



Sierra Mountain Guides Newsletter

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Where are people climbing?



The Palisades:
Despite the new snow, the palisades are still very nice for climbing, and will be perfect in a couple of weeks.

[Middle Palisade](#)

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Issue: #6

June/2008



Dear Howie,

Climbing season has officially begun! June is filling up with people who want to visit the Palisades, we have completed our last scheduled ski trip (though there is still good corn snow out there for those interested!), and I have been riding to work in sandals all week. I was talking to a girlfriend last week about getting out and doing a trip in the mountains together this summer. We were sharing stories of summer alpine climbing and a few notable things came to mind that I wanted to use to spark your memories or desires. We talked about those blissful days that you can wear a light capilene all day and not feel a chill, we talked about getting to spend an hour on the summit, basking in the sun, and we talked about the great pleasure that comes from moving quickly and efficiently over the terrain to complete a big climb in a day. Summer alpine climbing makes me think of how the sun smells when it hits the rock, warms my face, and tans my skin. I'll be the first to admit that it's not always warm and dreamy out there but if these nice days are what you desire than there is no better place than the Sierra to get'um. Let's not forget what good ol' Abe Lincoln had to say:

"It's not how many years are in your life, but how much life is in your years"

No kidding, get out there.

~Annie

Lovers Leap Rocks!

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A BIG thanks to OR for providing our guides uniforms!



In my opinion, some of the best climbing in California.



I will admit that I am a little biased. I grew up in California and learned to trad climb at the leap. I have memories of being 17, buzzing down highway 50 with the windows down, the smell of pines rushing in my car, and the music loud! My summers at the leap were all about good friends, chaco tans, and as much granite as I could handle. It's not too late for you to make these memories too (though I would probably recommend driving a little slower!)

The Leap is this giant granite monolith just off of Highway 50 as you are heading to South Lake Tahoe. Its covered with these huge horizontal dike that provide awesome hand and foot holds as well as an unusual beauty seen no where else. Just 3.5 hours from the bay area, it is an ideal weekend getaway during the summer. There are awesome climbs everywhere! In Yosemite you would have to spend half of your day driving around to climb three multi -pitch 5.8's. At Lovers Leap, you just hike down from the top and scoot over a dozen yards from where you started your last climb! At the leap, you can find high quality entry level climbs, mega classic climbs in the 5.8-5.9 range and if you want harder stuff, it's got that too. Check out this incredible video of Dan Osman on the leap (his experience will be slightly different than the one we have!):

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=5D0P9aPu51A>

We have trips scheduled all summer, check out our [calendar!](#)

~Annie

Onion Valley to Mt. Whitney

Whitney 101!

As you probably know, Mt. Whitney is the most popular mountain for recreation in the lower 48. At 14, 496 feet it stands as the highest mountain in the lower 48 and receives thousands and thousands of visitors each year during all seasons. Most people approach Mt. Whitney via the Mt. Whitney trail. This trail is 11 miles long



and packed with as many as 100 people per day. Guides are not allowed to offer this trip to the public and all persons doing this trip must obtain hard to get permits that are handed out in a lottery each year in February. Others choose to climb Mt. Whitney via several extremely popular and classic routes. Experienced climbers can do this on their own, but most will choose to hire guides to take them up the East Face, the East Buttress, or the Mountaineers Route. These climbs are must do's for any climber or aspiring climber but again, permits are hard to come by, and your trip in the mountains rarely lasts more than 3 days. We have a great suggestion for those of you who are interested in the following things:

- A trip up Mt. Whitney
- A chance to see a huge part of the John Muir Trail which runs along the "back" side of the mountains
- An original way to climb Mt .Whitney
- More time in the woods and lots of exercise

[Onion Valley to Mt Whitney and Beyond!](#)

August 5-11

7 days

\$845- A screaming deal!!

Why AMGA / IFMGA?

Hiring Professionals:

As you search around for guides in the United States you are going to come across many different logos and acronyms on web sites and brochures: AMGA, IFMGA, UIAGM, LNT, AIARE, WFR, and so on. These can get confusing and I would like to talk to someone who really knows about all this to try to get it cleared up. Neil Satterfield is an owner and an IFMGA guide for Sierra Mountain Guides, we'll ask him some questions.



Annie: What should I look for when hiring a guide?

Neil: One of the things that is difficult for anyone looking to hire a guide is making that leap of faith to go climbing with someone they have never met. Who is this person? Are they safe? How much experience do they have? Are they patient? etc... The obvious choice for you would be a person you can get along with well and has credentials and experience. But where does that leave us? What certifications are important, and does the guide have experience in the specific discipline that your trip encompasses? You should ideally hire an IFMGA guide or a guide AMGA certified in the discipline that your trip encompasses.

Annie: What are all those other acronyms that I mentioned above?

Neil: I know it can be confusing so here is the breakdown:

AMGA: The American Mountain Guides Association. The AMGA has been around for 25+ years and has been dedicated to supporting the guiding community through excellence in education, standards and certification to enhance the quality of services provided to the public. The AMGA is the guide certifying body in the United States. Within the AMGA are discipline specific certifications for Rock, Alpine, and Ski Guiding. All

SMG guides are AMGA trained and/or certified.

AMGA Certifications:

1. Single Pitch Instructor: (Stand alone certification) can facilitate and instruct the sport of rock climbing in a single pitch setting.
2. Rock Instructor: (Stand alone certification) can guide single-pitch to Grade III climbs.
3. Rock Guide: can guide and instruct multiple clients on longer rock routes up to Grade V in length.
4. Alpine Guide: Can guide in alpine rock, snow, and ice terrain up to Grade V, and in glaciated terrain.
5. Ski Mountaineering Guide: Can ski guide in complex, glaciated high mountain terrain.

IFMGA (or UIAGM): The International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations (UIAGM is the French acronym). Once an AMGA candidate has obtained certifications at the highest level in each of the 3 disciplines (Rock, Alpine, Ski), they are granted IFMGA equivalence, and are qualified to guide in IFMGA member countries. At this time there are 21 member countries throughout the world.

It takes a lot of dedication to the profession of mountain guiding to become an AMGA certified or IFMGA-level guide. An IFMGA candidate spends a minimum of 84 days over 4-5 years in courses and exams being trained and assessed by their mentors and peers to become certified. Not to mention all of the countless hours spent getting the prerequisite mountain leadership experience to even enter the program.

IFMGA guides are trained and certified to guide in all high-mountain terrain, on-sight, and in all seasons. An IFMGA Aspirant Guide is a guide that is certified in one discipline and has passed mid-level Aspirant Exams in all disciplines. Aspirants are eligible to guide in IFMGA member countries under direct supervision from an IFMGA mentor guide.

LNT: Leave no Trace. This certification is based on the principle of take only pictures and leave only footprints. All SMG guides are well schooled in the seven principles of Leave no Trace.

AIARE: American Institute for Avalanche Research and Education. AIARE's goals are to increase the public awareness of avalanches and avalanche safety, and to provide avalanche instructors with the curriculum, training, and tools to effectively educate students. We have worked closely with AIARE for the past 10+ years to develop and implement nationally recognized avalanche course curriculum.

WFR: Wilderness First Responder. A WFR is qualified to respond to any medical issue in a remote wilderness or mountain setting. All SMG guides are required to pass an 80-hour course and re-certify medical skills every 2-3 years.

Annie: Why are certification and training relevant to hiring a guide?

Neil: You wouldn't hire just anyone to do your gall bladder surgery, so why would you hire some guy crawling out of the back of his car to take you up a technical climb. When your life is on the line (literally) you want to hire an experienced professional with credentials you can trust. Things can go wrong in the mountains. Certification ensures that your guide has the skills to deal with critical situations. Experience develops good judgment and decision making skill to generally avoid those situations. Certification and experience go hand-in-hand in making a proficient guide. We also think personality and demeanor are important guide

attributes! At SMG we only hire guides we like, and we think most everyone one else will too!



(an AMGA trained, SMG guide hard at work)

Thanks for reading,

Sincerely,
All of us at
Sierra Mountain Guides



Sierra Mountain Guides: Becasue those twins have to eat!



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