

The Forty-Eighth High Trip

(1953)

Two two-week periods starting July 12. Along the Muir Crest—Miter Basin, Crabtree Meadows and Mount Whitney, Milestone Bench, Center Basin

For three years in a row, now, the management has missed a mile in trying to set up High Trip periods that would be equally appealing. The miss has meant that not only the periods, but the budget too have been out of balance. So this year we look forward bravely to perfect balance; all possible variables have been removed, and both periods will cover the Sierra crest between Kearsarge and Army passes. The choice will lie between whether you want the sun and snowscape at your back or in your eye as you travel from camp to camp! The first period starts at Carroll Creek, the second at Onion Valley. Both are limited to 125.

Campsites--all-time favorites

Miter Basin. The beauties of this glacial basin, close under Mount Langley and the crags of LeConte, Mallory, and Irvine, fascinated High Trippers in 1946 and kept Base Campers busy for four weeks in 1949.

Crabtree Meadow. A campsite surpassed by few and indispensable as a jumping-off for ascents to what California has that Colorado would like most, and from summit of which we expect many of the hardier type to watch sunrise and sunset.

Milestone Bench. This won't appear by name on any map, but High Trippers who stayed here in 1948 are still talking about it—especially the leader, who alternately calls Milestone Bench and Darwin Bench the most beautiful in all the Sierra. Here the campfire is foreground for sunset on Williamson, Tyndall, Barnard, Russell, Whitney, Muir, and Langley—seven— of the highest. And right at hand, a beautiful meadow timberline bedsites, rock-coved lakes, a Table Mountain and Milestone to catch the sunrise.

Center Basin (circa). The few of us who camped in Center Basin last summer agree that this is part of the great country the High Sierra. Beautiful peaks encircle an alpine land of forest, meadow, and streams. Handsome Center Peak all but crowds us out of camp, yet doesn't intrude at all.

Little Cottonwood (for northbound passengers only). The first night's stop at Little Cottonwood Creek makes Miter Basin a reasonable two-day trip for all and is our concession to the slow disintegration of footburners that the automobile has brought out—early-day High Trippers would have romped the entire distance in a day.

Kearsarge Lakes (for southbound passengers only). This is so alpine that you'd hardly expect that the High Trip could camp here, but Pat Goldsworthy proved we could last summer. We would like to repeat last summer's sunsets here, omitting only the rain that made them. Kearsarge Pinnacles echo the morning call's every single note.

The moves

From Carroll Creek to Miter Basin, or vice versa. Ike Livermore has always pointed out that this move provides a wonderful appreciation of the eastern escarpment of the Sierra. We'll agree with him and not dwell

on the subject any longer except to say that the inbound trip will start pleasantly early. Army Pass is crossed on the second day in, the last day out.

Miter Basin to Crabtree Meadow. Down Rock Creek, across strange Guyot Flat, and up Crabtree Creek to the first campsite with a good view of Mount Whitney. There is an alternate for knapsackers—a contour route that just misses the summit of Whitney.

Crabtree to Milestone. One of the most beautiful day's travel in the Sierra, crossing Wallace and Wright Creeks, Tyndall Creek, the headwaters of the Kern, and a final steep but short pull up to the bench above the Milestone camp that was traditionally sought in the old High Trip days. This is a long day, but well worth every foot of it and remarkably free, as High Trip days go, from ups and downs. Knapsack side trips should take in Tulainyo Lake and, for those who will tread lightly, Kaweah Basin—the "Last Citadel."

Milestone to Center Basin. High point of the move is 13,200 foot Foresters Pass, as amazing a piece of trail engineering as you'll find in the Sierra—with a chance to observe the striking difference in timberline character between the Kern and the Kings watersheds. Knapsackers looking for a change may choose the route via Lake South America, Harrison Pass, and Vidette Creek.

Center Basin to Onion Valley. A few miles on the John Muir Trail, then the ever-favored eastern approach over Kearsarge Pass. Here again there's a short cut for those who'd prefer a little vertical distance to a lot of horizontal, beautiful trail. There's even a short cut on the short cut. The Kearsarge approach is one of the easiest—and we hope that our fond plan for balanced periods is not blasted by a clamoring for the easier way in. We should not want to attach a stigma to one group as opposed to another, but there are those who would suggest that to come in over Kearsarge is a sign of weakness, while to come in over Army Pass combines the virtues of determination, resourcefulness, and free enterprise.

What the trip is like

The High Trip formula has not changed through the ages. Mules, persuaded by the crew of packers, carry the load—food, dunnage, commissary equipment. Skilled hands organize camp and prepare appetizing mountain meals. Members carry their minimum noontime needs, choose their own pace, companions, and route to the next campsite, being provided such leadership as they need. We move a day, rest a day or two, move again, and so on. Part of the fun is in watching mountains, part in watching people— from children not yet in their teens on up to old hands who don't remember their teens any longer—as they react to mountains. The mountains themselves are big enough to provide solitude galore.

There's always plenty to do—natural sciences to study *in situ*, mountaineering and climbing instruction, fishing, photographing, lots of live music, campfire fun, moving-day circuses wherever the mules and packers are —and always plenty not to do for those who want a quiet place in the half-shade.

The commissary crew will be nearly the same as last year's, led by David Brower and Pat Goldsworthy. The Mount Whitney Pack Trains strings will be under the able management of Bruce Morgan. As long as there's a High Trip there'll be ample opportunity for volunteer wielders of ax, shovel, and hotcake or trout turner.

The Cost

The total cost will \$82 per period, \$67 for children under 14. (Check to see how far under is likely to work out. As a clue, Ken and Bob Brower, at 7 1/2 and 6, made out beautifully last year, as the manager never missed a chance to attest.) This for those who budget such things, amounts to \$3.73 per week between now and trip time if our arithmetic is right. We have assigned the subcommittee on finance and rationalization the task of proving how much can save by getting away from lowland temptations to spend money on unessentials such as telephone, gadgets, and gas—and going on the High Trip instead. D.R.B

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