



↑ Decisions to make on the JMT.
 ↗ The fire-damaged forest around Devils Postpile.
 ↓ Campsite just north of Lyell Fork Bridge.

Winding its way through California's High Sierra, the JMT represents an unforgettable combination of jagged granite peaks, thunderous waterfalls, sweeping glacial valleys, and hundreds of alpine lakes.



When experienced hikers sit around the campfire and talk about the world's most beautiful pathways, the John Muir Trail is invariably one of the first names mentioned. Winding its way through California's High Sierra, the JMT represents an unforgettable combination of jagged granite peaks, thunderous waterfalls, sweeping glacial valleys, and hundreds of alpine lakes.

The John Muir Trail stretches 340 km (211 mi.) from Yosemite Valley to the top of Mount Whitney, which at 4,421 m (14,500 ft.) is the highest point in the contiguous United States and arguably the most breathtaking finishing point of any long-distance hike in North America. Along the way it passes through three National Parks (Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia), two designated wilderness areas (John Muir and Ansel Adams), and some of the most striking mountains on the planet.

As the trail is scenic from start to finish, standout highlights cannot be easily identified. That being said, though,

some of the most memorable features include Devils Postpile, a basalt rock formation that was created by lava flow and which resembles a stack of posts on an enormous scale, and Evolution Valley, where picturesque lakes and dramatic mountain vistas can be enjoyed. Rae Lakes and the Muir Pass—the midpoint of the trail and the location of the John Muir Hut built by the Sierra Club (see page 197)—are also worth mentioning. And for approximately 274 of its 340 km (170 of 211 mi.), the John Muir Trail coincides with another of America's most famous long-distance pathways, the Pacific Crest Trail, which runs from Mexico to Canada and is much longer at 4,265 km (2,650 mi.). →

ABOUT THE TRAIL

- **DISTANCE** 340 km (211 mi.)
- **DURATION** 17 to 24 days
- **LEVEL** Moderate to Difficult