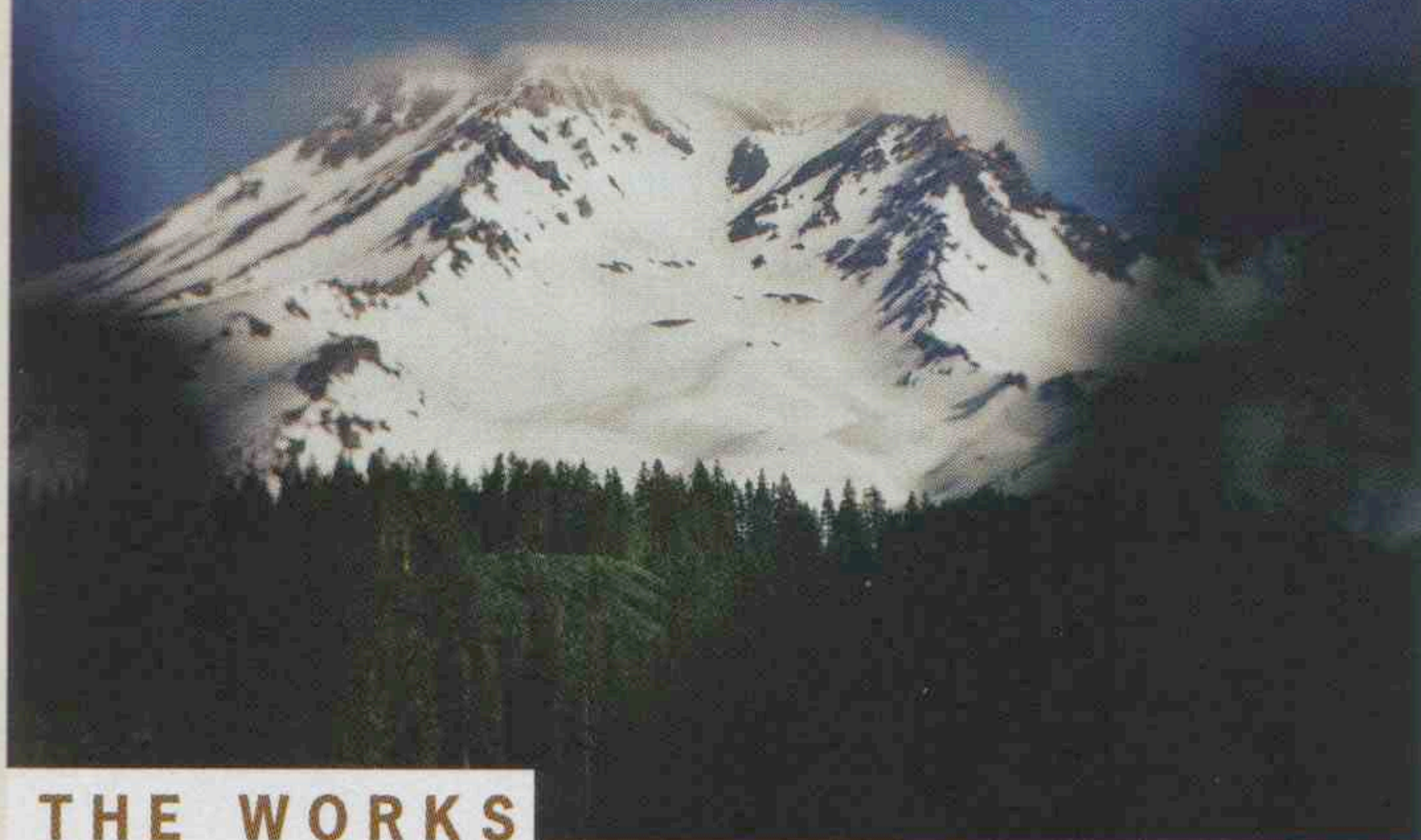


SHASTA, AS CROWD-FREE
AS YOU'LL EVER SEE IT



THE WORKS

[Mt. Shasta]

Must climb Towering 10,000 feet above the surrounding terrain, Mt. Shasta is a magnet to the eye—and to climbers, beckoning nearly 15,000 a year. Notoriously unpredictable weather, mandatory snow travel, beginner to advanced routes, a seat atop the highest point for hundreds of miles in any direction, and views of the Cascades from Lassen Peak far into Oregon make this volcano one of North America's most enticing alpine climbs.

Route Follow the least technical route, up the south side of the mountain via Avalanche Gulch. The climb is a burly 7 miles one way, gaining 7,000 feet, requiring crampon and ice-axe use, and taking 12 to 15 hours round-trip. Start at Bunny Flat trailhead and hike 2 miles to Horse Camp. Continue

along Olberman's Causeway, a series of flat stones, climbing to Helen Lake, a snowfield at 10,400 feet. It's a tent city on weekends in May and June, but a good place to acclimatize for the summit push. Start by 6 a.m., ascending toward The Heart, Red Banks, Misery Hill, and finally the well-earned summit.

Glissading glee A trench is often carved out from Red Banks at 13,000 feet down to Helen Lake. If there's enough snow and avalanche conditions are nil, kick off your crampons, brake with your axe, and enjoy the ride.

Window of opportunity The best chance to summit is mid-May to July, when snowpack still covers the loose rock, days are longer, and weather is generally more favorable.

Gear Crampons, ice axe, and helmet are de rigueur, as are human waste bags and the 10 essentials. Depending on the winter, you might break out snowshoes as early as Bunny Flat, as far up as Helen Lake, or not at all. Roping up is not necessary on this route.

Altitude adjustment Little-known fact: Only a third of those who take a shot reach the 14,162-foot summit. Improve your chances by watching for early signs of altitude sickness—dizziness, headaches, and nausea. Take a rest day and be willing to descend if symptoms don't let up.

Weather Like all large mountains, Shasta creates its own weather, often a volatile mix of sudden fog, rain, and snow that can envelop your route. Shasta holds the world record for deepest single-storm snowfall (189 inches in 6 days in 1959). Before you set out, get current weather and avalanche info at www.shastaavalanche.org.

Camping Horse Camp has sites and seasonal fresh water and asks for a \$3 donation per solo bivy, or \$5 per tent. Camping at Helen Lake is free; boil water or bring extra.

Permits You'll need a wilderness permit (free) and summit permit (\$15, good for 3 days). Get them at the ranger station or Bunny Flat trailhead. (530) 226-2500

Travel From I-5, take the Central Mt. Shasta exit (#738); right onto Lake St., left onto Pine, and right onto Alma to the ranger station. For Bunny Flat trailhead, head east on Lake St.; turn left onto the Everitt Memorial Hwy. and drive 11 miles.

Guidebook and maps *The Mt. Shasta Book*, by Andy Selters and Michael Zanger. The Fifth Season (www.thefifthseason.com) has topos and rents gear. Rather go guided? www.shastaguides.com

Lisa Jung

TIME2GO

FLY-FISHING

4 days

WEMINUICHE WILDERNESS, CO
Leave the Los Pinos trailhead and power 3 miles to the river of the same name. Fish the next 3 miles and set up camp near the Emerald Lake Trail junction. On day two, hike and fish another 3 miles to Willow Park, then make camp in a 9,300-foot meadow surrounded by waterfalls and 12,000-foot peaks. Fish the next day here or climb 2,000 more feet to Flint Lakes, angling for trout in Flint Creek as you ascend. www.sjma.org

7 days

FLATHEAD RIVER, MT
Trophy rainbows are on the menu on this classic journey through the Bob Marshall-Great Bear Wilderness complex. Start by hiking 6 miles into a remote Flathead River launch. Then raft 32 miles and start casting—when you're not crashing through class IV whitewater. Optional side hikes include a ramble to cliff-ringed Castle Lake. www.glacieraftco.com

10 days

WIND RIVER RANGE, WY
Trek to dream trout-chasing on a horse-supported trip with Sweetwater Fishing Expeditions. Ride to the Continental Divide, then backpack in search of golden trout, a species indigenous to the Sierra but bigger here (up to 7 pounds). The pace is all about fishing: make camp, fish a few days, move on. If you're good with a stimulator fly, you could snag (and release, of course) 100 a day. (307) 332-3986

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What's the best way to score a Forest Service cabin?

USDA Forest Service cabins cost as little as \$30 a night, and they serve up sweet accommodations for that special someone who just doesn't get your whole ultralight tarp thing. I've rented cabins for family reunions, winter basecamps, solstice celebrations, you name it. The best are the ones you hike to, like in Alaska's Chugach Range or Montana's Gallatin. Instead of calling all over the country to find one, go to www.reserveusa.com, which has added cabin and lookout bookings to its national online reservation system.

WHAT'S AILING YOU? LET US KNOW AT DOCTOR@BACKPACKER.COM