

The 1960 High Trip

(The 55th High Trip)

What is a High Trip? It's camping, yes; but it's traveling too. This form of wilderness experience, pioneered by the Sierra Club, now has its followers and imitators, and we ourselves have developed a wide variety of other outings. But the High Trip is the base of all.

The trips move at a leisurely pace – never more than twelve miles per day – changing camp about every third day. On the morning of a move, duffel bags are packed and left for the mules, and trip members, after breakfast, follow their own pace on well-marked trails from camp to camp.

The 55th High Trip revisits one of the loveliest and least traveled regions of the Sierra Nevada, the northeastern section of Yosemite National park. While this northernmost end of the High Sierra cannot boast the great canyons and higher peaks of the Kings and Kern country, it has its own special and intimate charm.

Everything that goes to make up the true Sierra atmosphere is here – all on a smaller and more accessible scale. Although the passes are not quite so high, there are spectacular views all around.

The trip starts high this year; the first camp at roadhead is at nearly 10,000 feet. Take time to become acclimated before joining the group, and don't let the first day's move be your first hike of the year.

The High Trips will be led by Ted Grubb and Gus Benner. Louise Dunlap, in her third summer as High Trip Chef, will prepare the usual excellent meals.

High Trip 1 – Virginia Canyon, Matterhorn Canyon, Benson Lake, Kerrick Meadow – July 10 – 23

The first High Trip group will meet at Virginia Lakes roadhead for dinner on Sunday, July 10.

After an early breakfast next morning, we move up through Virginia Lakes basin. This region is typically High Sierran, with great expanses of granite surrounding brilliant blue lakes. Climbing higher, the trail crosses a pass and drops down to Summit Lake, which drains to the eastern slope of the Sierra, while one of the headwaters of westward-flowing Return Creek starts just a short distance away from the other end of the lake.

The trail leads down to our camp beside the cascading waters of Return Creek. There will be opportunities to explore the slopes of Virginia Canyon, to climb Mount Conness and Shepherd Crest.

The next move to Matterhorn Canyon includes a sharp climb and a step descent, a striking view to the south (Mount Lyell, Mount Ritter and Banner Peak beyond Tuolumne Meadows), and near Miller Lake one of the best swimming holes in the Sierra.

From Matterhorn Canyon we climb to Benson Pass through a varied terrain of forest and crumbling granite, then go down past Smedberg Lake to camp at Benson Lake. Piute Creek, a quiet stream with deep pools to lure

the fisherman, enters the lake near our camp; there is a beautiful crescent of sandy beach close by, and great cliffs rise from the water's edge on two sides of this spectacular lake.

Next, the group will cross Seavey Pass, where veritable Oriental rock gardens are set among deep blue tarns and picturesque hemlocks, to camp in Kerrick Meadow. Many layover activities will be available here. Crown Point, a relatively easy scramble, offers a remarkable panorama.

An easy day's move then takes us to camp at The Forks. The last day's hike through The Roughts at times reminds us of travel in Switzerland's Alps, but Buckeye Creek roadhead will bring us back to reality – and California.

**High Trip 2 – Kerrick Bench, Slide Canyon,
Matterhorn Canyon – July 24 – August 5**

Our second group will assemble at Buckeye Creek roadhead on July 24. Backtracking on the first-trippers' outward-bound trail, we will camp first at The Forks. The next move will follow the route to Kerrick Bench, one of the High Trip's "own" camps. Peeler Lake, under Crown Point, is an easy stop-over on the way to this camp. After a layover here, the trail leads across Snow Pass to our Slide Canyon camp. Sawtooth Ridge and Matterhorn Peak will be close at hand to lure ambitious climbers, and amateur geological sleuths might like to try to solve the riddle of the great slide from which the canyon gets its name.

Next we head for Matterhorn Canyon over Burro Pass, and then follow the first-two-weekers' trail in reverse, camping in Virginia Canyon and on the last day hiking up and out to Virginia Lakes roadhead.

Excerpt taken from the *Sierra Club Bulletin*, January 1960