



**Mt. Banner Parents and Kids  
Camp**

**Trip Notes**

# **Mt. Banner Parents and Kids Camp**

**Kids enjoy the outdoors – once they get there! But organizing the logistics and getting them enthused can be difficult. So we have put together this trip, which removes the planning headaches from the parents and also gives kids a safe environment to discover the high Sierra, climb a few peaks, do a little rock climbing or to simply sit in the sun and relax. The Ritter Range area north of Mammoth is an ideal location for a basecamp. The approach to our basecamp is around 8 miles with a total elevation gain of about 2200 feet. But we ease the effort required to get to camp by using pack stock to carry the heavy items and we hike easily with a daypack. This leaves us most of the day to get to camp near Thousand Island Lake.**

**Behind camp are the stunning peaks of Mt. Ritter and Mt. Banner; these give us the opportunity to ascend to around 13,000 feet and gain spectacular views of the Yosemite high country. If parents want to relax in camp, we will take the kids out and work on getting them tired but fulfilled.**

## **Itinerary**

**Day One:** Hiking close to 8 miles without heavy packs allows us to take a leisurely hike up the San Joaquin River from Agnew Meadows to beautiful Thousand Island Lake. We will set up camp here for the remaining days. The pack stock arrive with our equipment and then leave.

Distance: 7.75 miles, 2200 feet of gain, 700 feet of loss

**Day Two:** We will take an acclimatization scramble up nearby Mt. Davis, which has a great view of the Minarets and the entire Ritter range north into the Yosemite High Country. This also preps us for our ascent of Mt. Banner the following day.

Distance: 7.5 miles, 2600 feet of gain, 2600 feet of loss. The summit of Mt. Davis is 12,309' (3752m).

**Day Three:** For Mt Banner we will ascend to Lake Catherine via meadows, grass slopes and talus. We skirt the Lake and, donning crampons and pulling out an ice axe, climb an easy glacial slope to the spectacular Ritter-Banner Saddle. Above this the route to the summit appears steep and difficult, but in reality we weave our way around the hard sections and scramble up a final small rock slope to the summit and its spectacular views. We return to camp the way we ascended.

Distance: 7.0 miles, 3400 of gain, 3400 feet of loss. The summit of Mt. Banner is 12,942' (3945m).

**Day Four:** We pack up, greet our packers who are returning to pick up our gear and arrive at the vehicles by early afternoon.

Distance: 7.75 miles, 700 feet of gain, 2200 feet of loss

## **Meeting place and time**

We meet at the Mammoth Welcome Center in Mammoth Lakes at 7:00 am. From 395 take the Mammoth Lakes exit and follow the signs into town. The Mammoth Lakes Welcome Center is a few miles from the highway on your right (along with the US Forest Service). The address is 2510 Main St, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546. If you get to the first traffic light you have gone too far. We like to meet in town so that if there are any last minute items we can get them, but come packed and ready to do a gear check and then to shuttle to the packstation. The packers like to get going early so we need to be at Agnew Meadows by 8:30 am.

## **Using the packstock**

Mules have been a traditional way of accessing the Sierra backcountry. They make the mountains accessible to a wider range of people, both young and old. They do enable us to take along some extras to make camp life more relaxed and easy. But we do need to limit people to a 20 pounds per person (this does not include tents). We do weigh the duffles.

## **Notes on the Climbing**

Our route up Banner takes us up the small glacier and snowfield between Banner and Ritter. This is low angle, but does hold snow year-round so we do need appropriate climbing equipment. We will give you instruction on how to use them before and during the ascent. But we do not need harnesses and technical climbing equipment up since the ascent is straightforward scrambling.

## **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, packstock and packers, 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**

No prior mountaineering experience is required but you should have some backpacking and hiking experience. You should be in good physical condition, ready to hike up to 8 miles off trail with a day pack at altitude. We do not have an age restriction for kids since everyone is different. But make sure that they are able to do the hike to camp, since once the mules pass us our options become limited and we need to get to the camp.

## **Ratios**

We keep the ratio of one guide to five participants to ensure speed and efficiency while climbing. We need to be off the peak early enough to avoid encounters with afternoon thunderstorms.

## **Bears**

Bears can be a problem in Mammoth and 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. If possible, please car pool up to the trailhead; we can talk about where to leave extra vehicles.

## **Acclimatization**

Since camp during the trip is over 9,000' we highly recommend that you spend at least one night at moderate altitude (higher than 8,000') just prior to the trip. Though you will not be carrying a heavy pack during the trip, you will still be working hard hiking and climbing every day. Spending a night in Mammoth, either camping or in a hotel, would do it. Please refer to our Planning for Success info sheet for more info.

## **Notes and other info**

Guidebooks include Secor's "The High Sierra; Peaks, Passes and Trails".

# Equipment List for Mt. Banner

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.

## Climbing equipment

- Boots\*. Lightweight mountaineering or heavy duty hiking boots are a must for this route. Trail runners or tennies are not acceptable. If there is snow you will need a heavier duty more waterproof boot. Foot care is very important and bad boots can make or break a trip. 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.
- Crampons.\* These must be compatible with your boots.

## Other essentials

- Camp Shoes for around camp. Sanuk sandals, Crocs, or light tennis shoes are all appropriate. The camp shoes will make hanging out in camp more comfortable, and lessen the impact we leave on the sites. Open toed flip flops are not acceptable.
- Daypack. A pack of 25-35 L is big enough.
- Sleeping Bag. A 32°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 differences, but a down bag should be waterproofed inside your bag with a trash bag lining the stuff sack.
- 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.

## Clothing

- 2 pair synthetic or wool socks.
- Gaiters. Shorties are handy to avoid rocks in the boots up high.
- Long underwear top and bottom.
- 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.
- Light down jacket; synthetic fill is second choice. This is optional & can replace the previous item. For in camp or in cold weather.
- 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.
- Shorts for on the trail.
- 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 pair of heavier 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.
- Eating and drinking equipment. An insulated mug with a lid. This can double for a bowl. Fork and spoon.
- Pocket knife. Small Swiss army style, not a large Leatherman.
- Personal toiletries. Toothbrush and toothpaste. 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.
- Plastic Trash Sac. Handy for keeping gear in outside the tent should it rain.
- 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.
- Optional reading material, journal, Kindle, etc.

## Food

- We include meals from lunch on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 4. Bring your own snack items like cliff bars, power bars, or gorp concoctions for all days. Also bring your favorite hot drinks (tea, hot chocolate, cider etc.) A days worth for most people would be 2 bars, 3 ounces of gorp, and perhaps a candy bar. Don't over do it.

## Shared Equipment Provided by SMC

- Duffel bag. This will carry all of your overnight gear and camp essentials. We prefer to use our own since they fit the mules' saddlebags well.
- Shelter. We will provide tents for you, and you will be asked to share a tent with someone as campsites are only so large, and to help distribute weight. If you have a tent of your own you want to use please call the office prior to the trip.
- Stoves, kitchen and cookware.
- Group climbing equipment
- Water purification. The group will have access to a variety of different ways to treat water. Chemical treatment, such as Aquamira or Iodine, will be carried by the guide. Gravity filtration bags will be distributed amongst the group for use in camp.
- Bear-proof food storage. All food and snacks will go into the mule's paniers overnight.

## You specifically don't need

- Big first aid kits (we have a comprehensive one).
- Deodorant or any toiletries beyond those listed above.
- Items that are not on this list.

## Additional Thoughts

- Some people, particularly women, tend to run colder than others. If this is the case add another layer or two, a warmer sleeping bag, warmer boots and extra handwarmers
- Women – see our "Women on the Trail" information sheet at the Women's Trips pages on the website.

200 South Main Street, P.O. Box 95, Bishop, CA 93515

office@sierramountaincenter.com

760.873.8526

www.sierramountaincenter.com