

Mt. Whitney- Inyo National Forest

Wilderness Backcountry

Activities like backpacking, hiking, skiing, and mountaineering are allowed in the Mt. Whitney area, which is within the John Muir Wilderness. Motorized or mechanical activities are not allowed in wilderness. Groups are limited to 15 people or less, in order to preserve the solitude and tranquility of the backcountry. There are maintained trails through the area to hike on, but no developed campground facilities. Once you start on the trail, there are no water faucets and no restrooms. Visitors are expected to carry out their solid human waste.

Wilderness permits are required year-round for the following:

- All overnight /multi-night trips in the Ansel Adams, John Muir, Hoover or Golden Trout wilderness.
- All overnight /multi-night trips that start in Inyo National Forest and will be overnight in Yosemite, Sequoia or Kings Canyon Wilderness.
- Day use into the Mt Whitney Zone.

Crossing Park Boundaries

The permit will be issued by Inyo National Forest if the trip starts from an Inyo National Forest trailhead, even if the first night of your trip will be spent in the adjacent national park. If you will cross into an adjacent National Park boundary you must follow park rules while you are there. Please check with the parks for specific regulations.

- For trips that will travel through multiple areas, check for regulations for each area you will visit.
- One permit is valid for the duration of a trip, including traveling through adjacent parks and forests.
- If you exit the wilderness for more than 24 hours or re-enter at a different location, a new permit is required.

Permit Types

Day Use

If the entire trip will be on one calendar date and you will enter the Mt. Whitney Zone, a Day Use permit is required. Day Use permits are required for all routes (access to Mountaineer's Route, East Face/Buttress routes, Mt Russell). Consecutive day use permits are not allowed; if a trip is more than one calendar date an Overnight permit is required.

Overnight

Trips lasting one or more nights require an Overnight permit. This includes trips that cross into national parks or elsewhere (i.e., Pacific Crest and John Muir trails). A Mt. Whitney Day Use permit cannot be used as part of an overnight trip to pass through the Mt Whitney area. An Overnight permit to use the Mt Whitney trail does not include all routes. Entry via the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek is a separate permit quota and is NOT reserved in the lottery. North Fork gives access to the Mountaineer's Route, East

Face / Buttress, Mt. Russell). Reserve a North Fork of Lone Pine trip from Inyo National Forest by selecting permit type for Visiting or Exiting Mt Whitney.

Visiting Mt Whitney or Exiting Mt Whitney

These permit types are not included in the lottery; reserve with an Inyo National Forest entry trail.

The Visiting Mt. Whitney permit is for trips that approach the Mt. Whitney Zone from Crabtree Meadows or cross country routes. You can enter the Mt Whitney Zone and climb to the summit; however this permit type does NOT include exit down the Mt. Whitney trail to Whitney Portal.

The Exit Mt Whitney permit is for trips that approach the Mt. Whitney Zone from Crabtree Meadows or cross country routes. This permit type allows you to climb to the summit and includes exit down the Mt Whitney trail to Whitney Portal. This includes the option to camp along the Mt Whitney trail. A quota limits the number of people allowed to exit each day.

A Mt. Whitney Day Use permit cannot be used as part of an overnight trip to pass through the Mt Whitney area.

Cross Country

The Cross Country permit is for trips that include off trail travel in areas of Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks where a smaller group size requirement applies. Check the website for the park you will visit to determine if you are entering an area where the group size is limited.

- If your travel route is not limited use the regular overnight permit type.
- If you are entering one of the limited areas, use the “cross country” permit type.

Group Size Limits and Trail Quotas

Group size limits and trail quotas help protect wilderness solitude by insuring that groups do not crowd together.

Group size limits apply year round (including day use and overnight trips).

- Groups on separate permits cannot combine if they will exceed the group size limit.
- Wilderness regulations limit the number of people in a group to fifteen (15) people.
- Some areas of Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks limit the group size to eight (8) for off trail or cross country travel.

Trail quotas limit the total number of people that can start on a trail in the same day. The time of year that quotas are in effect can vary for different wilderness areas.

- Trail quotas limit the total number of people that can start on a trail in the same day.
- The combined number of people in all the groups cannot exceed the daily entry quota.

Entry Date and Exit Date

- One permit is valid for the whole trip. Be sure to indicate the full trip.
- Trips cannot be longer than 14 days in one area.
- Entry date is the day you will begin walking the trail. The Exit date is the day you will come off the trail.
- All of your group must start on the entry date listed on your permit. Your permit will be invalid if you miss your entry date.
- Do not include vacation days that are not part of the backpacking trip like campgrounds or motels the night before or after the trip.
- For Mt. Whitney Day Use permits, the entry and exit date would be the same date, which is the day you are hiking on the trail.

Wilderness Regulations

In addition to all county, state and federal laws, the following acts are prohibited in the Ansel Adams, John Muir, Hoover, Golden Trout and South Sierra wildernesses:

- Camping overnight in the Wilderness without a valid wilderness permit. Day use of the Mt. Whitney Zone without a valid wilderness permit.
- Possessing or storing food, toiletries or refuse in a manner that allows bears or animals access to it.
- Storing or leaving unattended equipment, personal property or supplies for more than 24 hours.
- Camping within 100 feet of lakes, streams or trails (terrain permitting), and never less than 50 feet of lakes or streams or within 25 feet of trails.
- Washing and/or discharging soap waste within 100 feet of lakes or streams.
- Depositing bodily waste within 100 feet of lakes, streams, campsites or trails.
- Discharging a firearm, except for emergencies and the taking of game as permitted by California state law.
- Possessing or using a wheeled or mechanical device (bicycle, motorcycle, cart, etc); exceptions for persons requiring wheelchairs allow wheeled devices but not motors.
- Shortcutting a switchback on any forest trail.
- Entering or using the wilderness in a group larger than 15 persons or with more than 25 head of pack or saddle stock.
- Stock are prohibited, Whitney Portal to Trail Crest. Hitching, tethering or tying pack or saddle stock within 100 feet of lakes, streams, trails or campsites except while loading or unloading.
- Leaving any debris, garbage or refuse within the wilderness.

The above include enforceable Forest Service regulations with maximum penalties of \$5,000 and/or 6 months in jail. Violation of permit terms or other Forest Service regulations may also invalidate an issued permit, requiring a group to terminate their visit.

Food Storage and Refuse

- Overnight visitors must secure food and refuse in containers designed to prevent access by bears in the Mount Whitney area from May through October. Maps of the specific areas are available on the Inyo National Forest web. Links are on each trail page.
- If your trip continues beyond Mt. Whitney, food storage requirements and maps of the areas that require the use of bear resistant food storage containers are available on the National Park and Inyo National Forest web. Links are on each trail page.
- Areas that do not require use of food storage containers still have requirements for you to store your food and refuse in a manner that does not allow bear or other wildlife access to food or trash.
- Do not feed wildlife. It is not acceptable to burn or bury food or trash.

Pack Out Everything You Pack In

- Only Virtual Geo-caching will comply with Leave No Trace Practices.
- Take only pictures; leave no trace of your visit.

Campfires

- Fires are not allowed in the Mt. Whitney area.

In other parts of the wilderness on the forest:

- Maps of fire closure areas for Inyo National Forest are located at www.fs.usda.gov/inyo under Recreation and Hiking under the related links.
- Fires are prohibited for all areas above 10,400 ft. in elevation.
- Fires are prohibited for all areas above 10,000 ft. in elevation north of Mt. Emerson and Glacier Divide.
- Additional areas are closed to campfires below 10,000 ft near: Badger Lakes, Big Pine Creek (North and South forks), Chicken Spring Lake, Clark Lakes, Coldwater Canyon, Duck Creek, Lower Davis Lake, Ediza Lake, Emerald Lake, Garnet Lake, Gem Lake (north side), Hilton Lakes & Creek, Lower Horton Lake, Iceberg Lake, Kearsarge Pass/ Onion Valley (includes Golden Trout Lakes and Robinson Lake), King Creek (includes Ashley, Anona, Beck, Fern, Holcomb and Noname Lakes), McGee Canyon, Meysan Canyon, Mildred Lake, Minaret Lakes, Mt Whitney area, Parker Lake, Pine Creek, Purple Creek, Rocky Basin Lakes, Ruby Lake, Rush Forks, Sabrina, Saddlebag Lake (20 Lakes Basin), Lower Sardine Lake, Shadow Lake & Creek, Shepherd Pass (within 1,000 ft of Anvil Camp), Sullivan Lake, Taboose Creek, Thousand Island Lake, Tyee Lakes, Waugh Lake, and Weber Lake.
- Fires are prohibited in additional areas during times of high fire danger.

Campsites

- Campsites are not assigned or reserved. Your itinerary is the general location you expect to be camping.
- Camping is not allowed at Mirror Lake or Trailside Meadow on the Mt. Whitney trail.
- Camping at Lone Pine Lake requires an overnight permit.
- Camp well off the trail, a minimum of at least 25 feet away from trails.
- Campsites should be 100 feet or more away from any lake, stream or water sources. In areas where steep or rocky terrain does not permit camping farther away, camping is permitted from 50 to 100 feet from water.
- Never camp closer than 50 feet from lakes or streams.
- Use established campsites that meet the requirements listed above. Avoid damaging new areas. Do not move rocks, build walls, or disturb soils or vegetation to “improve” a camp site.

Protect Water Quality

- Move well off -trail and at least 100 feet away from all water sources or camps to urinate.
- Visitors are expected to pack out solid human waste from the Mt. Whitney Zone; in other areas it should be buried 6 to 8 inches deep and 100 feet or more from water sources or campsites.
- Dish water or bathwater should be disposed of at least 100 feet away from lakes, streams or other water sources. Pack out solid particles from dish washing.

Pets

- The summit of Mt. Whitney is in Sequoia National Park; pets are not allowed in the park wilderness area.
- Dogs are prohibited, as are any other pets, on trips visiting the wilderness of Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

- Dogs are allowed for trips staying in the National Forest. Pet food must be stored the same as required for your food.
- Pets need to be on leash or under verbal command. Do not allow pets to chase or harass wildlife.

Pack and Saddle Stock

- Stock are prohibited, Whitney Portal to Trail Crest.

In other parts of the wilderness:

- Stock includes animals traditionally used for saddle or pack stock, like horses and mules. Other animals like llamas, burros and goats are also counted as stock. Dogs are considered pets even if they carry a pack.
- The maximum number of stock is 25.
- Stock are prohibited from Whitney Portal to Trail Crest.
- Grazing is prohibited: Cascade Valley meadows, Pioneer Basin, Hilgard Meadow, east of Shepherd Pass. Seasonal grazing restrictions apply.
- Camping with stock is prohibited east of Shepherd Pass.
- In Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon wilderness: Stock are counted in the group size. Some areas in the parks have a total group size limit of 8. (Example: 4 people + 4 mules = group size of 8.)
- To prevent disease transmission to endangered Bighorn Sheep you are advised to limit the use of pack goats to areas that are not sheep habitat.

Reservation and Permit Policy

- Group leader must have the permit with them during the trip.
- The group leader signing the permit is responsible for ensuring that everyone in the group follows all of the rules and regulations during the wilderness trip.
- Reservations or permits cannot be sold or transferred to other parties. (Only a listed alternate leader can replace the group leader.)
- Each trip requires a new wilderness permit; there is no season pass.
- The National Interagency Pass or Golden Eagle Pass is not a substitute for specific activity permits, like a wilderness permit. There are no discounts for wilderness permits.
- All people count for wilderness quotas and fees; prices are not different for children or seniors.
- All the space for Mt. Whitney permits can be reserved. Reservations can be made until two days before the entry date. All unused reservation space is available for walk-in permits.

Permit Pick Up

- There is a deadline confirming reserved permits. The group size must be confirmed online before the deadline or the reservation will be canceled and made available to other groups. Deadline for Day Use permit is Noon, one day before the entry date. Deadline for overnight permit is 10 a.m. on the entry date.
- Mt. Whitney permits must be picked up at the Eastern Sierra InterAgency Visitor Center.
- Only the group leader or alternate leader may pick up or use the permit; the leader or alternate must be going on the wilderness trip. Show photo identification when requested.

- Permits for confirmed reservations can be picked up one or two days before the entry date or on the entry date.
- All unused reservation space is available for walk-in permits one day before the entry date or any time on the entry date.
- Walk-in permits are only issued to visitors in person.
- Open hours for issuing locations may change; look on the Inyo National Forest web for current hours of operation before your trip.