

# THE JOHN MUIR TRAIL – 23 DAYS

## Itinerary

Below are very tentative itineraries for the 23 days you're on the trail. There are a number of things which can change this schedule such as weather, minor injury, tired mules or just the desire for a rest day. For this reason, the actual camps are certain to vary. The below itinerary is designed to provide you with a general outline of the route. Please be flexible and adapt to inevitable changes which can occur.

## Day 1-8: Chicken Springs Lake to Glen Pass / Rae Lakes (68.5 Miles)

Your tour includes pickup from any hotel in the Mammoth Lakes area to your start point. From here you'll meet your guides and fellow hikers before your kit is thoroughly checked. Please remember that there won't be any opportunity to purchase gear, so you must arrive fully equipped and prepared. You'll then hike four and a half miles to Chicken Springs Lake - you're now officially hiking on the John Muir Trail. The hike to Chicken Springs Lake is popular with day hikers and with minimal elevation gains, you'll enjoy the stunning views, providing you with a great warm up for the next few weeks. The southern side of the lake is clad in rocky meadows scattered with scrub willows and gnarled foxtail pines. Sheer granite cliffs rise above the northern and eastern shores. Over the next few days you'll traverse the Cottonwood Pass Trail, the gateway to the Golden Trout Wilderness and the Eastern Sierras heading towards the mighty peak, Mount Whitney. This trail will provide you with high alpine lakes and expansive views. With fewer people hiking this particular trail you'll feel like you've entered the ultimate Sierra wilderness. On your way to Rock Creek you'll hike through Sequoia King National Park, the land of giant trees and mountains before heading upwards into the wide open spaces of Guyot Flat. Staying above the timberline and hiking to Crabtree Meadow, the moment has almost arrived to climb the highest peak in the lower 48 states. Turning east from Crabtree Meadows the route climbs towards Mount Whitney and you finally stand on the 14,495ft summit on the Sierra Crest with a view of many of the highest peaks of the Sierra Nevada. The peak rises 10,778ft (3,285 meters) or just over two miles above the town of Lone Pine, 15 miles to the east in the Owens Valley. The sense of accomplishment having reached this point will be immense and a wonderful memory to share with your fellow hikers. You descend back into Crabtree Meadows where you pick up fresh supplies. Climbing again through pine clad forests and out onto sandy plateaus high above treeline there are incredible views of high rugged peaks in every direction before you drop down to Tyndall Creek. Pass through alpine meadows, witness yellow marmots scurrying past and discover several lakes and streams as you ascend towards Forester Pass, the tallest pass on the John Muir Trail. From the top you'll be able to see Vidette Meadows, which is where you're headed. The next day you head over Glenn Pass the fourth highest pass on the trail and then onto Rae Lakes, for even more unbelievable wilderness right at your feet.

Accommodation: Camping included | Meals: breakfast (x7), lunch (x7), dinner (x8) included

## Day 9-16: Rae Lakes to Marie Lake (86 Miles)

The John Muir Trail travels approximately 75 miles in Kings Canyon National Park and the entire length of the trail within the park is only accessible by foot. This is one of the most remote trails anywhere in the USA. Your first experience of Kings Canyon National Park is Rae Lakes and from here you'll descend five steep miles to Woods Creek, where you'll cross the Woods Creek suspension bridge, one at a time. Lake Marjorie will be awaiting you next and is considered one of the most stunning lakes on the trail, but we'll let you be the judge of that as you spend the night here. Continue upwards past more beautiful lakes and wilderness until you reach the Upper Basin. Being located just above treeline you'll be rewarded with epic views to the south with the Upper Basin also being a great place to spot deer and marmots - keep your eyes peeled. The trail now follows Le Conte Canyon. The long canyon has beautiful meadows and classic mountain peaks and is shaped by the Middle Fork of the Kings Canyon River. Continue heading north to one of the prettiest meadows in the Sierra Nevadas, Grouse Meadow. You're surrounded by yet more breathtaking scenery, so take some time to absorb it all. You and your fellow hikers hike to the next meadow in Le Conte Canyon, Big Pete

Meadow, where you'll pick up more supplies and spot grazing deer. Wanda Lake, named after one of John Muir's daughters, is your next destination. At 11,000ft it sits just below Muir Pass. On the other side of the pass you'll find Helen Lake, named after his other daughter. You'll then hike 15 miles of spectacular terrain as you make your way to Upper San Joaquin River. The San Joaquin River is one of California's greatest rivers. Some of the trail here will lead right along the raging river and in places you'll have wooden bridges to cross. Your next resupply stop is at Marie Lake where you'll witness a pristine blue lake with tiny islands dotted in the centre of the lake and surrounded by huge slabs of granite banks.

Accommodation: Camping included | Meals: Breakfast (x8), lunch (x8), dinner (x8) included

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## Day 17-23: Marie Lake to Tuolumne Meadows (70 Miles)

This is the last stretch of your John Muir Trail experience so enjoy every minute of it. Depart from Marie Lake and make the ascent towards Quail Meadows. Head onto another beautiful lake, Chief Lake. The lake is right below the timberline and the dramatic views and aquamarine waters will create an everlasting memory of the beautiful scenery on the trail. Purple Lake is next with picturesque scenery, surrounded by steep, forested slopes and sheer rocky cliffs. This is the perfect place to dip your weary toes into the refreshing lake waters. You're now in Ansel Adams Wilderness dotted with sparkling lakes, glacially sculpted gorges and imposing peaks. Originally protected by the 1964 Wilderness Act, it was first called the Minarets Wilderness. Renamed to honour photographer Ansel Adams in 1984, it spreads over 230,258 acres, ranging in altitude from about 7,000ft to 14,000ft. You hike to Thousand Island Lake, named for the many rocky islands that dot the surface. This alpine lake that sits directly below the spectacular Banner Peak is nothing short of absolutely breathtaking. With just over 15 miles left to hike on this epic trail you head towards Lyell Canyon over Donohue Pass. This pass brings you closer to Yosemite National Park and due to the high elevation (11,056ft) you can expect to see snow in places the whole year round. From Donohue Pass you descend to 8,600ft and reach Lyell Canyon, a sub-alpine meadow in Yosemite. Your final day takes you to Tuolumne Meadows, where the Tuolumne River meanders quietly through the meadow and hikers can enjoy a backdrop of rugged mountain peaks and glacially carved domes. It's from here you'll be picked up and driven back to your hotel in Mammoth Lakes where sadly this once in a lifetime experience must come to an end.

Accommodation: Camping included (excluding day 23) | Meals: Breakfast (x7), lunch (x7), dinner (x6) included

Please note, this trip can change due to permitting issues, should this occur any amendments will be advised prior to travel.

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## Logistics

This is a long trip and for many it may be the longest backcountry trip you have ever done. Your guide is qualified and trained in wilderness first aid and carries a radio or cell phone for emergency communications. Please note this is not for personal use or calling home.

You should have good physical fitness for this trip and although you do not need to be marathon fit, you should be prepared to walk for eight to 15 miles per day. Some days are long, some are shorter and on some you'll stay at camp to recuperate. The most important thing is endurance and the ability to deal with whatever happens. Please contact us for details if you have specific questions.

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## Backcountry Conditions

This trip operates from late August to early September in order to hike during the most opportune weather conditions. Days, while getting shorter, should be warm with day temperatures in the 15°C / 60°F region. At night temperatures can dip to 0°C / 32°F, although this is rare and only at the higher elevation. There should be minimal biting insects and bugs. There'll 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's the possibility of afternoon thunderstorms that may be heavy for a short time. You'll be in the high mountains so there's always the chance of snow, but prolonged storms are not common at this time of year.