

(right) Working out the moves on the classic Hairaiser Buttress, Granite Basin (facing page)  
Light and fast on the crest of Crystal Crag,  
Mammoth Lakes Basin photos courtesy of the Sierra  
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# ON THE ROCK





**(facing page) The sweet summit of the third Pillar of Dana with Mono Lake below (above) Adventure climbing on the Elderberry Buttress, Pine Creek Canyon** photos courtesy of the Sierra Mountain Guides Collection

The electric orb of the morning sun lights up the golden Eastern Sierra granite. High on the wall, we are the recipients of a powerful package of energy that has traveled unfathomable distances, through the dark void of space, piercing Earth's atmosphere, soaked up by the rock, and radiating upon the face and hands. Cold night air is rapidly warmed by the breath and transforms desolation into inspiration. The spirit awakens, enlivens, and suddenly the only thing that exists in the

world is this sensation of moving over stone, a sudden awareness of the immediate and the fulfillment of sharing something very good with a friend.

“Belay on.” The statement has no English meaning other than in this context. To a non-climber it sounds like gibberish. For climbers it is a term that represents an implied understanding, a bond of mutual trust. It means, “We accept these risks together and if during this endeavor you fail in your bold attempts to succeed, I will do all that is in my ability, using my hard-won knowledge and skill to minimize the consequences of any potentially dangerous situations that we may face.” “On belay,” is just easier to say.

The Eastern Sierra represents an exciting diversity of rock climbing and the weather is most accommodating throughout the year. In the warmer months we make pilgrimages to the high mountains to sample the endless alpine granite ridges and faces that position us on the thin line between Earth and sky. When the snow begins to fall we may opt for a retreat to the valley and find ourselves on the desert’s edge, exploring vertical terrain in the majestic setting of the snow-covered high peaks that surround us.

The persistent hum of the rock calls like a siren’s song. Here, on the *East Side*, it delivers a hypnotic rhythm and a sweet, subtle melody to ears that have calibrated to the tune. Enjoy the music! **SH**

*For further information on Sierra Mountain Guides visit [www.sierramtnguides.com](http://www.sierramtnguides.com) or phone 760.648.1122.*

**(right) The golden, sun-drenched granite on Charlotte Dome is well worth every mile of approach (facing page) A few arm lengths from the Yosemite National Park boundary on the North Ridge of Mt. Conness** photos courtesy of the Sierra Mountain Guides Collection

