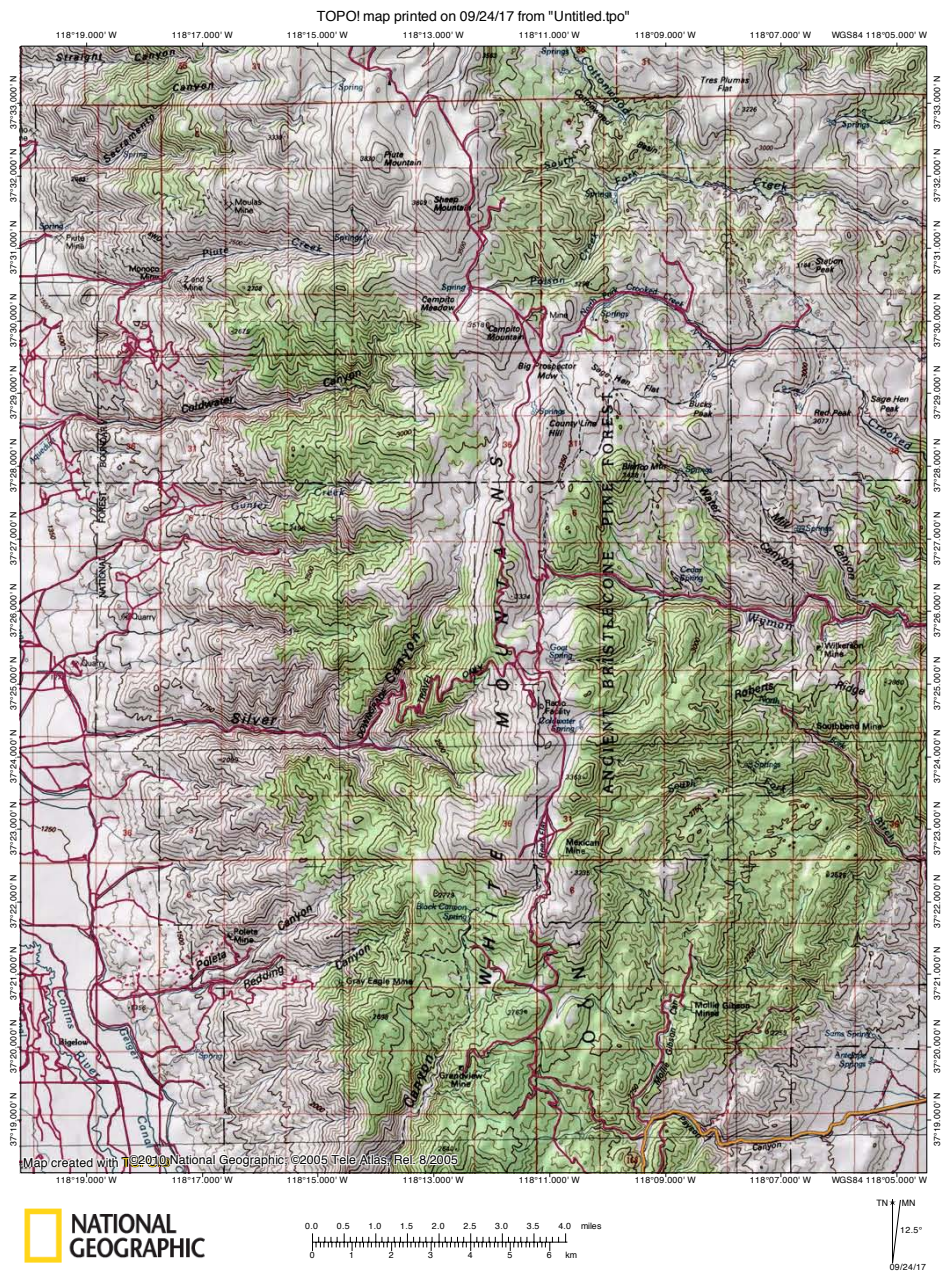


WHITE MOUNTAINS BRISTLECONE PINE FOREST, CALIFORNIA

The White Mountains Bristlecone Pine Forest is an area which I had hoped to visit for many years before we actually were able to see it. We first drove from Bishop to the Sierra View Overlook, which has excellent views not only of the eastern Sierras but also towards northern Death Valley and the Saline and Eureka Valleys. From there, we continued on to the Schulman Grove Visitors Center, which has excellent information on this area. We then hiked the first part of the Methuselah Trail (which begins near the visitors center), to where we could get views to the east and southeast, especially towards the northern Eureka Valley. Unfortunately, it was quite hot, and we were mildly bothered by the high elevation, so we did not complete the 4.5 mile loop. From the visitors center, we continued up the main road, where it turns to dirt. We went about half-way to the end of the road, and enjoyed nice views of the eastern Sierras and the White Mountains. Note that this dirt road has many sharp rocks, so having good tires and driving slow are necessary. Finally, we stopped at the top of the Silver Canyon road to get more views of the eastern Sierras. We had considered driving this road back to Bishop, but it is reportedly rough and narrow (i.e., once you start on it you are essentially committed to completing the drive because there really isn't anywhere to turn around, and passing vehicles going the other direction is difficult), and there currently were water crossings in the lower part of the canyon.

TOPO map of the road to the White Mountains Bristlecone Pine Forest. I also found the AAA Eastern Sierra Guide Map to be useful on this trip.



These first two photos are from when we flew over the Bishop area shortly after this trip, in the beginning of July. In this first photo, the White Mountains are to the left, and the eastern Sierras are to the far left. Eureka Valley is in the center, behind the green crop circles, with the Saline Valley beyond and to the right of it, and northern Death Valley to the left of it. I could just barely see the Racetrack Valley from the airplane window, but the resolution on my iPhone isn't sufficient to see it in this photo.



Here we are going over the White Mountains (lower left, beneath the clouds). Bishop is in the background middle of the photo, and the volcanic tablelands north of Bishop are in front of it. The eastern Sierras are the snowy, cloud-covered peaks in the background.



On our way in to Bishop, we drove through the town of Bridgeport. This photo is looking south towards some snowy peaks from just before reaching the town.



I think this photo was taken along Hwy 395 near Mammoth.



The next morning, we headed south from Bishop towards Big Pine and the road to the White Mountains. Here we are looking at the peaks up by Bishop Creek, to the west of the town of Bishop.



Another view of the eastern Sierras from Hwy 395.



Our first stop along the road to the White Mountains Bristlecone Pine Forest was the Sierra Vista Viewpoint, from which one can see the Inyo Mountains (to the left) and the eastern Sierras (to the right).



Looking southeast towards Deep Springs Lake from here.



Near the parking lot, there are some maps which indicate the names of some of the peaks which are visible from here. This one lists the peaks to the west.



Panorama of the impressive view of the eastern Sierras which we had here.



To the southeast are the Inyo Mountains; this sign lists some of the peaks which can be seen from here.



From here, we could see Tin and Dry Mountains in the distance (they didn't show up well in this photo as it was a bit hazy), and Waucoba Mountain closer by.



Looking back at the main road winding up towards the Bristlecone Pine Grove.



We continued along the trail to the viewpoint, and got increasingly spectacular views of the surrounding area. To the left in this photo is the Inyo Mountains and Deep Springs Lake, and to the right is the eastern Sierras.



To the north, we could see some of the peaks near the Schulman Grove.



This prominent peak to the northeast has a name (but I can't recall on which map I found it).



Looking across at the eastern Sierras from here. Notice the small valley between us and Bishop (which is the green patch to the far right in this photo). According to some maps, there is a road which leads down into this valley. I'm not sure how far it is open (or passable).



Another panorama looking west from here.



Looking southeast now, towards the Saline Valley and northern Death Valley.



This flower we spotted near the trail has round, fuzzy, pink flowers. I'm not sure what it is called.



From here, we continued on towards the Bristlecone Pine grove. The visitors center is up ahead and to the right in this photo, out of sight.



This informative sign at the parking area for the visitors center tells travelers about the Silver Canyon and Wyman Canyon roads, and the Patriarch Grove and White Mountain Peak trail.



As this sign states, some of the Bristlecone Pine trees here are over 4700 years old.



There are three trails which take off from the visitors center parking lot: the discovery trail, the bristlecone cabin trail, and the Methuselah walk trail. We had originally planned to hike the Methuselah trail (4.5 mile loop), but due to the heat and high altitude we decided to only hike part of the distance.



These signs tell visitors how to determine if a tree is a Great Basin Bristlecone Pine or a Limber Pine.



I wish this sign also appeared on some particular California college campuses.



Here is the trailhead for the Discovery Trail and the Methuselah Walk.



Looking up at the hill which the Discovery Trail ascends.



This large tree (I think it is a Limber Pine) is near the start of the Methuselah trail.



Looking across the valley at the hill that the Discovery Trail climbs from along the first part of the Methuselah trail.



The wood under the bark of some of the Bristlecone Pine trees in this area has amazing stripes .



Continuing along the trail as it follows the side of a hill.



Notice how tall many of the trees are here.



The hillside here is quite steep, and it is amazing how tall these trees have managed to grow in this environment.



Here we are starting to get some nice views to the east.



From this location, we could look into the Eureka Valley.



Panorama from this viewpoint at a major bend in the trail. The Eureka Valley is in the background center.



Looking down at the valley into which the Methuselah Trail eventually descends.



Looking over towards the Eureka Valley again.



We continued along the trail a short distance further. Here we are looking back at the hill near the Discovery Trail again.

