

TROOP 8

HIGH SIERRAS CALIFORNIA BACKPACKING TRIP

July 27 - AUGUST 11, 2013

Yosemite Valley and John Muir Trail Duck Pass to South Lake

1. Summary:

A fantastic backpacking trip, which included 3 days in the Yosemite Valley to acclimatize and an 8 day trek which incorporated 70 miles on the famous John Muir Trail. While this was a very strenuous trek with extensive periods above 10,000 feet and lots of daily elevation gain, for an experienced mature crew such as we had (16 -18 years age and all had been to Philmont previously), it did not present a problem. The scenery we passed though was absolutely stunning.

2. Participants:

ASM's Mark Twentyman, Bob Webber, Curt Villars

Scouts 11 Scouts aged 16-18 and all had been to Philmont previously.

3. Itinerary:

Day 1 – Took flight from Newark to San Francisco, then hired vans to drive to Hodgson Meadow Campsite in Yosemite National Park. We stopped on way to pick up some food supplies.

Day 2 – Got up early and went into the Yosemite Valley and walked the Mist Trail to Nevada Falls with day packs – a 6 mile round trip.. Then went off to see the Sequoia forest and Wawonna.

Day 3 – Got up early again and went into Yosemite Valley – walked to Glacier Point (7,200 Ft) with day packs a 9 mile round trip. Then coled off swimming in the Merced River.

Day 4 – Left Hodgson Meadow heading to Mammoth Lake – stopped at the Tioga Pass entrance to the park and climbed Gaylor Peak(11,000 Ft) with day packs. Arrived at the Cold Water campsite in Mammoth Lakes around 5pm.

Day 5 – Visited Devils Post Pile national monument and walked about 4 miles with day packs. Drivers took one van to position at our trek exit point at South Lake (approx. 1.5 hours South).

Day 6 – first day of our Trek starting at Duck Pass Trail head – this can be accessed directly from the Cold Water Campsite. Walked 12 miles to Tully Hole, passing over Duck Pass (10,750 Ft) and picking up the John Muir Trail at Duck Lake.

Day 7 – Tully Hole to Quail meadows over Silver Pass (10,640 Ft) about 11miles.

Day 8 – Quail Meadows to Marie Lakes (10,570 Ft) – approximately 14 miles. One of our longer and toughest days with the climb up to Marie Lakes in the afternoon heat being particularly hard. The views from the campsite though was well worth the effort.

Day 9 – Marie Lakes to Shooting Star Meadow – over Selden Pass (10,870 ft) and approximately 10 miles. Stopped at Muir Trail Ranch for resupply of food that was sent out by overnight mail 2 weeks earlier.

Day 10 – into Kings Canyon National Park and on to southern end of Colby Meadow under the large mountain called “The Hermit”, which was a fantastic campsite (10,000 ft), with a river and pools to cool off in. Approximately 12 miles.

Day 11 – A big long day of 14 miles at high altitude, so hit the trail at 5am and got to the John Muir Pass (11,955 Ft) at 11am, then on down to Little Pete Meadow for a campsite.

Day 12 – A shorter (at last!) day of approximately 6 miles. We left the John Muir Trail at the Le Conte Ranger station to take the Bishop Pass Trail to Dusy Lakes (10,750 ft) where we camped out.

Day 13 – Over Bishop Pass (11,972 ft) to our final campsite just short of South Lake, a trek of approximately 8 miles. A few of the Scouts climbed/scrambled up Mt Agassiz (13,893 Ft) which was a little more than they bargained for on the descent in terms of the exposure.

Day 14 – A short 2 mile walk to our vehicles then onto Denny’s for Breakfast and drive to San Francisco, where stayed in the Hostelling International building in Fort Mason near Fisherman’s Wharf (Great accommodation and location).

Day 15 – Day spent sight seeing in San Francisco – Scouts spent most of their time at Fisherman’s Wharf. Then a Crew evening meal out to celebrate our trip.

Day 16 – Flight back to Newark airport, followed by a midnight breakfast at the Broadway Diner on return to Chatham.

ADMIN.

Group Size: Max of 15 on the Trail or 8 for off Trail **BUT** there are quotas for nearly all of the Trail Heads for overnight camping ie Treks. So a large group will be limited as to which trails heads they can start from.

Permits: Permits are required for all overnight camping trips and can be booked easily and efficiently online. Note that you need to book the permit with the agency (there are several between National Parks/National Forest ect) in which your Trek starts AND note they have different rules re the timing as to when you can book – most are 6 months ahead but Yosemite NP is 180 days (ie not quite 6 months). The good news is that even if your exit point is in another agency’s jurisdiction, your original permit is valid and recognized by all so you only need one permit – there is also flexibility on the exit point and date which you can change (as we did) but there is no flexibility on entry point and date (unless you make another booking). For research the www.recreation.gov, website was very helpful.

The staff at the various National Park offices were always very friendly and helpful, when dealing with any questions we had. **For our permit we dealt with the Inyo National Forest Permit Office – 760 873 2483**

Mount Whitney has a separate permit and quota system which is run as a lottery for most of the Summer months – we entered but were not successful. (Some folks told us if you enter and leave from the West side it is not an issue but we never quite figured it out – our interest was from the East side only)

Bear Canisters: Required for all food and smellables throughout the Sierras

Campsites:

The National Park campsites have to be booked well in advance see Park websites – (our earliest date to book was March 15 and you need to do it the second the website opens up for booking) and while the larger group campsites go quickly (as there are few of them) you can accommodate a larger group by booking several smaller campsites as we had to.

Maps : We used National Geographic Maps 205, 206, & 809, which were fine in terms of scale and detail

Food Resupply: Our resupply point was at the Muir Trail Ranch – 4 days into our Trek. They offer a great friendly service and you can overnight food in plastic buckets to their location where they will hold for your arrival. Details in terms of costs, timing and logistics are all on their website.

Medical Issues:

- Coming from sea level it is obviously important to have a few days acclimatization
- Wearing sun hats (reluctance from some Scouts to do so – “makes my head too hot”!) is a must when in the sun
- Due to altitude/Heat need to drink lots of water – it is tough to get Scouts to drink enough plain water, so Gatorade or similar flavoring compounds helps
- **Blisters – take along Leuko tape its significantly better than moleskin in our experience**

Satellite Phone:

We took a Satellite Phone (\$300 for 3 weeks) in case on an emergency, as the route was pretty remote with no cell coverage. We would recommend taking one.

Pack Out Used Toilet Paper:

Permits require you to pack out all toilet paper and NOT to bury it in catholes.

San Francisco Accommodation:

The Hostelling International facility in San Fran at Fisherman’s Wharf was outstanding – see website or call 415 863 4490

Costs:

The all in cost for the trip including flights was \$1,170 per person