

Llama Trek in California Sierras

Saturday-Sunday September 1-9, 2018



The California Sierras are great territory for trekking away from roads. The scenery is magnificent, with forests, streams, and lakes below peaks and exposed rock mountainsides. The weather is dependably good, with rain possible but unlikely, lots of sunshine, and comfortable temperatures. The wide trails are excellent by northeastern standards, offering easy footing. Both ascents and descents are relieved by plenty of switchbacks.

This trip offers a unique opportunity to enjoy the backcountry camping experience without the burden of a heavy pack! Llamas will accompany us and carry our group equipment and food, and 20 pounds of your personal gear. This gives you the opportunity to enjoy this wonderful area with a much lighter pack. Llamas are a low impact alternative to pack horses, easy-going and gentle enough that for more than 20 years, the llama rancher has been sending his animals out without professional wranglers.

We plan to cover 50 or so miles in six days, from Leavitt Meadows to Kennedy Meadow on the Sonora Pass road over the Sierra crest. The most obvious and direct route is 25 miles, with many opportunities for extension to choose among. With a starting trailhead at 7,100 feet, and a maximum elevation just under 10,000 feet, eastern hikers in good condition should have no altitude issues.

After we all get ourselves to the San Francisco airport by noon on Saturday September 1, we will drive in rented vehicles to a campsite near Sonora. The next day, we drive over to the nearby llama ranch for hands-on llama familiarization, and then head up into the mountains, past our ending trailhead at Kennedy Meadow (where we will spot one

of our vehicles), to our starting trailhead at Leavitt Meadows. We will load up the llamas (probably a laborious process this first time!), and then cover about four easy miles to our first backcountry campsite.

With six days of hiking, this trip will be physical, despite trails which are excellent by Northeastern standards. Though the llamas carrying most of our load means this trip is not a backpack, neither is it an opportunity for people with no backcountry camping



experience at all. To some degree, we will all be beginners in travelling with llamas, and we want to avoid concerns about group members who don't know from actual experience what backcountry camping means.

If you have any questions, please

feel free to contact us. We prefer to handle your questions by phone unless you think the answer is likely to be straightforward. Certainly e-mail works well for requesting application materials. Leader contact information is included in the trip leader biographies near the end of this prospectus, before the equipment list.

TRIP ITINERARY

Here is a brief outline of what the trip entails each day.

DAY/DATE	DESTINATION
Saturday, Sept 1	Fly into San Francisco, arriving by noon; drive to Sonora
Sunday, Sept 2	Llama familiarization, drive to Leavitt Meadows, begin trek
Monday Sept 3	Continue trek
Tuesday, Sept 4	Continue trek
Wednesday, Sept 5	Continue trek
Thursday, Sept 6	Continue trek
Friday, Sept 6	Continue trek
Saturday, Sept 7	Hike out to Kennedy Meadow, collect cars, drive to motel
Sunday, Sept 8	Return to San Francisco airport in time for noon departures

DESCRIPTION OF TERRITORY

Our llama trek will be entirely within two national forests, Humboldt-Toiyabe and Stanislas, immediately north of Yosemite National Park. There are many route options to get from our start to finish.

There's a direct route, which we expect to augment with loops and digressions. From Leavitt Meadows, Emigrant Pass is about 13 miles away, slightly west of south. From the pass, Kennedy Meadows is only 12½ miles away by the most direct route to the northwest.

Beginning 6 miles from Leavitt Meadows, we enter an area with several alternatives. We can continue up the West Walker River and then west to the Emigrant Pass trail. Or we can head west to Fremont Lake and up past Chain of Lakes and the Long Lakes to the trail to the pass. We can even head up Kennedy Canyon and across the local crest, and follow just below it to Emigrant Pass.

From the pass, there are two separate routes 20 miles west to Crabtree Cabin. In the east, they diverge more, with one going past the Emigrant Lakes, and the other dipping south through Horse Meadow and past Huckleberry Lake. In the west, they run parallel, with connectors.

If we go all the way to Crabtree Cabin, there is an alternative route back northeast through Lake Valley to Whitesides Meadow, and then further northeast toward our end trailhead at Kennedy Meadow, or southeast back toward the Emigrant Lakes.

We are looking forward to exploring this wonderful area and taking advantage of the multiple options that we have available to us.



ACCOMMODATIONS

This trip is geared towards the outdoors adventurer. Except for our last night in a motel half way from the mountains to the airport, we will be camping every night, at a roadside campground or in the backcountry. Motel rooms and tents will be shared by two people. The weather at that time of year is likely to be superb, and so we should readily manage the lack of a roof over our heads.

SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS & BEING A TEAM PLAYER

We will be more than just a group: we will be a team. You must enjoy being part of a group and be willing to share with and help your team members. For safety and the integrity of the trip, it is important that participants disclose fully to the leaders your

level of experience, level of current fitness, mental health and medical issues and treatments, and advise the leaders of any change to the above before departure and while traveling. This is a physically and mentally demanding trip due to the amount of travel, hiking and altitude involved. You will be in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar people, and be mentally and physically challenged.



You are expected to have a positive attitude with an open mind that unexpected issues can occur at any time. Group members should always be supportive and understanding of anyone having difficulties. Participants are expected to contribute to the group experience, be approachable by others, and take genuine interest in the group members. Any interpersonal matter that participants cannot resolve themselves should be brought to the attention of the leaders for resolution. Participants are expected to stay committed to the planned activity and respect and follow the leader's decisions. Participants' thoughts, concerns and group consensus will be appreciated when received and will be taken into consideration in the leader's decisions. To minimize risks we will stick close together and will hike in groups and not alone.

Based on the locations of participants, a pre-trip hike and or gathering will be arranged so we can get to know each other, talk about the trip, and discuss appropriate gear.

COST

The approximate cost for the trip is \$1,400 for AMC members. Non-members can join for \$50, and get the same price. This will cover the following items:

- National Park entry permits
- Backcountry campsites
- All meals on the trek
- First night roadside campsite near Sonora
- Dinner and breakfast at that roadside campsite.
- Last night motel roughly half way back to San Francisco
- All local transportation (to and from the airport, campgrounds, and trailheads)

- AMC Adventure Travel fee
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage

All participants are expected to share in meal planning and purchasing of food in town on the first or second day, and especially in preparation of meals and cleaning up.

First and last day lunches, your own personal choices for trail snacks, alcohol, and other personal expenses are NOT included.

Your transportation to San Francisco and back is your responsibility, though we will advise you as much as you need. You can use a travel website, a normal travel agent, an airline, or frequent flier miles, as long as you are scheduled to arrive at the San Francisco airport by noon on Saturday September 1, and don't plan on leaving San Francisco heading home before noon on Sunday September 9. At this time, we estimate that the cost of a non-stop round trip ticket between the East Coast and San Francisco will be \$350-500.



The approximate cost for the excursion (published and stated here) is based on quotes at the time the trip was submitted to the Adventure Travel Committee in October, 2017. The final cost of the trip will be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases, will be passed back to you. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is considerably more likely than a price increase.

Please be aware that, in accordance with AMC policy, you are subsidizing the leaders' costs. The subsidy from each participant is limited to 20% of one leader's costs. Beyond this, the leaders are not allowed to realize any profit from this excursion.

The trip price also includes an AMC overhead fee to cover the administrative expenses of offering Major Excursions, including the trip's publication in *AMC Outdoors* for several months. The overhead fee is 20% of participant land costs; air travel is not included in the calculation. The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does *not* include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If the possibility of such problems concerns you, individual travel insurance is suggested; the AMC has a recommended vendor whose material will be sent to you if your application is accepted.

REGISTRATION AND CANCELLATION

To apply, you must request, complete, and submit the Participant Application, Confidential Health Questionnaire, and Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risk and Release form (all available on request), enclosing a registration deposit of \$300. You will not actually be accepted, and your check will not be deposited, until the leaders have determined by telephone conversation with you that you and the trip seem to be a good match. A second payment of \$500 is due two weeks after your acceptance. The final balance of \$600 is due June 15, 2018. Deposit checks from wait-listed applicants will not be cashed until we accept them AND they confirm continued interest. Please make payments by check payable to the *Appalachian Mountain Club* and send to John Lisker, 2390 Commonwealth Avenue, Auburndale, MA 02466.



Our cancellation policy is based on several considerations. Cancellation will not be allowed to raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. Published minimum penalty schedule: zero before April 2018, \$200 in April through June, and \$400 after June 2018. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf, and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of your

registration and cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant.

We expect a group size of 12 people, including the 2 leaders. If you are interested in this interesting and attractive use of llamas, you should apply as soon as possible. When registration is complete, we will send all participants the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all those going on the trip. We are good communicators and will try very hard to keep everyone well informed, primarily by e-mail.

If the trip is cancelled because not enough acceptable participants apply, everything you have paid will be refunded in full.

EXPERIENCE AND RISKS

Our starting trailhead altitude is above 7,000 feet, and we cross a pass at almost 10,000 feet. Although these elevations should not be high enough for properly conditioned people to contract acute mountain sickness (AMS), the combination of physical exertion and oxygen levels lower than in the Northeast require that we pace ourselves and pay attention to proper nutrition and hydration. People wishing to participate in this trip must have previous backcountry camping experience, at the intermediate level or higher. Although the hiking will be at a moderate pace, and the trail quality will be high

by Northeastern standards, this trip is not intended for beginners or people who have not hiked 3 or more consecutive days in the last few years. Several of the days are long (up to 12 miles). You need to be prepared to commit yourself to keeping in shape between the time you sign up for the trip and the time you depart on it.

When you participate in this activity, you should be prepared both physically and



mentally, and equipped with the appropriate gear. You should always be aware of the risks involved and conduct yourself accordingly. We are not responsible for your safety; you are. Prior to your being accepted as a participant in this trip, you will be asked to discuss your capabilities and experience with us. Please do not be offended by our questions.

Since there is a possibility of bear visits at all of the campsites, we will carry bear canisters.

Although the weather is likely to be superb, there is always a possibility of some precipitation.

QUESTIONS and REQUESTING APPLICATION MATERIALS

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us. We prefer to handle your questions by phone unless you think the answer is likely to be straightforward. Certainly e-mail works well for requesting application materials. The contact information is immediately below, with the leader biographies.

TRIP LEADERS

John Lisker has led 20 previous AMC Travel Adventures, including six tent backpacks in the High Sierras in California, the Elk and San Juan ranges in Colorado, the Wind River range in Wyoming, and the Canadian Rockies. He has also led four New Zealand trips, each with three short hut treks; five hut-to-hut treks in the Alps; and two supported treks in Morocco. He is a leader with the Hiking-Backpacking Committee of the AMC Boston Chapter, and is also the current Chapter Ombudsman and a former Chapter Chair. John can be reached at 617-244-1636 and john.lisker@juno.com.



Sue Lach is an avid hiker, backpacker, and adventure traveler who enjoys sharing her passion for exploring the globe with others. She is a long time member of the AMC, a past CT Chapter Committee Member, and is currently serving as an Adventure Travel Committee Member. Her first trip with the AMC was to Africa where in 2005 she reached the summit of Mt Kilimanjaro and was hooked. Soon after, she became an AT leader. Sue has led and co-led trips in Belize, the Grand Tetons, the Canadian Rockies, the Torres Del Paine circuit in Chile, New Zealand, Mongolia, Nepal, Machu Picchu and Great Smoky Mountains. She recently co-led an AMC Family Trip in Nova Scotia. Next on her list is a personal expedition to Antarctica, Italian Dolomites and a return to Mongolia. Sue lives in Manchester, CT, enjoys mountain/road biking and photography. She is an avid runner having completed the 2015 and 2016 New York City Marathon as a member of the Sandy Hook Promise Charity Team raising money for such an important cause. When she is not traversing the globe, Sue occupies her time as an IT Project Manager for The Hartford and is currently pursuing a Pilates Teacher Certification. Sue can be reached at 860-712-7216 and slach@me.com.



EQUIPMENT LIST

Below is a list of the required and recommended gear for the trip, as well as a list of items which some people will bring and share.

Required and Essential Gear

- broken-in hiking boots (preferably waterproof)
- at least 2-3 set of hiking socks with liners
- non-cotton shorts (or long pants if you prefer) and shirt for hiking
- large day pack (with extra capacity for flexibility)
- sleeping bag good down to freezing
- sleeping pad
- waterproof wind and rain gear (tops and bottoms)
- wool sweater, or synthetic pile/fleece jacket
- warm long pants - wool or fleece
- hat for warmth, and gloves or mittens
- polypropylene, Coolmax, Bergelene or other synthetic extra layer clothing
- sunglasses
- hat or bandanna for sun protection
- sunscreen and insect repellent
- Texas, Crocs or other sandals (to wear around camp and for stream crossings)
- headlamp or flashlight with fresh batteries
- mess kit (fork, spoon, cup, bowl)
- unbreakable water bottles or hydration bladder (at least 2 liters total capacity)
- waterproof pack liner and/or pack cover
- high-energy trail snacks
- toilet paper & kit
- ear plugs
- straps/cords to attach gear to pack

Shared Gear

The leaders will collect information on what equipment people have in these categories, and decide who should bring what to share.

- lightweight tent for 2 or more
- stove (and fuel bottle, if necessary)
- water filter
- bear canister

Optional Gear

- casual clothing for travel and when we are in civilization
- small daypack/lumbar pack for sightseeing
- personal first aid kit (leaders will have group first aid kits)
- hiking poles
- waterproof matches
- whistle
- knife
- camp towel
- toilet kit
- bathing suit
- camera