



How to Plan a Pack Trip

By Bob Tanner

Planning a trip into the back country this year?

If so, we offer the following suggestions so that you may enjoy this wonderful experience to the fullest.

The purpose of your trip may be a family outing, fishing or hunting, camping, photography or just a desire to get away from it all whatever it may be, a little planning can make it more enjoyable for you, your party as well as the packer.

A variety of types of trips is available in the Sierras and each pack outfit arranges an individual trip to meet your interests, budget and dates you prefer. In preparing for your pack trip you should select the type of trip you desire. Basically there are four types of trips:

Spot Trips: You are taken by horseback and pack animal to your campsite and picked up on a predetermined date. You furnish your camp gear and provisions. Variations in rates occur because of distance. Trips of approximately three hours' riding time permit the packer to return to the station the same day. Trips of five to seven hours necessitate the packer remaining overnight. Your length of stay on a spot trip does not effect the charges.

This type of trip is recommended for those who like to camp, enjoy hiking to nearby lakes and like a moderate amount of horseback riding. This trip has so many desirable features of camp comfort, easy riding, economy and suitability for families that it has become the most popular type in the Sierras.

Traveling trips: The stock and packer remain with the party for the duration of the trip. The amount of moving, new campsites and distance covered is determined by the individual party. This trip is recommended for persons who enjoy seeing new country and enjoy horseback riding with gentle, trailwise stock. Camp gear and provisions are provided by the party.

All-Expense trips: Stock, packer and cook stay with the party for the duration of the trip. Camp gear and provisions are provided by the pack outfit. This is the easiest way to really enjoy a vacation. Your only duty is to fish or hunt, relax and eat.

Dunnage pack: The pack outfit packs the gear for a walking party planning either a traveling or spot trip. For most people this trip is far more enjoyable and wiser than attempting to back-pack.

Variations of the above-type trips may be arranged, such as all-expense spot trips, (which is a spot trip with food, cook, and camp gear provided); extended trips, (on which the packer and stock are kept at a centralized camp and numerous side trips are made from this camp) or a moving spot trip, (whereby on one (late you are taken to the lake or stream of your choice), on a later date you are moved to another location, and on a third date you are brought out.

After selection of the type of trip you desire a letter should be written to the packer or packers of your choice requesting their suggestions, (unless you have already determined the area you desire to visit). In this letter you should indicate the type of trip you desire, the number in your party, preferences as to fishing (lake,

stream or combination), hunting, photography, whether or not you wish to make short hikes from your camp as well as the duration of your trip and the approximate dates.

Upon selection of the pack outfit of your choice confirm your reservation with a deposit stating the exact dates of your trip and the number in your party. It is helpful if you can give the approximate weight of the gear and food you will have packed as this determines the number of pack animals required. The average party will require approximately one pack animal per person (150 lbs.) for a week's stay. This is based on normal camp gear and food as used in the conventional campground. The packer estimates your needs on the number in your party, including children, the season (hunters usually take more gear) and the duration of your trip. If you are planning a deluxe camp or traveling light you should notify the packer of these variations.

In planning saddle horses for your party the packer should know the number of children and persons weighing in excess of 200 lbs. Packers can handle 280-pound men and any type of equipment if you will give them advance warning.

If any change occurs in your plans, such as more or less people, unusual gear, change in dates, or change in area desired, you should notify the packer prior to the trip. This should not be construed to mean that pack trips cannot be planned on short notice. However, for the best service, choice of areas and dates, advance planning is suggested.

Normal camping gear including warm sleeping bags is recommended. It is not necessary for you to do any pre-packing. You bring what you want transported into the backcountry and leave the method to the packer's ingenuity. Duffel bags are superior to suitcases for personal gear.

Square 5-gallon tins are handy in camp for water and storage, and two will fit inside a pack box. If you pre-pack your food in these tins, each tin should weigh 25 to 30 lbs. when full. If you desire, as many do, to construct your own pack boxes from lightweight lumber, the size should accommodate two 5-gallon tins (10" x 14" x 21".) Eggs and other breakables are not difficult for the packer if you leave them out where the packer can see them.

Foods that are common to your meals at home can be packed into the backcountry. The easiest way to plan your food list is to start with the number of days. Fresh foods such as tomatoes, avocados and lettuce can be wrapped individually and placed in cartons. Biscuits, cakes and pies can be enjoyed if you take a reflector or dutch oven. Fresh meat can be held a number of days if it is wrapped in newspaper and dry ice. Frozen meats normally are not thawed until the second day if wrapped in newspaper. Pre-cooked roasts make delicious meals. For those who do not want to take time for camp cooking, you can bring your meals in cans and packages. Simple meals of canned ham and chicken are excellent for the last few days. Don't forget to allow food for your packer. Aluminum foil and paper plates are recommended as well as a pressure cooker for slow-cooking items, such as potatoes.

A pre-packed lunch carried with you is the best solution to lunch on the first day of your trip. Unless previously arranged otherwise, packers normally expect you to arrive at the pack station between 7:00 and 8:00 A.M. Certain packers for particular areas will inform you of the latest time of arrival. If your arrival will be later than normal, make this arrangement prior to your trip. Nearby eating facilities are available at most pack stations, and their use is heartily recommended.

You should not expect to be out at the pack station with your gear on the last day of your trip until late afternoon. If you are planning a long automobile trip immediately following the pack trip, an out date that will permit you to stay overnight in a nearby campground or motel is recommended.

With these suggestions in mind, it is hoped that you will accept the invitation of the packers to engage their services for an enjoyable and spectacular pack trip in the High Sierras.

Information on the various packers and territories served may be obtained from the corresponding secretary, Eastern High Sierra Packers' Assn., Box 16, Bishop, Calif. The packer of your choice will be happy to answer your questions and assist you in making your pack trip an enjoyable and memorable experience.

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