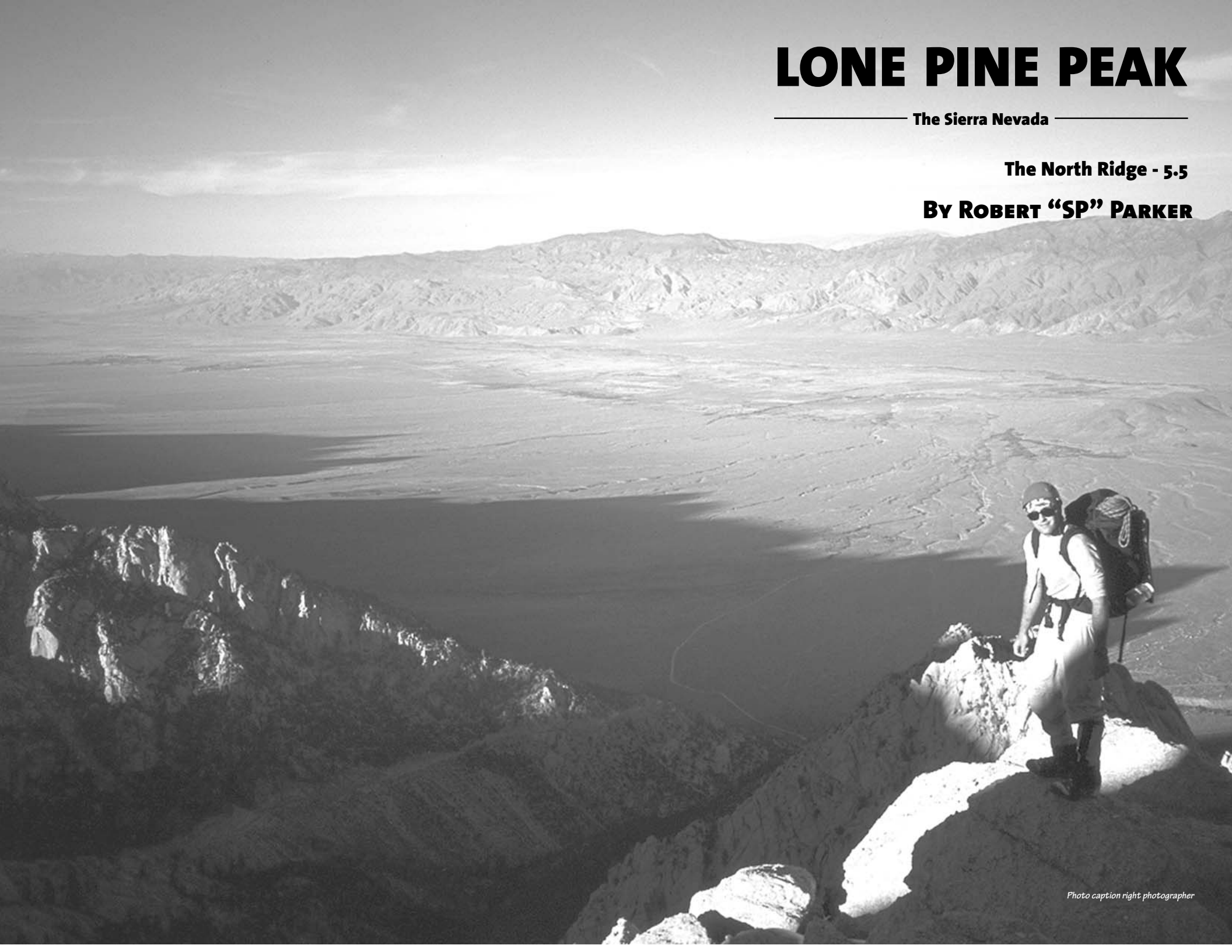


# LONE PINE PEAK

— The Sierra Nevada —

**The North Ridge - 5.5**

**BY ROBERT "SP" PARKER**



*Photo caption right photographer*

Viewed from Lone Pine on Highway 395 Lone Pine Peak dominates the viewshed and it is quite often mistaken for Mount Whitney. The North Ridge extends from the valley floor for nearly 6,000 ft and the route takes this line of strength all the way to the summit, although usually it is ascended by joining the ridge via the Lake Meysan trail some distance from the valley floor. The route is a classic ridge climb, technical difficulties are few and moderate, route finding at times can be tricky and you will straddling the ridge a cheval, at other times traversing around and over gendarmes and towers. As you can imagine, the views of the Owens Valley and the Whitney Group are stunning.

## WHERE

Lone Pine Peak 12,944 ft is located above the town of Lone Pine on Highway 395 sixty miles south of Bishop. The peak is visible from town, and is the prominent peak in the foreground to the south of the towers of the Whitney group which are set further back. It approached via Whitney Portal at the end of Whitney Portal Road via the Lake Meysan trail.

## WHEN

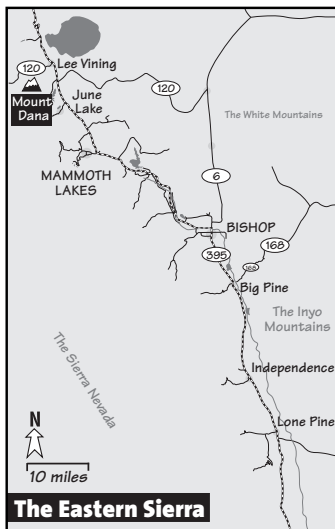
This ridge can be climbed all year round. For a snow free ascent June to October is the best time, and anytime outside of that for winter conditions.

## STRATEGY

The route can be done in a number of ways depending on your fitness, time and whether you would like to experience a bivvy en route.

- As a day climb.
- Over two days with a late in the afternoon hike to camp at 9,190-feet. There is a nice flat sandy area here just above the creek.
- As a two day climb with a bivvy atop the big tower. This makes for a fun experience, but means carrying gear up and over the summit.

There are many variations to the route and many places to belay. On this type of route it is impossible to list all of the variations. If you veer from this description it is not a big deal and you will regain the description at some point. Sometimes going to the one side or the other of a block may be harder or easier, but in the long run it does not matter. Use mountaineering sense and do not try to make the terrain fit the description.



Lone Pine Peak and its North Ridge (the skyline ridge) from the Owens Valley and highway 395. photo: SP Parker

## EQUIPMENT

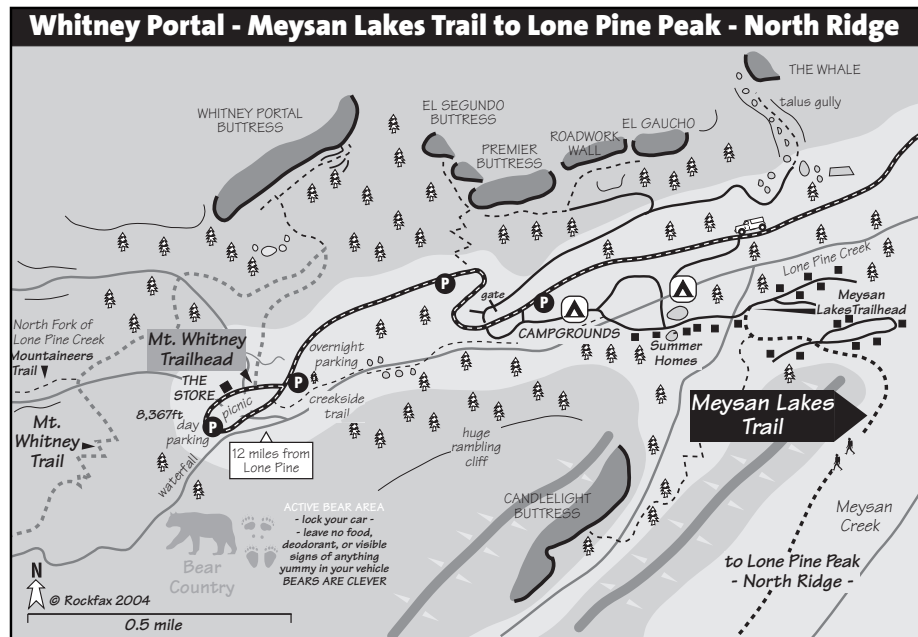
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## PERMITS AND REGULATIONS

You will need a permit for an overnight stay on Lone Pine Peak. Contact the Mt. Whitney Ranger District, PO Box 8, Lone Pine, CA 93545, telephone 760-876-6200, for additional information about this trailhead. The relevant web information can be found at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo/wild/whitney.html>

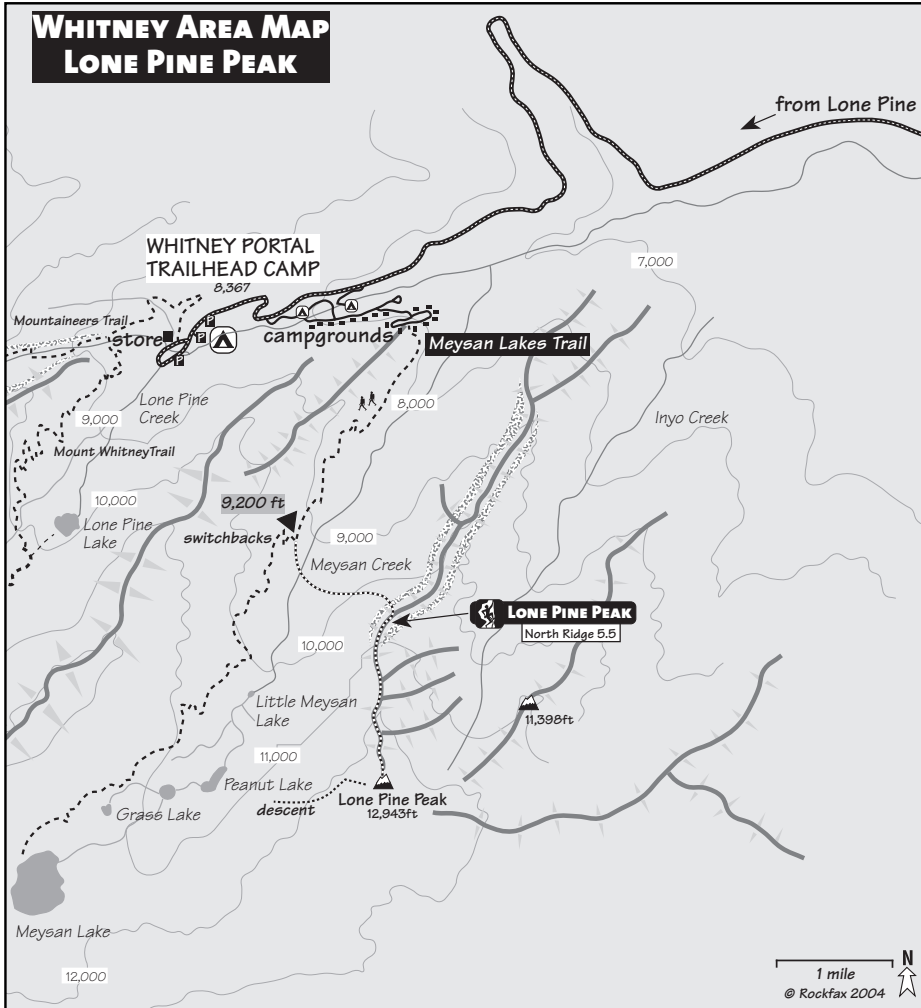
## WHITNEY PORTAL CAMPING AND BEARS

See the Mount Whitney chapter on page 233 for details about the approach to Whitney Portal, camping and bear hazards



## THE APPROACH: LAKE MEYSAN TRAIL TO THE NORTH RIDGE

The trailhead for Lake Meysan is situated at Whitney Portal just beyond the group campgrounds near the summer homes. Hike downstream from the Portal parking to join a road in the campgrounds and by a summer home this trailhead is posted (see map above). Take the Meysan Lakes Trail to a point where it starts to switch back up steeply at 9200 feet. From here head east through a flat area and descend a little to cross the creek then go up the other side onto the talus and angle right on the bigger blocks and then left around the top of the talus to a tree ledge/gully. Follow this up left and then as it becomes steeper cross around horizontally into the next gully to the north. Follow up this to a notch in the skyline. Angle left across the talus to the next skyline and find an open slope that leads up and southwards. Go up this to its highest point and then rope up or continue to solo onwards. Go up a gully to the skyline and then follow the ridge to the top of the first tower where the ridge narrows and the real climbing begins.



**THE CLIMB**

Descend down 120 feet to a notch where there are a couple of bivvy sites. Climb cracks just right of the ridge crest to belay on the ridge. Then take the left side of the ridge past large granite blades. Follow the ridge now on its right side as it curves slightly to the west. Pass a large spire on its right side and find a narrow section of the ridge. Descend maybe "a cheval" and then drop down the right side to a ledge. Continue up and around on ledges to the notch below the Big Tower with a couple of small bivvy sites. The section above is the technical crux.

Start directly from the notch and veer slightly right into a groove via a hand traverse. Up this groove and step to the next groove to the right. Climb this and find a layback at its top with a fixed pin (back this up!). Step from the laybacks top to a ledge and belay here (120 feet). From the right end of the ledge climb an awkward wide crack to easier ground and go straight up low angle cracks in a slab. Belay on the top (150 feet). Fourth class leads to the bivvy sites 50 feet below the top of the Big Tower.

From the bivvy go right and loop back above the bivvy site and go along the ridge as it curves back to the right. Head along the crest and descend into a notch with some bivvy sites just before it. Climb up to



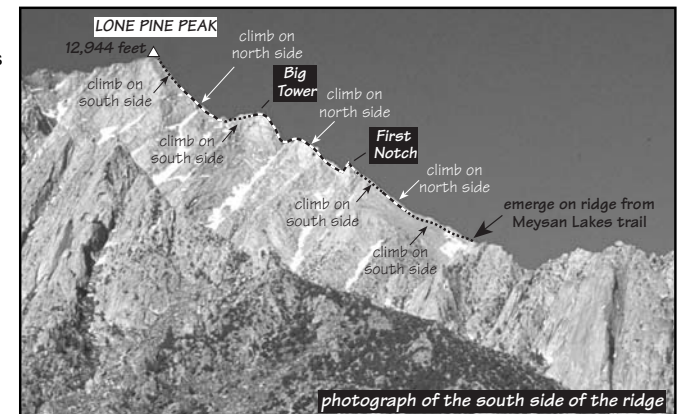
a small tower above the notch and then descend 30 feet. Pass a rock spire on its east side and climb the left side of a large tower via cracks to just below its top. Descend 40 feet and traverse west into the notch below the final ridge to the summit.

The hardest moves are leaving the notch. Start 20-feet below the notch on the east side via a short curved flake and layback making a long reach to good holds. Then trend left and up to a

flat ledge (100 feet). Above this move through small overhang blocks and go up and right and then back left on a low angle slab to ledges right on the ridge crest (140 feet). Above is a 12-inch low angle crack. Climb up this and over the step above and then cross to the west side of the ridge crest. Now stay on the west side going pretty much straight up gaining the flatter blocky area just below the summit. Trend slightly left through loose blocks and exit onto the summit. The register should be about 50 feet to the right.

**THE DESCENT**

The descent takes 3-4 hours, two hours if you hurry. Go west from the summit via blocks and sand until a lower plateau becomes visible. This plateau is not visible from the summit but you can see another plateau to the south. Go northwest across the plateau towards the low point on the ridge. You may find some cairns here. Cross over the ridge just left of the low point and trend across and slightly down to the saddle on the ridge straight ahead just left of a tower. Descend down ugly loose talus towards the lakes. Cross around the lake and pick up the trail on the far side.



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