

Mt. Whitney via the Mountaineer's Route

History

At 14,495 feet Mount Whitney is the highest point of the lower forty eight states and a goal for mountaineers. The Mountaineer's Route is an alternative route to the more popular Whitney Trail, which is the standard hiking route to the summit of Mount Whitney. The first recorded ascent of Mount Whitney was in 1873 by a party led by the California Geological Survey. The first documented ascent of Mount Whitney via the Mountaineer's Route was made by Norman Clyde, a legendary mountaineer, in 1928. Over the years, the Mountaineer's Route has gained popularity among climbers seeking a more adventurous and challenging ascent of Mount Whitney. However, it remains less crowded than the standard hiking route, which is why many climbers are drawn to it.

What to Expect

Expect to carry up to 35-40 pounds. Everyone will be given group shared gear to carry. Expect 5-10 pounds of extra weight from shared equipment in your pack. The trail to base camp is steep. Expect lots of step ups — you will climb the equivalent of over 200 flights of stairs on your first day along varied trail. Physical training is crucial for success on a climb like this. See our physical training and acclimatization tips in the “Resources” tab of your trip.

Approach your mountain adventure with an open and adaptable mindset, as it enhances your overall enjoyment. Some factors, such as unpredictable weather, changing conditions, or a fellow participant not feeling their best, are beyond our control. In our quest to reach the summit of Mt. Whitney, we make every effort to guide you to success. Safety always remains our paramount concern in these challenging environments.

Meeting Place and Time

We will meet in Lone Pine at 7:30am at Spainhower Park. The Park is on the north end of Lone Pine; we will be at the south entrance next to Carl's Jr. Restaurant. Plan to have had breakfast and be ready to go. Your guide will do a gear check, distribute group equipment then everyone will caravan to the trailhead.

Prerequisites

Technical climbing skills are not required but prior backpacking experience is required as is experience at altitudes above 12,000'. This is a physically demanding trip and you should be in good condition and have the ability to traverse broken uneven slopes with a moderately heavy pack (30-40 pounds).

Human Waste

Within the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek, mitigating human impact is a paramount concern, compelling us to responsibly carry out all solid human waste from this region. To facilitate this essential practice, the Forest Service has furnished a user-friendly bag system. Rest assured, we will supply you with these bags and offer clear instructions on their proper utilization.

Acclimatization

To maximize your chances of success on the Mountaineer's Route, we strongly recommend acclimatizing to higher altitudes before the trip, especially considering our first-night camp at 11,200 feet. Approximately 80% of unsuccessful attempts on these routes can be attributed to altitude-related issues, with the remaining 20% influenced by weather conditions.

For proper acclimatization, we suggest spending at least one night at a moderate altitude, higher than 8,000 feet, just prior to the start of the journey. Convenient options include the Whitney Portal



Campground at 8,400 feet or the nearby Cottonwood Lakes walk-in campground at nearly 10,000 feet. Ideally, allocating two days to immerse yourself in the Cottonwood Lakes area immediately before commencing your climb of the Mountaineer's Route is highly beneficial. Cottonwood Lakes offers a vast expanse to explore, brimming with hiking trails and natural beauty. Taking the time to acclimatize properly prior to embarking on the trip is a proactive measure that can significantly enhance your experience and safety. Please plan accordingly.

Bears

Bears pose a significant concern at the Portal Trailhead. To ensure everyone's safety and prevent any incidents, it is imperative that you refrain from leaving food or any scented items like deodorant or soap in your vehicle. Please be aware that storage options for food lockers at Whitney Portal are limited, so it's essential not to bring any unnecessary items with you to the trailhead. Failure to observe these precautions will increase the risk of bears damaging your vehicle.

Porters

If you are apprehensive about lugging your overnight gear through challenging terrain our porter services are available to shoulder the burden of your heavier and bulkier items, allowing you to venture forth with a lighter daypack for the journey. Whether you require assistance for the ascent, descent, or both, our porters are at your service. Don't hesitate to reach out to our office for additional information and booking details.

Questions? - We are here to help! Contact us:

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