



Welcome to International Alpine Guides John Muir Trail Kearsarge Pass to Cottonwood via Mt. Whitney Hike

We are excited to have to you as a guest on our John Muir Trail Kearsarge Pass to Cottonwood Pass Hike! It is a high elevation hike through Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park that visits the most remote parts of the High Sierra. It also hikes to the top of the highest point in the lower 48, Mount Whitney.

Following is some important general information to help you prepare for your upcoming adventure. Our hope is that this will help your planning go smoothly and will add to the enjoyment of your trip. Do not hesitate to contact us with any questions...we are available to provide you with a high level of service. Our office will be checking in with you at some point prior to your trip.

It is required that you carefully read all the information we give to you and on our website, including the gear lists and any itinerary information. For your safety and enjoyment, and for the safety and enjoyment of others on your trip, you are responsible for knowing all of it and agreeing to our policies and procedures.

Your Guide

Your lead guide will be in contact with you approximately 2 days prior to the trip via phone call and/or email. It is our goal that you will develop a rapport with your guide before the trip commences that will last long after it ends. Before they have contacted you, please continue to contact the office with any further questions you may have.

All of our backpacking trips are fully guided trips which means you will be traveling with the group and your guides the entire time. You are required to stay with the group the entire trip.

For everyone's enjoyment and safety, it is required that you follow your guide's instructions and direction for the duration of your trip. Failure to do so may result in your guide arranging for you to leave the trip.

Pacing

On our group backpacking trips we hike at a slow and steady pace. Your guide will pace the group appropriately according to the group's strengths and the day's objective. We generally hike no faster than 2 MPH and we take breaks no more than every hour to hour and a half.

The group's pace may be slower than you normally hike. However, you have signed up for a group trip and you are required to hike at the pace the guide sets for the group. ***Under no circumstances will you be allowed to hike ahead of the group!***

Trail Conditions & Itinerary

The JMT Kearsarge to Cottonwood hike is a remote and very committing wilderness adventure. This is not a "tour" or a fully catered hike, it is a strenuous and committing backpack in remote terrain. You are required to carry all of your own gear and also your share of the group gear according to your size.

Parts of the High Sierra Nevada we visit are in the most remote wilderness areas of the lower 48 states. Trail conditions will vary widely. You can expect uneven trails and muddy or wet trails. The Sierra can also receive copious amount of snow during our winters, and you could experience some snow covered trails well into the summer months. Fresh summer snow and other adverse weather conditions can happen anytime. You could also experience some off-trail travel if conditions warrant a detour off trail.

Your itinerary is not "set in stone". We keep our day-to-day itineraries flexible to account for group strengths, trail and environmental conditions. Camping locations and daily mileages may, and often do, vary from the published itinerary and our guides will at times have to be very flexible

We cannot guarantee the exact itinerary, daily mileages or trail conditions of any of our trips.

You must be prepared to be flexible in your expectations. But that is the nature of adventure! We recommend ***not*** trying to keep a daily log of mileage (ex apple watches, or personal GPS... etc.) as all devices record different mileage, and to please just remain flexible and immerse yourself in the grandeur of the Sierra wilderness.

Physical Fitness Requirements & Training Advice

We are happy to provide you with training advice to help you better physically prepare for your trip. Feel free to contact our office for more information. Showing up physically prepared for your backpacking trip will greatly increase your enjoyment and your odds of success. In short, the best training is aerobic and stamina training that mimics what you will be doing on your trip. So in addition to all other training you will be doing, you must train by hiking 14-16 miles with a lightweight day pack and also practice hiking 12-14 miles with an overnight weight pack.

You will be expected to carry an overnight-weight backpack with your share of group gear such as stoves, etc. and food. Pack weights vary on each trip according to the section of the hike and your own personal gear. We also distribute group gear and food according to a person's own weight and size.

It is imperative that you are prepared to hike up to 12 miles each day at high elevation on this hike. We generally leave camp between 8 and 9am and arrive at the next campsite in the late afternoon, but this must remain flexible! There may be days you arrive at camp close to dinner time. And there may be days the guide decides to leave much earlier in the morning. There also may be days where you arrive in camp early afternoon to relax and enjoy the surroundings.

You are expected to meet the physical & experience levels required for your trip. If you are unable to keep a reasonable pace that is required to meet each day's mileage objectives in a reasonable amount of time, you may be asked to leave the trip without refund.

Mental Flexibility

On wilderness backpacking trips it is imperative for your enjoyment, and the enjoyment of other guests, that you have a very flexible and easygoing mindset. As mentioned above, exact mileages, campsite locations and even break spots are flexible and can change. Sometimes things do not go as planned such as thunderstorms, blisters, trail conditions, pacing of the group, the food menu and a multitude of other unforeseen things that can come up on a long wilderness backpacking trip. We ask that everyone maintain a positive mental attitude throughout the trip.

Any caustic behavior towards our staff, other guests, and other wilderness users is strictly not tolerated, and may result in you being removed from the trip.

Food

We provide breakfast and dinner throughout the trip. The food we provide on all our backpacking trips we like to consider “backcountry gourmet”. We strive to provide the best food possible according to the objective at hand.

We can accommodate most diets and dietary restrictions. However, it is required that you are flexible with simple like and dislikes of food as we eat as a group. Please communicate to us well in advance any dietary restrictions or allergies you may have.

Lunch and snacks will not be provided. For lunches, plan on bringing food that doesn’t require warming or cooking. In addition, we ask that you consider weight and space when planning food for the crucial need to keep weight down.

Travel Assistance

Our office is available to you for any travel assistance to help you get to the meeting place of your trip.

IAG and your guides are not able to provide you transportation to the meeting place of your trip. You are responsible for arranging your own transport to the meeting point.

Using public transport to the meeting place is possible but can be somewhat time consuming so please account for that.

Gear List

It is imperative and required that you bring **everything** on the gear list. You can find recommendations on specific gear choices on our website. If you have any questions at all please do not hesitate to contact our office or ask your guide once they are in contact with you.

We will be doing a full pack check with you the first night we meet to make sure you have everything you need and not too much. Our guides have the right to tell you not to bring something along that is not needed on the hike.

It is your responsibility to come fully prepared. We can refuse your participation on the trip if you show up without the proper gear and clothing.

Gear for lend

Many items are available for lend at no extra charge. These include sleeping bag and pad, backpacks and even eating utensils. Tents are automatically provided on all trips. (There is a \$25 cleaning charge for sleeping bags). Our sleeping pads are closed cell foam and they work great. However, If you wish to have a cushier pad, we suggest purchasing a lightweight air mattress.

You must notify the office of any gear you need at least 7 days in advance of your trip via our gear request form on our website.

Sleeping Arrangements

You will be sleeping in lightweight tents that we can provide and we do ask people to share tents to reduce our footprint in the wilderness. You can bring your own tent if you have it approved by us first.

Tips/Gratuities

If you are happy with the service provided by your guide, it is customary to provide a 10-15% tip. This is solely at your discretion.

Cancellation Policy

International Alpine Guides has a 60-day day no refund cancellation policy. Sorry, but no refunds can be made within that time period. You can purchase travel insurance to cover the costs of cancellation within the no-cancellation period (See below).

We do not issue refunds for unused days due to weather, mountain conditions, fires or other environmental conditions or government actions that are beyond our control. But we can issue a weather credit for any unused days due to weather. This is at the discretion of CAG. We do not issue credits or refunds due to not reaching an objective.

Please see the website for our [full cancellation policy](#).

Travel and Rescue Insurance

It is highly recommended that you purchase travel insurance for your trip. This will cover the cost of any trip fees if you have to cancel for any covered reason (You can even get "cancel for any reason" policies). It will also cover many other things such as extra medical bills, transport and airline delays, etc.

In the event a rescue is needed, you are responsible for any costs associated with the need for a rescue. Some travel insurance plans may cover some of this. However, we recommend you join the [American Alpine Club](#). The nominal costs of the AAC membership provides you automatically with thousands of dollars in rescue insurance.

Health Insurance

It is imperative that you have adequate health insurance to cover anything that may occur on your trip. IAG does not provide any insurance for its guests.

Rescues

Our guides are wilderness medical professionals certified as Wilderness First Responders and are the only ones that make the call whether an outside rescue is warranted. Minor medical problems and/or fatigue do not constitute the need for an outside rescue.

Rescues involving rescue personnel and/or helicopters are ONLY available for high-risk medical problems that have an immediate threat to life and limb. And sometimes an outside rescue may not even be an option depending on weather conditions or other circumstances.

Voluntarily leaving a trip early

In the event you need to, or simply want to, leave the trip voluntarily you will be charged for any costs associated with that. This includes paying staff to hike you out and/or any transportation costs associated with that. As your contracted guides, we are fully responsible for your wellbeing and cannot let you hike out on your own.

The above also pertains to someone having to leave a trip early due to lack of physical preparedness.

For your safety you cannot leave the trip on your own without IAG staff while out in the wilderness. If you do so, against the direction of your guide, we will be required to report you to the National Park and Forest Service.

We do not offer any refunds or credits when someone needs to, or wants to, leave the trip early.

SEQUOIA PACIFIC CREST TRAIL/JMT ITINERARY

Day 1

We meet at a campsite near the town of Independence in the Eastern Sierra just South of Bishop, Ca. between 4 and 6pm. Exact location TBD. Dinner will be served that night and your guide will conduct a pack check and go over all the gear for the trip.

Day 2

After a hearty breakfast, we begin the day by hiking up the Onion Valley trailhead, cross over Kearsarge Pass and drop down to meet up with the Pacific Crest Trail and John Muir Trail near beautiful Bullfrog Lake In Kings Canyon/Sequoia National Park.

Day 3

Continuing South along the PCT, we make our way to up the Bubbs Creek drainage towards Forrester Pass to make camp in a secluded location off the main trail and away from others.

Day 4

Today is finishing the hike up Forrester Pass, at 13,150 it is the highest elevation on the entire 2000 mile length of the PCT. We descend the South side of the pass and make our way downhill towards Tyndall Creek and the spectacular Wrights Lake basin for another secluded camp in either location.

Day 5

Continuing South, we leave the PCT and continue along the JMT towards Mount Whitney where we make camp in the Crabtree Meadows area and set up our Whitney base camp in preparation for our summit of Mount Whitney.

Day 6

Mount Whitney summit day. With lightweight packs we take the JMT up the backside of Mount Whitney to the highest point in the contiguous United States (14,495 ft). This is also the Southern terminus of the John Muir Trail. The views are of course very expansive. We then retrace our steps back to our base camp where we spend another night.

Day 7

Re-joining the PCT we continue South in Sequoia National Park towards the starkly beautiful Siberian Outpost. We camp along quiet Upper Rock Creek for our last night in the wilderness.

Day 8

Leaving the PCT we hike into the Golden Trout Wilderness and over 11,000 ft Cottonwood Pass before arriving at the Horseshoe Meadows trail head. From here a shuttle awaits us to take everyone back to the starting point.

Itinerary subject to change