

The 1957 High Trip

(The 52nd High Trip)

High Trip 1 – Evolution Country and Muir Pass – July 7-20

This year the Sierra High Trips will return to the great climax country of the range. The first two-week period will enter over Piute Pass. Those who pick the first two weeks will assemble at North Lake (9,200 feet). Dinner will be served there the evening of the 7th, but we advise that you get into the mountains a day or two ahead of this and begin the acclimatization process. The next morning's move, our first, we will climb over Piute Pass (11,400) and into the great granite desolation of upper Piute Creek.

Camp will be set up at Hutchinson Meadow and here we will spend our first layover day. For those who need conditioning, this will be an opportunity just to relax and prepare for the days ahead. For those who feel the urge to go exploring, there are many places that will beckon, such as the above-timberline lakes – including Desolation Lake, French Canyon and Pilot Knob with its fine view. For those already in condition and rarin' to go, Mt. Humphreys offers a top mountaineering attraction.

The next move is a split one into Evolution Valley and there will be a choice of routes on this moving day. Those who wish to follow the trail will hike down Piute Creek, then follow up the South Fork of the San Joaquin to its junction with Evolution Creek. The final climb past the beautiful cascades of Evolution Creek will end at the next camp in Evolution Meadow. The alternative is a not difficult cross-country route over Glacier Divide and down to the next camp. The greater part of the High Trip group in 1951 made this cross-country and saved several miles in doing it. Also they had a magnificent high country view back to Mt. Humphreys and forward to Mt. Darwin.

And what does one do in Evolution Valley? There are so many points of beauty here that it will be hard to choose. Perhaps you will spend your time meadow browsing; fishing in the tumbling stream; or exploring on the benches that parallel either side of the valley.

It's moving day again! Now we head for the high, just-below-timberline country. The campsite is at Darwin Bench, close by Evolution Lake. It was discovered by Dave Brower, and in his opinion, is the finest High Trip camp in the Sierra. This is mountaineering country and all qualified climbers will have an opportunity to reach the top of one of the many peaks that surround us – Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Haeckel, The Hermit and Mt. McGee among others.

Our next camp will be in the upper reaches of LeConte Canyon and there will be opportunity for the more adventuresome to spend a night at the Muir Hut on Muir Pass (12,059) as they make this move. This will be another split move, giving those who want to continue climbing in the Darwin Group an extra day to conquer another peak. Remember that we will each carry one stick of wood to the top of the pass for fuel to succor those (in other parties!) who may get stranded in stormy weather at the hut.

There is much exploring to be done during our layover in LeConte Canyon, and for the climbers there is the Black Giant to offer a challenge. The next move will take us down LeConte Canyon, along the upper reaches of the Middle Fork of the Kings River and up into Dusy Basin. The climbers will now really be at home. North Palisade, Mt. Winchell and Agassiz are all within climbing distance of the Dusy campsite. After this final dull

day together, we will leave the mountains over Bishop Pass (12,000) and drop down to South Lake. Those who are staying for the full four weeks will remain at the Dusy Basin camp.

High Trip 2 – The Palisades and Bench Lake – July 21 – August 3

Assembling at South Lake (9,750) for dinner on the 21st of July, the second two-weeks party will move over Bishop Pass to the Dusy Basin campsite. Here commissary will be well established and ready to start the trip with one of those wonderful High Trip dinners. After a not-too-difficult first day's hike you may feel like doing some exploring during the one day at Dusy Basin. One possibility would be to climb over Knapsack Pass into the great bowl below the North palisade. Or maybe this would be just the time to cast that first fly. Or maybe you will just want to sit and catch your breath and prepare for the days ahead. The choice is yours.

Now we are ready to move on to the next camp at Grouse Meadow. This will be the first time the High Trip has stopped at Grouse Meadow since 1939. This was John Muir's favorite meadow and it is truly a place of beauty and of grandeur, lying as it does at the foot of the great cliffs on either side of LeConte Canyon. Here will be a wonderful opportunity to explore the country across the Middle Fork of the Kings River under the Devils Crag, or to hike down the river to the junction with Cartridge Creek and toward Simpson Meadow.

Our first split move will lead through Deer Meadow and up past the Palisade Lakes to a camp just below timberline beside a charming little waterfall. From this camp we will look up to Disappointment Peak and behind it the great black face of the Middle Palisade. This is the great climbing country, though the principal peaks of Middle Palisade and Mt. Sill will call for some mountaineering experience. There will be climbing guides from the commissary to lead those who have this experience and wish to climb one of these 14,000-foot peaks. After such a climb, one feels that he has received his true baptism as a High Sierran.

But again we must move on to our next camp in Upper Basin. The climb over Mather Pass (12,050) will not be difficult, as we will start from our 11,000-foot camp above the Palisade Lakes. Those who choose to move over the first day will have the opportunity to climb Split Mountain, the last chance on this trip to get above 14,000 feet. Those who remain behind for more climbing in the Palisades will spend only a night at the Upper Basin camp and the following day the entire group will move on to Bench Lake.

Bench Lake conjures up many images; fighting trout (when they bite), early morning reflections of Arrow Pak, best swimming in the Sierra (not just an icy dip), a High Trip symphonette playing Beethoven perched on the edge of the "bench" with the South Fork shimmering in the canyon far below. There will be two days to revel in the wonder of this spot. And the last move will be a first in High Trip annals. We will leave the mountains over Taboose Pass, never before used by a High Trip.

After a last look back (one of the grand views in the Sierra) the trail will lead us down, down, down to Owens Valley.

Excerpt taken from the *Sierra Club Bulletin*, March 1957