

The 1964 High Trip

(The 59th High Trip)

The Fifty-ninth High Trip will travel through French Canyon, Piute Creek, the Mono Recesses and upper Fish Creek. When the Twenty-eighth High Trip went through this area for the first time in 1929 the John Muir Trail was not yet completed.

This is how Marion Randal Parsons wrote of a moving day up Piute Creek (SCB, February 1930): “For a few miles we followed a well-graded section of the John Muir Trail; but up Piute Canyon the old trail, careless of lost elevation, stony and steep, made hard going for both animals and men. The canyon, topped by huge domes and walled with beautifully whorled and striated cliffs, is bare, stern, and harshly primitive as in a beginning world; and indeed since the glaciers chiseled it, time and weather have done little crevice its cliffs and pavements with tree-sustaining soil. Under Pilot Knob, however, the grim walls widen, and their groves and meadows are generously spread.” There followed a layover day when High Trippers “...scattered out, to fish up French canyon along meadows crimson with castilleia and shooting-stars, or explore the enchanting group of lakes on the plateau above; to visit Piute pass, or climb and encircle Pilot Knob; to penetrate Humphreys Basin, or, perhaps, to climb Mount Humphreys.”



Mules enjoying themselves in the high country. Could it ever be any more fun than that!

What is a High Trip? The paragraph above gives a capsule idea. The pattern is still the same. A group of people of all ages and of varied interests camps and travels in the higher reaches of the mountains. On moving days, duffel bags are packed and left for the mules, and trip members follow their own pace to the next camp. Layover days can be spent in leisurely enjoyment of the quiet peace of the high country, or in energetic climbing.

At the chosen campsites, the ground is your bed, and the sky – or a tent – you roof. Breakfast and dinner are prepared by the commissary crew, and bedding and food are carried by the pack train. The individual member is required only to set up and break his personal camp, and make the hike to the next camp. He can help with the cooking, assist in setting up a new camp, or lend a hand at any of the many duties which keep the outing on schedule.

A few cautionary words: it's wise to spend a day or two in the high country before the trip, and thus become acclimatized for the exertions ahead. Young teen-agers on the trip must be accompanied by an adult, preferably a parent or parents.

High Trip 1 – French Canyon, Bear Creek, Mono Recesses – July 19 - August 1

Our first camp will be at the end of the road through Round Valley northwest of Bishop, and the next morning's move will be a short one of four miles – a good first day's climb from the roadhead at 7,000 feet to camp near Pine Lake (9,650). Then we move over Pine Creek Pass (11,200) to our camp in French Canyon (10,000). The summit of Pilot Knob and the lakes of Humphreys Basin are within easy reach from this camp.

Our next move is down Piute Creek to the south Fork of the San Joaquin and up the John Muir Trail to Senger Creek and Sally Keyes Lakes. After we go on over Selden Pass (10,872) there will be a chance for climbers to try such peaks as Mount Hilgard, Mount Abbot or Seven Gables. Hikers can go to Lake Italy, or explore the upper reaches of Bear Creek and swim in a wonderful stretch of that stream between vertical cliffs of granite.

Then we'll travel by the John Muir Trail and via a volcanic knob to Mono Creek and a camp in the Second Recess. Climbers will have Red and White Mountain close by, and the streams and lakes of the Recesses and Pioneer Basin should lure the fishermen. The 1st day's hike will lead up over Mono Pass (12,000) and down to the Rock Creek roadhead.

Leader – Al Baxter.

High Trip 2 – Silver Pass, Tully Hole, McGee Creek Pass – August 2 - 15

Members will gather for dinner on August 2 at the Rock Creek roadhead (9,700) at the entrance to Little Lakes Valley. The first moving day will lead over Mono Pass to Mono Creek and into Pioneer Basin. Here a layover day will allow climbing Mount Abbot, exploring the Fourth Recess, or fishing in the many lakes of Pioneer basin. A second moving day will take us to a camp at the Second Recess.

Next we will cross the North Fork of Mono creek on the John Muir Trail and camp at Silver Bench, south of Silver Pass. When we go over that pass on our way to the south fork of Fish Creek, near the Lake of the Lone Indian, we will have from the trail a magnificent view of Ritter, Banner and the Minarets to the north.

A move up the east fork of Fish creek through Tully Hole will take us to a last high camp near Horse Heaven. From camp – or from McGee Creek Pass the last day – there will be an opportunity to climb Red Slate Mountain. The last day's hike takes us out over McGee Creek Pass (12,000) through spectacular country to the roadhead.

Leader – Ted Grubb.

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