



# Women's Intermediate Backpacking

## Trip Notes



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For this program we have upped the level a little bit and think of it as “Stepping out a bit further”. We include longer distances each day and also a crossing of a Sierra Crest pass, taking us to the west side of the Sierra and then looping back to the east ending at our starting point. Our focus is on getting you skills and comfort with being in the mountains, allowing you to get out by yourself or to be confident joining a longer trip such as the JMT. This is an intermediate backpacking trip and a fun adventure with a group of women who are looking to get out and push themselves a little bit further but in a warm, welcoming and supportive atmosphere.

For three days and two nights we will hike up from forest to the high alpine, carrying what we need and seeing beautiful mountains, forests and alpine lakes. A lot of people find that it is hard to get time off work to get to the mountains but driving to the Eastern Sierra and back in a weekend just makes everything too rushed and ruins the goal of getting away and relaxing in the mountains. Take an extra day off work and have time to enjoy the peace of the mountains and their beauty and recharge your soul.

## **Itinerary:**

Day 1: We meet at the end of the Cottonwood Road at the trailhead to Cottonwood Lakes. This is one of the highest trailheads in the Sierra Nevada at 10,000 feet. We will check gear and head out on the gradual climb to Cottonwood Lakes where we choose our campsite from the countless sandy sites adjacent to crystal clear blue lakes.

Day 2: We head off early and over New Army Pass. This takes us to the high point of our trip at 12,300 feet and fantastic views out over the southern Sierra, far to the southern mountain ranges surrounding the Los Angeles Basin and out to the desert ranges of Nevada. We drop steadily into the trees of upper Rock Creek drainage. We take lunch here and then head back along the PCT to a small unnamed lake and meadow above Big Whitney Meadows.

Day 3: We rise early for the last part of the trip and hit the trail back over Cottonwood Pass to the trailhead. We plan to get back there early afternoon giving you time to reluctantly head home, happy and fulfilled.

## **Distances and elevations**

Day 1	Trailhead to Cottonwood Lakes	5.5 miles	1300 feet of gain	300 feet of down
Day 2	Cottonwood Lakes to un-named lake	7.1 miles	1900 feet of gain	1600 feet of down
Day 3	Un-named lake to Trailhead	6.3 miles	699 feet of gain	2000 feet of down

## **Meeting place and time**

We meet at the Cottonwood Lakes Trailhead at 8:00 am. We'll do a pack check, a group orientation and make lunch before hitting the trail. The trailhead is some 45 minutes from Lone Pine so you need to have checked and double-checked your gear since there will be no opportunity for “last minute” shopping for forgotten items. See our driving directions below.

## **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, permits, all necessary group gear, tents, kitchen gear and breakfast, lunch and dinner daily (You bring hot/cold drinks and snack items). Scheduled dates include USFS trail fees. Private programs do not.

## **Prerequisites**

Good hiking shape, good physical condition and able to carry a pack with three days of equipment. Prior day and/or overnight hiking experience is preferable but not absolutely necessary. We will be working with you to expand your skills and knowledge.

## **Your Guides**

Our guides are experienced outdoors people and you can expect the highest level of safety and mountain knowledge.

## **Trailhead Directions**

There are a number of roads and two trailheads here, making our meeting place a little confusing. Please read carefully and copy these directions down for the drive! There is no service at or near the trailhead.

In Lone Pine, at the intersection of US Highway 395 and Whitney Portal Road, take Whitney Portal Road west. Go 3.2 miles and turn left onto Horseshoe Meadow Road. Go 20 miles up the steep road with many hairpin bends. After the New Army Pass sign turn right and go 0.25 miles. You will pass the walk in campground, and parking for the Cottonwood Lakes trailhead will be

directly after. Park here and look for your guides.

### **Special Notes**

For maps use the Mt. Whitney, Mt. Langley and Cirque Peak 7.5 minute maps. The Tom Harrison *Mt. Whitney High Country* Map covers most of the route and the *Whitney Zone* one gives detail of the area.

### **Bears**

Bears can be a problem at the trailhead. Do not leave food, scented items (deodorant, soap etc.) in your vehicle. There is limited food locker storage at Cottonwood Meadows so do not bring extra items with you to the trailhead. Clean up all trash prior to your trip. Failure to take precautions can cause the vehicle to be ripped apart by a bear and the added insult of a fine from the Forest Service.

### **Lone Pine Accommodation and Showers**

The Whitney Portal Hostel and Hotel is a great place to stay in Lone Pine and prices are reasonable. They also offer showers so if you want to clean up before heading home stop by and grab one for a few dollars.

Contact them at 760-876-0030 and look on line at [www.mountwhitneyportal.com](http://www.mountwhitneyportal.com).



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# Equipment List for Women's Intermediate Backpacking

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. The following list will vary according to the time of year, and your individual requirements. When packing **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 1oz. 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).

## Food

- We include meals from lunch on Day 1 through lunch on Day 4. 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

- 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.
- Bear Canisters. Each hiker gets a large plastic cylinder for overnight food protection from animals. When you pack each day you will be issued one canister to carry for that day.

## 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.

## Additional Thoughts

- Some people, particularly women, tend to run colder than others. If this is the case add another layer or two, a warmer sleeping bag, warmer boots and extra handwarmers
- Women – see our "Women on the Trail" information sheet at the Women's Trips pages on the website.

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