

Man to make another attempt to cross Sierra in wheelchair

By Sami Emory, Outside

It's a bright winter morning and Bob Coomber, better known as 4WheelBob, is taking it slow up a trail in Redwood Regional Park, near Oakland. His gloved hands keep tireless pace with each other on the wheels of his wheelchair. His long, sinewy arms tense and twist in response to every crest, every divot of the trail. As we hike, Coomber admits he hasn't been out in this chair—a specially modified all-terrain wheelchair—for more than three years. "It's been on the back porch," he says, "just sort of tempting me."

In just a few months' time, however, Coomber will be in prime condition. He has to be: This fall, Coomber will make his third attempt to take his chair up and over the 11,845-foot Kearsarge Pass in California's southern Sierra Nevada, west of the town of Independence. The trek will take him from the trailhead to Kings Canyon, on the other side of the pass, for a round-trip of approximately 24 miles. Depending on the incline and the weather, Coomber will travel anywhere from half a mile to a few miles per day. The journey, he estimates, will take him 10 to 14 12-hour days of near-constant exertion.

If he succeeds, Coomber will be the first person in a wheelchair to cross the Sierra.

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