

2012 Mt. Whitney Lottery Application is Online at Recreation.gov



The trail to Mount Whitney starts in Inyo National Forest in California's beautiful Eastern Sierra. Many hikers choose to travel to the summit and back in one day. Backpackers can begin trips of one or more nights on the Mt. Whitney Trail. The summit of Mt. Whitney is also the southern end of the John Muir trail that travels from Mt. Whitney to Yosemite National Park. So whether you are seeking a one day hiking challenge or beginning the trek of your dreams, Mt. Whitney offers a memorable experience.

While you are here, be respectful of water, woods and wildlife. Visitors to the Mt. Whitney Zone are expected to pack out their solid human waste (poop and paper). Travel lightly on the land. Remember to leave this place undamaged, so it will continue to be what we seek of wilderness.

Before you apply to the lottery:

The 2012 Lottery is online. Do not mail an application. There are **NO refunds** for Mt. Whitney permits. Be sure your dates and permit type are correct. Day use and overnight permits are not interchangeable. Reservations cannot be transferred or sold to other groups. Only the leader or alternate leader will be able to use the permit. **Every lottery application will be charge a \$6 lottery transaction fee.** Successful lottery applications will be charged **\$15 per person.** Review the [fees](#) and [general rules](#) for terms and wilderness regulations.

- Entry date is the date your group must start on the trail.
- All visitors are expected to pack out their solid human waste (poop and paper).
- Whitney Portal Campground is not in the wilderness area and is a separate reservation.

Some trips to Mt Whitney are not reserved in the lottery and may be available to reserve now, use these questions to see if your trip is in the lottery.

Question 1. Is this trip sponsored by an organization or commercial group?

No for Question 1: **Go to Question 2.**

If Yes for Question 1: Professional guides, tour groups, corporate groups, non profit organizations, school or educational programs should check in with Inyo National Forest Wilderness Permit Office to determine if the trip would be reserved in the lottery. Schools and other organizations may need a special use permit. Customers of a commercial trip should book the trip directly with the commercial outfit. Making a non-commercial reservation does not guarantee space for a commercial trip. Commercial use of the Mt. Whitney trail and Trail Crest exit require special approval, so book well before the trip.

Question 2. When does your trip begin?

For trips that begin during the quota period, **May 1 through November 1, Go to Question 3.**

Winter season trips are not reserved in the lottery. Get a permit at the Eastern Sierra InterAgency Visitor Center. Self issue permits forms can be used at night or if the center is closed.

Question 3. Is your trip a Day Hike into the Mt. Whitney Zone?

[Click for larger Whitney Zone Map](#)



Yes for Question 2 & 3: **Enter the lottery to reserve a Day Use Permit!**

- Before you apply, look at the "Things to Know Before You Go" information about Day Use Permits.
- A Day Use permit cannot be used as part of an overnight trip to pass through the Mt. Whitney Zone, get an overnight permit if your trip is more than one day.

Not a Day Hike, Go to Question 4.

Question 4. For Overnight and multi-night trips ~Where does your trip begin?

Look at the [area map](#) to determine the trail name.

If you are starting on the Mt. Whitney Trail: Enter the lottery to reserve an Overnight permit.

(All other trails are NOT reserved in the lottery).

- Overnight trips starting on North Fork of Lone Pine Creek trail and other Inyo National Forest trails can be reserved on line, 6 months in advance.
- Trips starting in Yosemite, Sequoia or Kings Canyon National Parks, contact the park where you will start the trip for information.

Things to Know Before You Apply

Mt. Whitney Lottery: Permits for Mt. Whitney are reserved by a lottery due to the high demand for reservations. All the applications will be included in a computerized lottery. You apply for the dates, group size and if it's a day hike or overnight permit. The lottery application will allow you to list up to 15 alternate choices. Dates in July, August and September usually fill completely from the lottery. Other times of the year may have snow and ice on the trail.

Applications will be accepted [online](#) from February 1 through March 15, 2012.

- After March 15 lottery applications will not be accepted.
- All lottery applications submitted from February 1 through March 15 will be processed in a computerized random drawing. No preference is given for early applications.
- Your credit card will be charged the \$15 per person reservation fee if space is available to make a reservation. There are no refunds.
- Each application will be charged a \$6 lottery transaction fee. There are no refunds.
- Permit reservations cannot be changed, transferred or resold. Only the leader or alternate leader can use the permit.
- Lottery results will be sent by email before April 1.

After the lottery is complete:

- Starting April 1 the remaining space will be made available for reservations on a first-come, first-served basis either online or through the Recreation.gov call center.
- Reservations can be made until two days before a trip entry date if space is available.
- Space is not saved for walk-in permits for Mt. Whitney. There is no wait list for cancellations. Cancellations will go back on the calendar within 24 hours.

Seasonal Information

Choose your dates wisely. The Mt. Whitney Trail is a non-technical, but strenuous, route to the summit of Mt. Whitney when it is free of snow. (22 miles round trip; from 8,000 to 14,496 ft. elevation) Winter mountaineering skills and equipment are necessary for safe travel when snow is on the mountain.

May-June: The winter snowpack slowly recedes. Expect snow on the ground above Lone Pine Lake through Memorial Day weekend, and snow on the switchbacks above Trail Camp through June. Nights are usually still below freezing. Winter-like storms are still possible. There was snow on the trail until after July 4th in 2011.

July-early September: The trail is usually snow free and the weather can be fair and pleasant. At elevations above Trail Camp, However, it is often cold and windy. Thunderstorms and lightning are a significant hazard. If thunderstorms are forecast, plan to leave the summit by noon. Be aware thunderstorms sometimes will occur early in the day. At the first sign of lightning, leave the summit area or exposed ridge tops.

Late September-October: Short days and cold temperatures make day hikes to the summit difficult. Storms may bring severe cold with high winds and snow deposits from a few inches to several feet. Thin snow may melt quickly, but deeper drifts may linger for the winter. Winter mountaineering equipment and skills are necessary for safe travel when snow is on the mountain.

November-April: Winter prevails, with deep snow and very cold temperatures. Winter storms may drop several feet of snow and have winds over 100 mph. The road to Whitney Portal is usually closed 8/3 miles from Lone Pine (at elevation 6,400 ft., about 3 miles from the trailhead) from mid-November to late April. Experienced winter mountaineers should be suitably equipped for extreme conditions and check avalanche conditions and weather forecasts.

Permit Types

Mt. Whitney Zone Day Use: If the entire trip will be on one calendar date the trip is day use; if you will enter the Mt. Whitney Zone, a Mt. Whitney Zone Day Use permit is required. This permit allows your choice of routes, including the Mt. Whitney trail and North Fork of Lone Pine Creek trail (access to climbing routes like *Mountaineers Route*, *East Face* and *East Buttress* and Mt Russell).

- Consecutive day use permits are not allowed.
- If a trip is more than one calendar date an Overnight permit is required.
- A day use permit cannot be used as part of an overnight trip to pass through the Mt Whitney Zone.

Mt Whitney Trail Overnight: Trips lasting one or more nights require an Overnight permit. This is for the regular trail that goes to the top of Mt. Whitney and includes trips that continue into Sequoia National Park (i.e., Pacific Crest and John Muir trails).

- Mt. Whitney Day Use permit cannot be used as part of an overnight trip to pass through the Mt Whitney Zone.
- A different permit (NOT reserved in the lottery) is used for access to the Mountaineer's Route, East Face / Buttress, Mt. Russell. For this area request the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek trail.

Frequently Asked Questions about Mt. Whitney

When will the trail be clear of snow?

The trail is usually snow free from mid-July through early September. Heavy snow years may have ice and snow on the switchbacks above Trail Camp through the end of June or early July. Snow may cover the trail again in late September or October. When the trail has ice or snow, winter mountaineering skills, experience and equipment are essential for a safe trip.

What should I put for my exit trail?

If you are coming down on the Mt Whitney trail to end your trip at Whitney Portal, put "Mt. Whitney Trail". If you will continue your trip to exit elsewhere, indicate where your trip will end. Example: John Muir Trail hikers going through to Yosemite would indicate Happy Isles- Yosemite or Tuolumne Meadows- Yosemite.

Can I change my Mt Whitney reservation?

Reservations cannot be transferred to other groups or to future years.

- After the lottery, changes to group size can be made on line or through the Recreation.gov call center.
- Corrections to itinerary or exit date can be done when the permit is issued.
- To change the entry date, entry trail or permit type, cancel and re-book for the desired trip. There are no refunds; this type of change would pay reservation fees again.

I'm going on a multi-night trip; do I also need a day use permit for the day we will summit?

No, the overnight permit is valid for your summit day; day use permits are only for people who are doing their entire trip on one day.

I'm not going all the way to the summit, do I need a permit?

Day hiking anywhere in the Mt. Whitney Zone requires a permit.

If you are overnight anywhere in the wilderness boundary you need a wilderness permit for the area you are entering. Camping near Lone Pine Lake requires a Mt. Whitney Overnight Permit.

My trip to Mt Whitney is not starting on the regular Mt Whitney trail; do I need to enter the lottery?

If you are day hiking, YES, day use permits for all routes are reserved by the lottery.

If your trip is overnight and starting on a trail other than the Mt Whitney Trail, NO your trip is not in the lottery, follow the directions for reserving the entry trail you are starting on. This includes the Mountaineers Route up the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek and entry points for the John Muir Trail, like Kearsarge Pass.

What is a Cross Country permit for?

If your trip will go into Sequoia or Kings Canyon National Parks and you would be hiking off trail, check with the park to determine if you are visiting an area where group size is limited. In the Mt. Whitney area choose the Cross Country permit type for the mountaineer's route, sierra high route, circum navigation route, Crabtree Lakes, Miter Basin, and the area between New Army Pass-Mt Langley to Mt Russell.

When do I pick up the permit?

To hold your space, confirm your group size on line from 2 to 14 days before your trip. If your group size is not confirmed before the deadline the reservation will be canceled.

- Deadline for confirmation of Day Use is Noon, one day before your entry date.
- For Overnight trips the confirmation deadline is 10am on your entry date.

One or two days before the trip the group leader or alternate leader that is listed on the application can pick up the permit. Show photo id when requested. Group leader must carry the permit while on the trail.

Permit will be canceled if not picked up before the entry date has passed.

Instructions for permit pickup are included in the confirmation letter e-mail.

Where do I pick up the permit?

Wilderness Permits for starting in the Mt. Whitney Zone must be picked up at:

Eastern Sierra InterAgency Visitor Center

Located at the junction of Highway 395 and SR 136, south of Lone Pine, CA.

How do I reserve overnight trips that start on other trails in Inyo National Forest?

These trails can be reserved online up to 6 months in advance of the entry date, go to www.Recreation.gov

- Use the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek trail to access the Mountaineer's Route, East Face / Buttress, Mt. Russell and other climbs in this isolated canyon.
- Trips that will exit the Mt Whitney trail (Trail Crest to Whitney Portal) have an exit quota that will apply to the date you finish at the Portal. These dates fill quickly. Reserve the entry trail with permit type "Exit Mt. Whitney". Be sure your dates are what you want; exit date can not be saved if you change the entry date.

Call center assistance is available for reservations if you prefer.

1-877-444-6777

TDD Line: 1-877-833-6777

International Line: 1-518-885-3639

Still Have Wilderness Permit Questions?

Inyo National Forest Wilderness Permit Office: (760) 873-2483

Phone line hours are 8am to 4:30.

Winter schedule~ closed on weekends and holidays.

After May 15 we will be open every day for the summer schedule.