



**The John Muir Trail
with
Pack Stock Support**

Trip Notes

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The John Muir Trail is one of the finest hikes to be found anywhere in the world. Our route starts at Cottonwood Meadows to the south and winds north over two hundred miles to Yosemite Valley. Along the way it climbs over 13,000' passes, wanders beneath high alpine peaks, and traverses beautiful meadows and forested river valleys. The spectacular scenery is combined with the generally clement weather of California and warm summer temperatures. For all participants this will be a trip of a lifetime, one to be remembered for years to come.

Perhaps a 200 mile trip sounds a little too long for you, or you just don't want to carry a full backpacking load for that long. We understand.

This is why we work with Rock Creek Pack Station to offer pack-supported trips where you simply shoulder a light daypack and leave the hard work to our four-hooved friends. We offer high quality meals, a relaxed pace and if not all the comforts of home some additional comforts not typical of a backpacking trip, such as a chair at the end of the day. Think of these trips as not just "doing" the John Muir Trail but as a stress-free relaxing sojourn amongst some of the finest mountains in the world.

Itinerary

A normal backpacking John Muir Trail takes over twenty days but since not everyone can take time off for that, we have divided the trip into annual segments. This enables you to see the full JMT over the course of a few years, spend more time in the backcountry and fully enjoy what the trail offers. You can expect to cover six to twelve miles a day and plan on one or two layover days to simply relax, sit by the stream, fish or maybe even climb a peak. Depending upon the segment we will meet at either the trailhead or at the SMC office in Bishop. Come fully prepared and ready to go since there will be no last minute shopping at the trailheads.

Below are very tentative day-by-day itineraries. This can change for many reasons such as weather, minor injury, tired mules or unforeseen circumstances so please be flexible and go with any changes the backcountry dictates.

Mileages and elevation changes are approximate and rounded. They may differ slightly based on the program or GPS that you might use. They may also differ if campsite locations change.

Cottonwood to Onion Valley 9 Days, 70 Miles

Cover 23 miles following the Pacific Crest Trail over three days will help prepare us for the ascent to Mount Whitney from Guitar Lake. The top of Mount Whitney begins the start of our trek along the John Muir Trail. We will then follow the JMT north enjoying views of the Kaweah Range to the west and the Sierra crest to the east before crossing over Forester Pass, the highest pass on the John Muir Trail. Dropping into the glacially carved U-shaped valley of Bubbs Creek we descend to Vidette Meadow before exiting over Kearsarge Pass.

Day 1	Cottonwood to Chicken Springs Lake	5.3 miles	1405 feet of gain	0 feet of loss
Day 2	Chicken Springs Lake to Rock Creek	9.7 miles	700 feet of gain	2400 feet of loss
Day 3	Rock Creek to Crabtree	6.75 miles	2040 feet of gain	990 feet of loss
Day 4	Crabtree to Guitar Lake	3.0 miles	1050 feet of gain	160 feet of loss
Day 5	Climb Mt. Whitney and descend to Crabtree	14.4 miles	3405 feet of gain	4410 feet of loss
Day 6	Crabtree to Tyndall Creek	9.5 miles	1850 feet of gain	1950 feet of loss
Day 7	Layover day			
Day 8	Tyndall Creek to Upper Bubbs Creek	12.5 miles	2590 feet of gain	3400 feet of loss
Day 9	Bubbs Creek to Onion Valley	9 miles	2375 feet of gain	2900 feet of loss

Onion Valley to Bishop Pass 10 Days, 63 Miles

This is truly the Sierra High Country picking up where Section One left off. We will climb over three 12,000' passes and walk down the famous golden staircase. Hiking above tree line for much of this section affords us expansive views of the glacial cut granite walls of Kings Canyon National Park. The varied landscape rewards us with cascading creeks as well as serene meadows along much of the hike to our exit at Bishop Pass. This section has several "shorter" days as well as two layover days.

Day 1	Onion Valley to Charlotte Lake	7.5 miles	2870 feet of gain	1650 feet of loss
Day 2	Charlotte Lake to Baxter Meadow	9.0 miles	1825 feet of gain	2650 feet of loss
Day 3	Layover day			
Day 4	Baxter Meadow to Twin Lakes	6.8 miles	2275 feet of gain	1150 feet of loss
Day 5	Twin Lakes to Upper Basin	9.5 miles	2350 feet of gain	2250 feet of loss

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Day 6	Layover day			
Day 7	Upper Basin to Lower Palisade Lake	7.25 miles	1550 feet of gain	1600 feet of loss
Day 8	Lower Palisade Lake to Grouse Meadow	8.5 miles	450 feet of gain	2900 feet of loss
Day 9	Grouse Meadow to Upper Dusy Basin	7.5 miles	3130 feet of gain	1100 feet of loss
Day 10	Upper Dusy Basin to South Lake	6.7 miles	875 feet of gain	2460 feet of loss

Bishop Pass to Red's Meadow 11 Days, 89 Miles

We take the climb back into the high country easy to start with getting used to the elevation once again taking two days to rejoin the JMT. This section through Evolution Valley and the surrounding high peaks has a reputation for being one of the most beautiful sections on the JMT and we can only agree. Steadily we drop to lower elevations, heading west towards Lake Edison and Mono Creek before climbing over the Silver Divide, while not as expansive as what we have already traversed is more intimate and exquisite. The final section takes us through the recent volcanic cones and soils of the Mammoth area to our van pickup at Red's Meadow.

Day 1	South Lake to Upper Dusy Basin	7.0 miles	2700 feet of gain	1050 feet of loss
Day 2	Upper Dusy Basin to Big Pete Meadow	8.75 miles	650 feet of gain	3400 feet of loss
Day 3	Big Pete Meadow to Colby Meadow	14.6 miles	3000 feet of gain	2500 feet of loss
Day 4	Layover day			
Day 5	Colby Meadow to Shooting Star Meadow	11.2 miles	510 feet of gain	2400 feet of loss
Day 6	Shooting Star Meadow to Rosemarie Meadow	9.2 miles	3300 feet of gain	1200 feet of loss
Day 7	Layover day			
Day 8	Rosemarie Meadow to Quail Meadow	11.2 miles	1150 feet of gain	3300 feet of loss
Day 9	Quail Meadow to Horse Heaven	8.7 miles	1150 feet of gain	2750 feet of loss
Day 10	Horse Heaven to Deer Creek	12.5 miles	2200 feet of gain	2700 feet of loss
Day 11	Deer Creek to Red's Meadow	5.75 miles	550 feet of gain	1950 feet of loss

Red's Meadow to Yosemite 8 Days, 60 Miles

Now it is time to experience the grandeur of the Ansel Adams Wilderness with the Minaret Spires and the Ritter Range escarpment towering over green meadows and alpine lakes. We take our time through this section enjoying it and relaxing alongside of the lakes away from the main trail. Read a book, fish or scramble up a peak; or just do nothing and absorb the Sierra. This might just be our favorite part of the range. From Rush Creek we make our last big pass crossing ascending over Donahue Pass to follow the Lyell Fork of the Tuolumne River before ascending one last time past Cathedral Lakes before the long descent to Yosemite Valley.

Day 1	Reds Meadow to Gladys Lake	7.1 miles	2500 feet of gain	575 feet of loss
Day 2	Gladys Lake to Laura Lake	5.0 miles	1500 feet of gain	1500 feet of loss
Day 3	Laura Lake to Davis Lake	7.5 miles	1820 feet of gain	1500 feet of loss
Day 4	Davis Lake to Lyell Canyon	9.5 miles	1675 feet of gain	2700 feet of loss
Day 5	Lyell Canyon to Cathedral Lake	13.0 miles	1500 feet of gain	1100 feet of loss
Day 6	Layover day			
Day 7	Cathedral Lake to Sunrise Creek	11.5 miles	1175 feet of gain	3300 feet of loss
Day 8	Sunrise Creek to Yosemite Valley	6.0 miles	300 feet of gain	3550 feet of loss

Logistics

These are long trips and, for many people, may be the longest backcountry trip they have ever done. Because of the length there is always the potential for things to go wrong and the unexpected to occur. Your guide will be trained in wilderness first aid and will carry a radio or cell phone for emergency communications. (No, not for personal use and calling home!). Family and friends can contact you through our office, but because of the problems of communication in the backcountry the delay can be substantial. You need to be in good shape for the trip. This does not mean being a super fit marathoner though. Some days are long; some are short and some we do not move camp at all. But you need to be prepared for up to twelve miles a day, although these will be not the norm. The most important thing is endurance and the ability to deal with whatever happens. Please contact us for details if you have specific questions.

Backcountry Conditions

We do this trip from mid August to early September to get what we consider to be the best conditions. Most biting insects and bugs

should be gone. Days, while getting shorter should be warm with day temperatures in the 60° region and nights dipping to about 32° rarely, and only at the higher elevations. There may be small snow patches on the highest passes, but not enough to warrant ice axe and crampon use. Stream flows will be well below peak flow and most should be easy to cross. There is the possibility of afternoon thunderstorms that may be heavy for a short time. You will be in the high mountains so there is always the chance of snow, but prolonged storms are not common at this time of year.

Weight

The big question everyone asks is "how much will I have to carry?" The answer is; not much. A day pack with water, extra clothing lunch, rainwear etc. It should be less than 10 pounds.

Dates and Prices

Check the latest brochure, call us or go to our web site for dates and rates. Should minimum participant numbers not be reached you will be given the option of paying our private rate, rescheduling, or cancelling.

Price Includes

Trailhead shuttle at both ends of the trip.

Meals during the trip. This does not include restaurant meals at the beginning and end of the trip.

Group equipment such as tents, outhouse, food canisters, and water purification.

Mule support for the duration of the trip provided by Rock Creek Pack Station.

Guides, contingency and emergency support, and all necessary permits.

Price Excludes

Transportation from airports to/from Bishop. We can help you make these arrangements but since people's travel plans vary so much we cannot include this transportation in the cost.

In town/restaurant meals at the beginning and end of the trip.

Any gratuities for staff and packers.

Prerequisites

Good level of physical condition. Prior backpacking experience is not necessary but you must be comfortable with sleeping in a sleeping bag in a tent possibly with a partner.

Getting to Bishop

Again, if you need assistance making these arrangements please let us know. The closest major airport is Reno, Nevada, approximately four hours to our north. Los Angeles is five hours to our south. A shuttle service exists between Bishop and Reno. We can help participants arrange this if necessary and is about \$53 per person each way. This price is not included in the basic trip price.

Bears

We have a number of people unfamiliar with being in bear country.

Do not panic too much about the bears. They are something to deal with but are not aggressive and are a part of the backcountry experience. We generally have no encounters with them at all and often hikers leave a little let down not to have even seen one beating a hasty retreat. To quote John Muir in 1898;

"In my first interview with a Sierra bear we were frightened and embarrassed, both of us, but the bear's behavior was better than mine". If your vehicle is left at the trailhead ensure that it is emptied of anything that is, or smells like, food and put in a bear locker.

Equipment List for JMT with Pack Stock Support

The following list is a very specific guide that will assist you in packing for the program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have specific questions regarding equipment and if you need assistance prior to making a purchase. This trip is stock supported so a few luxuries are fine, but do not overdo it. Consider the month, weather patterns, and snow conditions. You will be limited to 20lb total in your duffel bag and we will weigh the bags. Items with a * can be rented from SMC.

Essentials

- Footwear. You will be hiking roughly 6-12 miles per day. Please bring shoes or boots that you have broken in and that are suitable for multiple days of travel. Your feet are your transportation and can make the difference between surviving this trip and thriving.
- Camp Shoes for around camp. Sanuk sandals, Crocs, or light tennis shoes are all appropriate. The camp shoes will make hanging out in camp more comfortable, and lessen the impact we leave on the sites. Open toed flip flops are not acceptable.
- Daypack. A pack of 25-35 L is big enough.
- Sleeping Bag. A 32°F bag should be sufficient but if you are cold at night a sleeping bag liner can add significant warmth with minimal additional weight. We recommend a down bag as opposed to a synthetic one due to weight differences, but a down bag should be waterproofed inside your bag with a trash bag lining the stuff sack.
- Sleeping pad. A 3/4 length Ultralight inflatable pad paired with a foam pad is our favorite combination. If bringing an inflatable pad also bring a repair kit to fix leaks.

Clothing

- 3-4 pairs of socks. 2-3 pairs to alternate while hiking, and a clean pair for at camp. Nothing beats a fresh pair of socks in the backcountry. Blister prevention is crucial so the clean third pair for camp is excellent preventative care. Having socks to alternate hiking in also gives the opportunity to rinse and dry socks. A mid-weight, non-cotton sock is ideal, such as a Smartwool or Darn Tough hiking specific sock. Please do not bring low-cut ankle socks as they can lead to rubbing on the heel.
- 1 mid-weight long-sleeve top. Capilene, Merino or other synthetic.
- 1 pair of long-johns or tights. Capilene, Merino or other synthetic.
- 1 warm pair of pants.
- 1 warm shirt. Synchilla or 200 weight works well.
- 1 warm jacket. A down jacket is preferred with around 800 fill.
- Waterproof Jacket and Pants - Lightweight and non-bulky. Side zips on the pants should be long enough to slide on over boots. Jacket must have a hood.
- 1 pair of hiking pants.
- 1 pair of shorts. Nice for swimming.
- 1 long-sleeve sun shirt. We recommend a "hoody" style though anything that covers your arms and is synthetic is great.
- 1 short-sleeve T-shirt. Synthetic, not cotton, so it can dry quickly and wick sweat from your body on sweaty, but windy, days.
- 1 lightweight pair of polypropylene or similar gloves.
- 1 warm hat/beanie. Synthetics are less itchy than wool.
- Sunhat. Better to cover up than just rely upon sunscreen.

Etc.

- Sun glasses. Good quality. If using prescription lenses consider a backup pair.
- Water carrying system with a capacity of 2-3 liters. A combination of a bottle and hydration system works well. We recommend a 2 liter bladder for daily trail use and an additional Klean Kanteen insulated bottle for drink flavoring, coffee, etc. This can be your thermos and additional water bottle.

- Headlamp. With a spare set of batteries.
- Swiss army style knife. No giant "multi-tools".
- Personal toiletries including toothbrush, toothpaste (travel sized), baby wipes and floss. Keep it minimal.
- Hand sanitizer - a personal travel size bottle.
- Toilet paper. The used toilet paper will go in a paper bag, which then goes in a ziplock, which you carry in your pack.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. A 1 oz. bottle will be enough. Make sure the lip screen actually contains a sunscreen.
- Basic first aid supplies such as ibuprofen, moleskin, and tape. Your guides will have extensive first aid kits so please don't go overboard with your personal kits. If you tend to take NSAID's regularly please bring your own, or if your feet require constant blister attention please bring tape and moleskin.
- Camera, a spare memory card and battery. No big cameras please; compacts only. You can substitute a camera phone.
- 2 Plastic Trash Bags. One for lining your duffel in case it rains, the other for your day pack (if your day pack has a rain cover that is also acceptable).
- Trekking poles*. These are not essential, but can be handy on the trail. It is your choice, but they do save the knees on long descents.
- Reading material, journal or Kindle. Do not bring "War & Peace".
- Ear plugs. Handy to block flapping tent noise (or noisy partners).

Food

- We include meals from lunch on Day 1 through lunch on the last day. Bring your own snack items like cliff bars, power bars, or gorp concoctions for all days. Also bring your favorite hot drinks (tea, hot chocolate, cider etc.). A days worth for most people would be 2 bars, 3 ounces of gorp, and perhaps a candy bar. Don't over do it.

Shared equipment provided by SMC

- Duffel bag. This will carry all of your overnight gear and camp essentials. We prefer to use our own since they fit the mule's saddlebags well.
- Shelter. We will provide tents for you, and you will be asked to share a tent with someone as campsites are only so large, and to help reduce weight. If you have a tent of your own you want to use please call the office prior to the trip.
- Stoves, kitchen and cookware.
- Water purification. The group will have access to a variety of different ways to treat water. Chemical treatment, such as Aquamira or Iodine, will be carried by the guide. Gravity filtration bags will be used in camp.
- Bear-proof food storage. All food and snacks will go into the mule paniers overnight.
- Eating and drinking equipment.

You specifically don't need

- Big first aid kits (we have a comprehensive one).
- Deodorant or any toiletries beyond those listed above.
- Items that are not on this list.