



WILD JOURNEYS

15912 pg 48-51

AT HOME IN THE WILD

Sierra Club Outings leaders share their favorite backpacking destinations

By Dashka Slater

MOUNTAINS “ARE BEAUTIFUL TERRORS,” writes George MacDonald in his classic children’s book *The Princess and Curdie*. They are “portions of the heart of the earth that have escaped from the dungeon down below . . . into the wind, and the cold, and the starshine.” If valleys are for cities and settlers, mountains belong to weather and wildflowers, to glaciers and raptors. There is nothing tame about a mountain, no landscape more compelling. Each year, thousands of us strap on boots and packs and pant up the trail in search of the silence and sky that extend in all directions.

Sierra asked six Sierra Club Outings leaders to tell us about a favorite backpacking trip, and invariably each focused on or around a mountain. But there the similarities ended. We heard about alpine lakes and flower-drenched meadows, high desert plateaus and narrow canyons, wolverines and wild horses. The adventurers’ choices stretch from the stormy White Mountains of New Hampshire to the gentle slopes of the Ansel Adams Wilderness in California to gear-intensive forays above the Arctic Circle. Whether you’re an experienced peakbagger or still breaking in your first pair of boots, these are places that will inspire you to exclaim, as John Muir did during his first visit to the Sierra Nevada, “Who wouldn’t be a mountaineer! Up here all the world’s prizes seem nothing.”

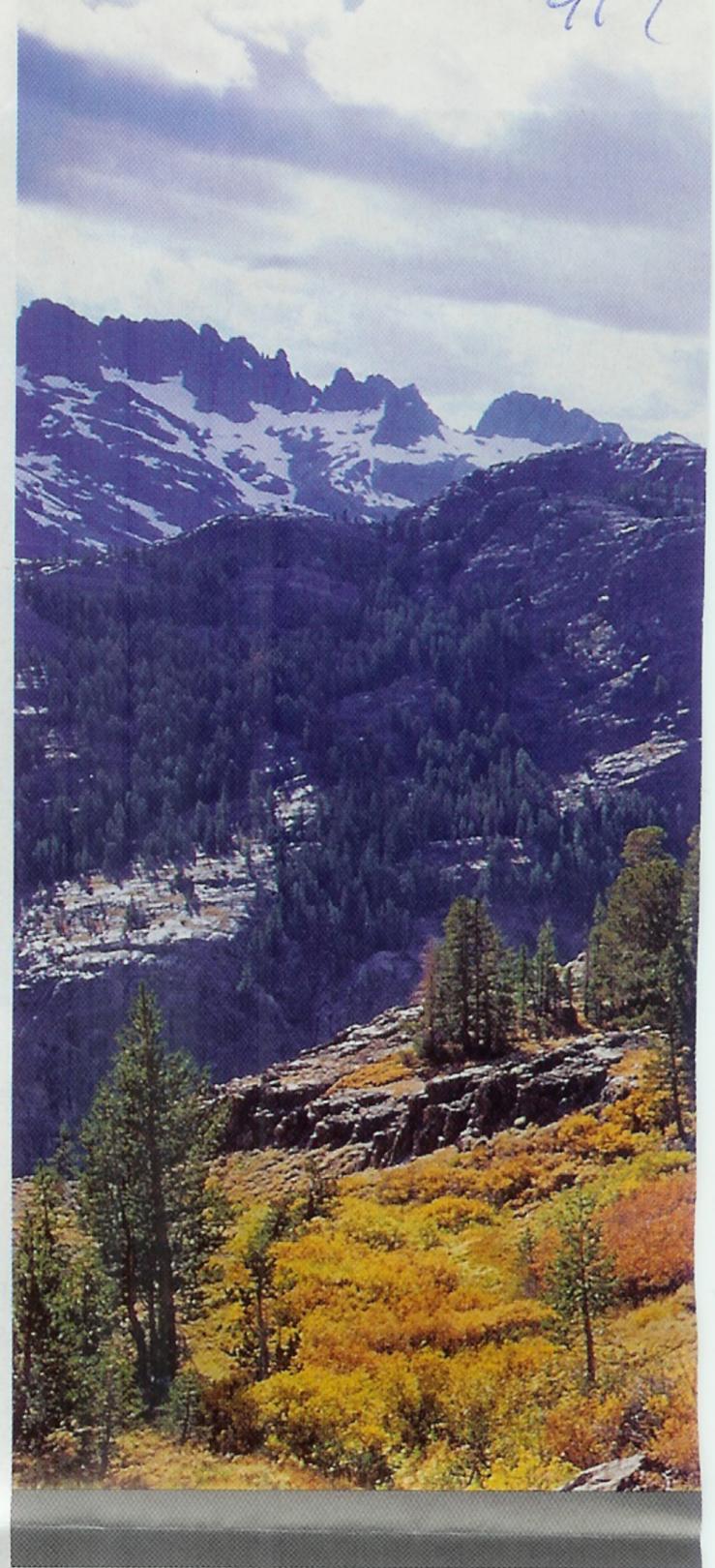


ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTOPH HITZ