawbone Canyon, Esha Canyon on Morgan, White Mountain or Ellery Bowl or... The list just goes on.

No matter what we choose you will be assured of skiing the best runs we can find often with a summit to aim for.

Generally we start early in the morning before daylight and head out while the snow is firm with easier travelling conditions. We time our turn around to catch the best conditions on the way down and want to be finished before the snow gets too soft and mushy, usually getting back to base in time for a snack and to relax and gloat over our tracks high above.

For either of these programs you can use telemark or alpine touring equipment, your choice. Snowboarders are welcome on these trips too. Whatever you choose be comfortable on the gear going uphill as well as on the descents.

Camp I: The Bishop area

Bishop meeting place and time: We meet the first day at 8:00 a.m. at the world headquarters of Sierra Mountain Center, 200 South Main Street, in Bishop. We are on the east side of Highway 395 in the second block south of the south most traffic light (intersection of Line Street and Main Street/Highway 395. Or is you prefer just across the Mountain Rambler Brewery. We will meet for an orientation talk and equipment check. This allows us to complete a gear and equipment check and to outline the following days activities since an early start will probably be in order. We will have camping arranged at Millpond Campground just north of Bishop where there are ample car camping sites and hot showers. If you prefer to stay in Bishop in the comfort of a motel let us know and we can arrange that for you. (Motel expense is not included in the program price but camping is). You can cook in the campground or go into Bishop for meals except breakfast which is probably best had in the campground since it will be early.

Camp II: The Tioga Pass area.

We time this camp to take advantage of the opening of the Tioga road which allows us to drive right to snowline and put skis on at the car.

We will meet at 6.00pm at the Nicely's Restaurant in the center of Lee Vining the night before the scheduled start of the program. From here we will proceed to our campsite in Lee Vining Canyon and prepare for the following days activities. If you prefer you can stay at a motel in Lee Vining and we can assist in coordinating this for you. We'll return to camp each afternoon in time for a solar shower, snacks and to get ready for another early start and great skiing the next day. Meals are not included in this camp.

Gear and equipment: SMC does not rent ski equipment, but we work with Mammoth Mountaineering (760 934 4191) to get you set up on the correct equipment. MMS has a very wide range of rental equipment that is probably the best you will find anywhere in California. All gear is state of the art, well tuned and rental fees are deductible if you buy a set up from them. (We highly recommend renting before you buy so as to find what suits you best, since a full setup is pretty pricy). We can coordinate the rental but suggest that you arrive Mammoth the night before since boot fitting can take some time.

Prerequisites: We will be able to divide the groups according to skill level and there is ample terrain for everyone to find their ideal runs. You do not need to have prior backcountry ski experience, but you should be comfortable skiing intermediate and above runs at a ski area.

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Notes and other information:

For a good overview see the Inyo National Forest John Muir/Ansel Adams Wilderness map (but please don't bring it on the trip...). The SMC web site has photos, our own topo map, trip profile 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 by staying in Mammoth or nearby. Let us know if you need help arranging accommodation.

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.

Corn Camps Equipment List

If you have any questions about equipment or items on (or not on) this list please don't hesitate to call and ask our advice. Every trip will start with a pre-trip session to fine tune 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 a * are items that we rent or are available through a local shop. SMC does not rent ski equipment, but we work with Mammoth Mountaineering (760 934-4191) to get you set up on the correct equipment. MMS has a very wide range of rental equipment that is probably the best you will find anywhere in California. All gear is state of the art, well tuned and rental fees are deductible if you buy a set up from them. (We highly recommend renting before you buy so as to find what suits you best, since a full setup is pretty pricey). We can coordinate the rental but suggest you arrive in Mammoth the night before since proper boot fitting takes some time.

Essentials

- Skis*. Metal edge telemark mountaineering skis or alpine touring skis are essential. Better too short than too long. Get them tuned and check the bindings for tightness and boot fit prior to the trip. Starting the trip with a good base wax is essential.
- Boots*. Examples of good alpine touring boots are the Scarpa Matrix or Avant (the Avant Lady or the Magic for women), Garamont Mega Rides or Dynafit boots. Make sure the boots are a comfortable fit for walking as well as skiing.
- Climbing skins*. These should be close to the width of the ski's waist. Make sure the glue is in good shape.
- Ski Crampons*. Make sure they fit!
- Poles*. Telescoping styles are best.
- Internal frame backpack. 4000-5000 cubic inches is the minimum and if your gear is compact this is a good size
- Shovel*. If you do not have one we will provide it.
- Avalanche beacon*. If you do not have one we will provide it.
- Avalanche probe*. If you do not have one we will provide it.

Clothing

- 3 pairs of socks. A mid-weight, non-cotton ski specific sock is ideal. Low cut socks can wear the front of the shin.
- Gaiters. These are not necessary if the shell pants come down well over the boot or have an internal gaiter.
- 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.
- 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.
- Bandanna for facial and neck sun protection.
- 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.
- Shelled gloves or mittens.
- Long sleeve lightweight white shirt for sun protection. Stylish Hawaiian patterns are the guides favorites.
- Down booties for wearing around camp.

Etc.

- Sun glasses. Good quality. If using prescription lenses consider a backup pair.
- Water carrying system with a capacity of 2-3 liters. We prefer bottles in insulated jackets to hydration system since they are less likely to freeze solid. Klean Kanteen style insulated bottles can double as a thermos.
- Eating & drinking equipment. Plastic sporks will break; titanium does not.
- Swiss army style knife. No giant "multi-tools".

- Hand sanitizer - a personal travel size bottle.
- Toilet paper. The used toilet paper will go in a paper bag, which then goes in a ziplock, which you carry in your pack.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. A 1 oz. bottle will be enough. Make sure the lip screen actually contains a sunscreen.
- Basic first aid supplies such as ibuprofen, moleskin, and tape. Your guides will have extensive first aid kits so please don't go over board with your personal kits. If you tend to take NSAID's regularly please bring your own, or if your feet require constant blister attention please bring tape and moleskin.
- Camera, a spare memory card and battery. No big cameras please; compacts only.
- 1 watch with an alarm.

Food

- Bring some snack items like cliff bars, power bars, gorp concoctions. A day's worth for most people would be 2 bars & 3 ounces of gorp. Don't overdo it.

Car Camping Equipment if Camping

- Sleeping bag. A 10-20°F bag should be sufficient but if you are cold at night a sleeping bag liner can add significant warmth with minimal additional weight. We recommend a down-bag as opposed to a synthetic one due to weight difference. Pair this with a compression stuff sac to reduce volume.
- Sleeping pad. A 3/4 length Ultralight inflatable pad paired with a foam pad is our favorite combination. If bringing an inflatable pad also bring a repair kit to fix leaks.
- Around camp clothing

Additional Items

Some tours may require the below items. We will let you know prior to your trip so you can bring or rent them if they are needed.

- Lightweight ice axe*.
- Crampons*. They must be compatible with your boots which can be an issue with telemark boots. Check fit before the trip starts.

You specifically don't need

- ⊗ Cell phones. They rarely work and we often carry a satellite phone for emergency use.
- ⊗ Big first aid kits (we have a comprehensive one).
- ⊗ Toiletries beyond those listed here. E.g. razors, deodorant etc.
- ⊗ Items that are not on this list.