

What We are Doing to Help Our Guests and Guides

Sierra Mountain Center is as excited as you are to get back out into the mountains. Let's enjoy the healing, stress relief, and adventure that we have all been in need of during this uncertain and difficult time. SMC has closely followed the guidance set forth by local, state and federal agencies in order, both closing and then re-opening when allowed, for the sake of our guests and guides alike.

In this new and changing landscape, we must recognize that guided trips will not return to normal, at least not any time soon. We must develop new strategies to mitigate the new risks, just as we as professional mountain guides, climbing instructors and hiking guides do with ever-present risks in backcountry environments. We have operating guidelines that have been developed in collaboration with our medical advisors, industry experts and CDC guidelines.

Unlike some of the risks we are used to managing in the backcountry as guides, this new hazard requires commitment from you as well for its management. We will be partners in COVID risk management, with both of us taking responsibility for the group's health and safety. There is no way that we can mitigate 100% of the risks that are going to be present: that is an unrealistic expectation whether at home or in the mountains. But if we work together doing the best we can we can dramatically lower these risks.

We are all in this together and want trips to run according to guidelines from State, Federal and our medical advisor. We are not trying to make life hard for anyone, but are trying to make the most of the situation we all find ourselves in. As we always say when confronted by bad weather or poor conditions, "The mountains will always be there; we have to make sure that we are, too".

What will this new face of guiding look like at Sierra Mountain Center?

We wish to be diligent about communicating with you, about current conditions in Mono and Inyo counties, about the status of your trip, and about new changes that you may expect including new packing lists and guidelines we will ask you to commit to and follow. We need everyone's full investment and cooperation if we are going to be able to make our trips work, and that will begin with open and clear communication.

Operational Changes at SMC:

- Smaller group sizes
- Physical distancing when possible, use of masks when it is not possible
- No shared tents, unless household members or similar
- Meals. We are still adapting this part of our operations. Currently we provide pre-packaged meals and individual servings. We do not provide anything that involves cutting, slicing or putting a hand in a group bag.
- Frequent hand sanitizing. Hand washing stations in camp. Use of appropriate hand sanitizer when climbing and handling group equipment.
- Sanitizing of SMC rental equipment and guide equipment prior to distribution
- More legal requirements with revised waivers including Covid-19 language.
- A Covid-19 specific questionnaire that needs to be completed prior to the trip.

What we ask of you as guests on SMC trips:

- Please do not sign up for a trip if you are sick with COVID-like symptoms
- Our office will contact you 2 weeks from your trip start and ask you if you have recently been or are currently sick.
- Your guide will do a health check on the day of your trip. If you are experiencing symptoms that may indicate

COVID-19, we cannot proceed with the trip.

- We ask for a full commitment to hygiene, distancing and mask usage while on your trip. Failure to comply, or actions which could jeopardize the health of participants or the guide may result in early termination of your trip
- We ask that you remain flexible as we navigate the new look of guiding together.
- SMC has implemented a flexible rebooking and cancellation policy so that you do not feel the pressure to begin your trip if you are feeling unwell.

What items you need to bring in addition to our regular packing list

Personal Hygiene Items

- Your own hand sanitizer in a handy pocket sized bottle with additional small bottle in the pack for longer trips,
- Face mask or Buff (UV or Coolmax recommended and please use a Buff doubled or with an insert). One to wear and spares to change into depending upon the length of the trip.
- Biodegradable hand soap for washing in camp.
- Package of handwipes
- 2-31-gallon sized Ziplock bags for personal trash
- Personal water purification. Options include:
 - Water filter/pump
 - Steripen and enough batteries to treat for your trip length
 - Chemical Treatment such as Aqua-Mira
 - Iodine tablets (30 min. NOT 12 hr. treatment time). This is the simplest and easiest. Do NOT use iodine if you have a shellfish allergy!
 - Small dropper bottle with iodine or bleach
- Small, personal sized bottles of sunscreen, toothpaste, and other toiletries
- Personal toilet paper with a ziplock bag for clean and a ziplock for used

Accommodations

Guests will sleep in separate tents unless with a member of their household or similar. We will provide these, but if you have your own then do bring it if it is an appropriate one for the trip. Talk to us about it. We will be cleaning and sterilizing tents between uses.

Technical Equipment

SMC will be limiting rental equipment quantities so that we can ensure sanitization. In order to limit cross-contamination between groups, we ask that whenever possible, guests bring their own harness, helmet, slings etc. If you do not have these let us know.

For technical climbs we suggest the use of a liquid chalk such as Black diamond Liquid Gold. It is 70% ethanol and should help with sterilization along the climb.

We will be cleaning and sterilizing rental equipment between uses.

Trip Food

SMC will be easing back into providing full meals, but not yet on all trips. Currently we will be providing all food on pack stock supported trips. For all other backpacking and technical programs the following applies:

SMC provides the following meal items.

- Freeze dried meals
- Oatmeal or similar quick breakfasts that require the addition of boiling water
- Soups
- Breakfast bars, pop tarts, cookies etc for dinners

You need to bring your favorite hot and cold drinks - coffee packs, tea, cocoa, etc. Especially if you are a big eater, we ask that you bring your own foods that can supplement the items we provide to bring meals up to what you like to eat in quantity and preference. Some suggestions are:

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Breakfast:

- Nuts, dried fruit, coconut oil or PB packets to add to the oatmeal.
- Bagels and cream cheese
- Granola and powdered milk, cereal bars, pop tarts, pastries (pre-packed single muffins pack well and have 400+ calories)
- Hot drinks

Lunch/Snacks:

Lunch is more of a state of mind, that encompasses snacking from just after breakfast all the way until dinner! We aim to eat at regular intervals throughout our days in the mountains. Avoid meals that require much work, an assortment of salty, savory and sweet items is recommended. Aim for 1500-2000 calories total.

- Tortillas to wrap around fillings, crackers, pita, bagels
- Cream cheese packets, mustard/mayo packets, nut butter packets, olive oil packets
- Tuna packages and/or jerky, salami
- Dried fruit, almonds, or other salted nuts or mixes
- Energy bars, cookies, brownies, candy bars... chocolate
- You can bring fresh items but keep in mind they won't last many days

Dinner:

Remember to focus on calorie amount NOT the serving size. Aim for around 500-800 calories for dinner. Many "2 person meals" only contain around 500 calories total.

We cover most of the items but some additional you might like instead can include

- Cold main dishes (pasta salad, pizza, a packed in sub for night 1, etc)
- Packaged salads can be a nice addition, for short trips
- Chocolate, cookies, candy for dessert
- Extra herbal tea or cocoa

SMC accommodates vegetarian requests made ahead of time.

SMC will provide as much purified boiling hot water as need

ed with our own stoves and pots.

SMC will provide Bear resistant containers (Bear Can/Ursack where allowed) where necessary.

Travel to the Eastern Sierra and Staying Here

At the pandemic's onset, many people flocked to the Eastside to escape risk, and soon Covid-19 moved in. Please help us minimize this surge since outbreaks here will overwhelm our limited medical capabilities and have a sad impact upon our small permanent population. Please come well equipped with supplies and equipment. Shop in your local area and limit exposure to locals, especially in enclosed spaces. We can help set you up with campsites and places to stay in the outdoors and avoid the large hotels and enclosed spaces.

Thank you for you continued support and patronage. We look forward to seeing you in the mountains and for all of us to get out and rejuvenate our souls in the places that we love.

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