

SAMPLE CLIMB PROSPECTUS

SOUTH SISTER BY THE SOUTH RIDGE

Climb: SOUTH SISTER BY THE SOUTH RIDGE IN THE SUMMER
Date: A flexible date, weather forecast dependant
Time: Leave the Devil's Lake TH on Cascade Lakes Highway at 0600
Leaders: Every group has a leader and the leader should appoint an assistant
Goal: Climb as a group, reaching the summit together

South Sister, at 10,358 feet, is the highest of the Three Sisters, Broken Top and Mt. Bachelor. On a clear day, the surrounding peaks and Mt. Washington, Three Finger Jack, Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Hood, Mt. St. Helens, Mt. Adams and peaks to the south can all be photographed from the summit block.

South Sister is volcanic. Built atop a basaltic base, the mountain is composed of soft andosite topped by a harder basaltic cone. The mountain is symmetrical in form and has a well preserved summit crater, in summer boasting the highest lake in Oregon. The mountain rebuilt itself on an ancient volcano which still protrudes from the east side, near the summit. Seven glaciers continue to erode the soft material of South Sister. You can climb just to the west of steep and dangerously crevassed Lewis Glacier, its beautiful glacial tarn appearing from under the heavy snows of Winter.

You can climb from Devils Lake following the summer climber's trail past terminal moraines and beautiful Moraine Lake to the foot of Lewis Glacier. You can rest there at the edge of the glacial tarn before climbing on to the south rim of the volcano, then across the caldera to the summit block on the north east edge of the rim. The climb is a strenuous 5,000 foot, six mile one-way grunt to the summit and then a six mile return. Actual trail miles have been estimated at fifteen. Depending on the weather this hard summer climb can be delightful or dangerous from the effects of hyperthermia (heat exhaustion). Lowlanders can experience mild altitude sickness above 8,000 feet.

The purpose of this adventure should be for every-one in the group to have a fine time, not to put an individual or two on the summit. Climb together as a group, the stronger climbers voluntarily carrying any group gear. That being said, there are two good waiting points for those whose bodies may not be up to their high spirits. They must rejoin the group. No one may descend alone; return to the cars as a group. Remember, it is not the mountain or the route, it is the recollections of the shared adventure that we will take with us.

Heat exhaustion and "bonking" are the biggest problems we may encounter. If it is a hot day, at least three (3) quarts of water must be carried by each climber for our planned 5-6 hour ascent and 4 to 5 hour descent. Bring an extra quart in the car for drinking just before and immediately after the climb. Use Platypus or Nalgene bags! Nalgene plastic bottles weight six ounces empty. Three water bottles weigh over a bulky pound empty for our down hill hike; three Platypus bags weigh 3 ounces empty.

If it is a very sunny day most people will sweat water and minerals and need to replace lost electrolytes: Gator-aid is an answer: place the powder in at least two of the three quarts of water. Plan to eat about 200 calories of simple or complex carbohydrates (a ClifBar) each hour with some water to avoid running out of glycogen stored in your big muscles and "bonking" or "hitting the wall". See our Seminar Notes on nutrition and hydration. Try for a slow but steady 1,000' per hour average rate of climb, plus the fifteen mile hike.

Dark sun glasses are a must. Sun screen SPF 30 to 45, applied before you leave home is necessary. Apply the sun screen to the underside of nose and ears to avoid serious burns from reflected sunlight. Repeat applications during the climb. Experience tells us that the sun will burn the right side of our face and neck on the ascent and again in the afternoon. Outdoor Research (OR) and others make light sunscreen hats with neck protection. You will need this serious sun protection even on an overcast day.

Trail shoes or gore-tex style boots should be sufficient. Make sure they have aggressive soles for the gravelly scree. You might wear short gaiters to keep the scree out of your strong shoes or light boots.

Wear light nylon pants and a long sleeved light nylon shirt and head and neck sun protection. Bring a very light insulating layer and a wind layer for your upper body. A strong cold jet stream often rakes the summit. Shorts are not a good idea, but wear them if you must. Watch out for sunburn on the backs of your legs.

If the forecast weather is cold with possible precipitation and wind, come prepared for the exertion of the climb and also for possible inactivity as we might have to sit-out an emergency, high on the mountain. If an afternoon thunder storm with lightening is forecast, climb another day.

You will need a strong day pack with a belt to carry your possible six pounds of water, sun screen, ten essentials, extra layers and ClifBars and bagels. Your pack with everything you need should weigh about four pounds, without the disappearing six pounds of water.

Hiking poles are very helpful in distributing some seventeen percent of the up-hill work to the muscles of your upper body. Your strong shoes or light boots provide a platform for kicking steps in the scree and also accommodate your fifteen miles of hiking. You leaders should stop for blister care and other adjustments. Just tell them!

Technical skills are not required, but be aware that the final push to the top is a steep 1,000 foot section of scree overlying a hard volcanic layer, just made for slipping. Again, poles help a great deal, going up and going down.

Do your dog a favor and leave him at home. Or consider having to carry your exhausted dog down the mountain with bloody pads and torn nails.

Bring your pack with three quarts of water and the Ten Essential Systems to the trailhead, ready to go. Wear your boots or strong trail shoes for the short drive up the hill to the trail head. Your pack should not weigh much more than about 10 pounds, including six pounds of disappearing water. Check you pack weight on a scale to test your skill at selecting gear for Fit, Experienced, Light and Fast fun and adventure on South Sister!

On Belay!
Robert Speik

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