



# Mammoth to Tuolumne Hike

## Trip Notes

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The John Muir Trail is one of the finest hikes to be found anywhere in the world. The hike from Yosemite National Park to the high point of the lower forty-eight states, Mount Whitney, is about 200 miles and is a twenty day trip. But not everyone can take the time to do this. So here is a short four day segment of the trail that more slowly takes us through some of the most beautiful portions of the JMT. This hike has a little of everything, condensing the best parts down to four days: a wide river valley, a high pass crossing, great views, stunningly beautiful lakes and jagged peaks.

This trip can be made in either direction but we like to start from Mammoth Lakes since it avoids the problems of obtaining a wilderness permit in Yosemite, which can be very difficult. This also enables you to spend the night before in Mammoth and gain some acclimatization to the elevation in a comfortable setting. While this trip can be done in less than four days, our goal is to enjoy the hike and not beat ourselves up. That way we can split the days into easy segments that allow you to forget the city, work and all those things that come with modern life. You'll have time to sit by a lake in the sun and read a book, go fishing or take an afternoon hike without the overnight pack.

## **Itinerary:**

*Day 1:* We head up the rushing San Joaquin River from Agnew Meadows along the River Trail. We pass beautiful Shadow Lake with fantastic views of the jagged Minarets and the blocky summits of Mounts Ritter and Banner. We plan to camp above Shadow Lake close to Shadow Creek and make this not too long a day.

Starting elevation 8321 feet      Ending elevation 10030 feet  
Distance 4.5 miles with 1050 feet of gain and 350 feet of loss

*Day 2:* We head north paralleling the San Joaquin river and pass by some of the Sierra's most beautiful lakes all aptly named from precious gems: Ruby, Garnet, Emerald and finally to the incomparable Thousand Island Lake. We wander around the lake stopping to enjoy the scenery as we climb up and over the low and easy Island Pass. From here we descend into Rush Creek and stop near the forks of the creek and set up camp.

Starting elevation 10030 feet      Ending elevation 9650 feet  
Distance 7.5 miles with 2000 feet of gain and 1500 feet of loss

*Day 3:* Today is our biggest pass but the distance to the top is not too far. So we shoulder our everlightening packs, head over Donahue Pass and drop to into Lyell Canyon. Above us rises Mt Lyell, the high point of Yosemite National Park, and we start a steady drop to into the wide glacially carved valley of Lyell Canyon. We plan to camp near the Tuolumne River in the base of Lyell Canyon.

Starting elevation 9650 feet      Ending elevation 8950 feet  
Distance 8.0 miles with 2200 feet of gain and 1550 feet of loss

*Day 4:* All downhill now to the roadhead at Tuolumne Meadows through Lyell canyon, past the Lyell Fork of the Tuolumne River lazily meandering its way. We aim to be at our vehicle pick up in the early afternoon giving us time to head back to Mammoth and a well-earned rest.

Starting elevation 8950 feet      Ending elevation 8700 feet  
Distance 7.5 miles with 400 feet of gain and 200 feet of loss

**Meeting place and time:** We meet at the Stellar Brew Cafe in Mammoth Lakes at 9:00 am. This is situated on the north (right) side of Highway 203 (the road to Mammoth from Highway 395) just after the first traffic light coming into town.

**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 canceling. Price includes guiding and all necessary group gear. We can assist with hotel reservations should you require them.

**Prerequisites:** Prior day hiking experience required. No prior overnight experience is required but you need to be in good physical condition, able to walk 10 miles and gain up to 2000 feet daily while carrying a multiday backpack.

# Equipment List for the Tuolumne to Mammoth Hike

The following list is a general guide and will assist you in packing for the program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have specific questions regarding equipment or if you need assistance prior to making a purchase. When backpacking paying attention to the details and creating a personal system will lead to success. Experiment with your gear and your packing style before arriving in the Sierra. Consider the month, weather patterns, and snow conditions. **Think lightweight.** Items with a \* can be rented from SMC.

## Essentials

- Footwear. You will be hiking roughly 7-8 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.
- Pack. 60-65 liter. The pack you choose to bring will also greatly impact your trip. Bring the smallest lightest pack you can get everything into.
- 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 must be waterproofed inside your bag with a trash bag lining the stuff sack. Pair this with a compression stuff sac to reduce volume.
- 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 pairs of socks. 2 pairs to alternate while hiking, and a third 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 2 pairs 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 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.
- Eating and drinking equipment. For drinking we like a thermos (refer to "water carrying system" above for more clarity). Plastic sporks will break - titanium does not. Collapsible style bowls save space.
- 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.
- Plastic Trash Bag for keeping things in outside the tent should it rain.
- 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).

## Shared equipment provided by SMC

- 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 distribute 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 distributed amongst the group for use in camp.

## 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.