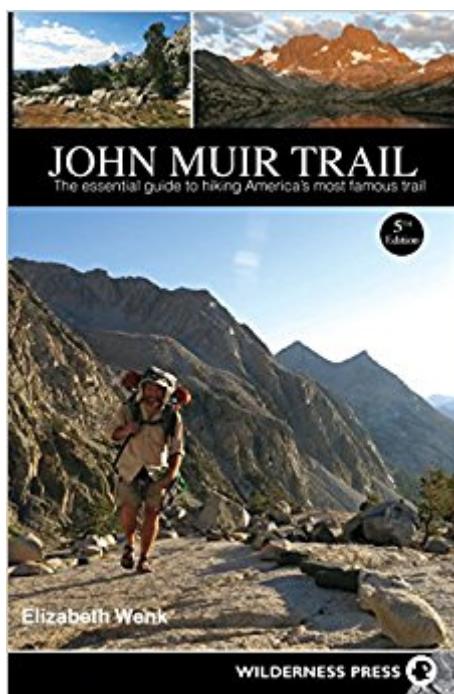


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John Muir Trail: The Essential Guide To Hiking America's Most Famous Trail



Synopsis

Elizabeth Wenk's authoritative guide describes the 212-mile John Muir Trail, running from Yosemite Valley to the summit of Mt. Whitney. John Muir Trail provides all the necessary planning information, including up-to-date details on wilderness and permit regulations, food resupplies, trailhead amenities, and travel from nearby cities. Useful essentials are updated GPS coordinates and maps for prominent campsites (along with an updated list of sites along the trail), trail junctions, bear boxes, and other points of interest. The trail descriptions also include natural and human history to provide a workout for both body and mind -- a must-have for any Muir Trail enthusiast. Note that the text includes the southbound trail description, while the full guide with the northbound description is available as a separate ebook product.

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Customer Reviews

"An incredible accomplishment by an incredible researcher who is very attentive and considerate to the needs of her audience."--Raleigh Martin, *Backpacking Light*"The very best way to get the most out of your experience in the wilderness is to understand it, and there is no better way to do that than to carry along Elizabeth Wenk's *John Muir Trail*: The essential guide to hiking America's most famous trail. The fifth edition has just been released and--to use a software analogy--it's a major upgrade."--Ray Rippel, author of the *JMTbook* (Planning your Thru-Hike of the John Muir Trail ebook)

Brand New Maps, Notable Peaks Highlight Newest JMT GuideRunning from Mount Whitney to Yosemite Valley in the Sierra Nevada, the 212-mile John Muir Trail passes through some of the most dramatic mountain terrain in the United States--massive granite peaks, dizzying waterfalls, pristine alpine lakes, and vibrant meadows filled with wildflowers. Each year, thousands of backpackers traverse some or all of the trail, having relied on Sierra veteran Lizzy Wenk's *John Muir Trail: The Essential Guide to Hiking America's Most Famous Trail*, now in its 5th edition from Wilderness Press, to guide them along the way. The definitive one-stop shop for the JMT, the new John Muir Trail has information found nowhere else. It meticulously describes the entire passage, with detailed directions for readers of all levels of familiarity, as well as UTM coordinates for important junctions, lateral trails, nearly 300 campsites, food-storage boxes, and points of interest. Probably the most significant update to John Muir Trail, though, consists of 16 brand new, original topographic maps, created by the author, incorporated throughout the trail's 13 sections, as well as a list of 15 side trips to nearby, notable peaks. Panoramic vista point photographs label summits on the skyline as hikers make their journey.

This is a book review about a trail that Backpacker Magazine has called twice America's greatest trail, the 212 mile long John Muir Trail (JMT) which starts at Yosemite Valley in California and ends at Whitney Portal after you finish getting to the summit of Mt. Whitney, the tallest mountain in the 48 contiguous US States. I just finished reading Elizabeth Wenk's 5th edition of her classic 2007, 4th edition, JMT Guide book. Both books are exactly 296 pages long (counting the introductory pages). The 5th edition book contains much more information (some written and much visual). In the previous edition she included information for both the popular direction (Southbound also called SOBO) and the less popular Northbound (also called NOBO). She migrated the 79 pages of information about the NOBO route to the electronic edition of the book that is forthcoming. This is because the vast majority of JMT hikers do the SOBO route because it starts at a low elevation (around 4,000 feet) versus starting at the end, Mt. Whitney, which is 14,505 feet high. Most hikers want to slowly acclimate to higher elevations, myself included. I have done the JMT Southbound 6 times now and will be doing my 7th consecutive annual JMT hike in the summer of 2014. She has used these freed-up 79 pages to go into more depth about doing the JMT hike. The book has new maps of the trail and now number 16 maps instead of 13. In the 4th edition, each page of a book showed one of the 13 map pages. In the 5th edition, each map page spans two book pages, so the maps are more than twice as big in the 5th edition, and they include an extra color (black/white/red vs black/white). The new maps represent the biggest improvement from the 4th edition. They were

created specifically for the book to be easy to read and show the relevant landscape on either side of the trail. They use 200 feet contour lines, versus 80 which enable one to see ridges vs valleys and determine approximate elevation levels, without being overly busy. All the place names and such stand out better with this format. Information from the book is directly plotted onto the maps. If photocopied, they'd be very readable on the trail, an extra bonus. The book now features panoramic images of what mountain peaks are seen from the top of the major JMT Passes, two images shown normally for these major passes, one looking north from the pass; the other looking south. This is what I consider the major reason to get the book if you already own the 4th edition and plan to do the trail again. She presents four panoramic images from the top of Mt. Whitney! The author explained to me she included a panorama for any pass with an open view so she skipped passes like Selden looking south or Donohue looking North, because there you are not looking straight at a "sea of peaks". Another new feature for the 5th edition is that she documents all of the JMT trail sections that are longer than 3 miles without any water or with few options to refill. You'll want to photocopy this page for your next hike! More information is given on the logistics of getting to and doing the hike, on water purification and water quality. She presents a comprehensive history of the making of the trail. She provides updated information throughout including referrals to JMT web sites and social groups that contain extensive, well cataloged information, such as mentioning twice the John Muir Trail Yahoo group which has about 3000 members. She now includes a section on Emergency Beacons and Contacts with emergency phone numbers. For those new to the JMT and Elizabeth Wenk, she has a doctorate in biology whose thesis was on the effects of rock type on alpine plant distribution and physiology. She instructs the reader on the geology, wildlife, and plant and tree life one sees during a JMT hike. Like with the 4th edition, but updated, she continues to show all the utilized camp sites, junctions, passes, and scenic waypoints of the trail. Alongside each map, she has a visual altitude profile of the hiking section involved. She covers in detail side trails and exit trails, including details and maps of the side towns near the exit trailheads. She also provides an Excel Spreadsheet (not in the book though) with included GPS files for your GPS devices containing all the tables in her book as well as additional information. Her spreadsheet is currently hosted at the John Muir Trail Yahoo Group and at the Wilderness Press website. At our JMT Yahoo Group, we have long delved deep into the logistics of how to do the JMT but while reading the 5th edition, I was pleasantly surprised to learn new details myself. For instance, we have always advised people to get to the trail, if by flying, through either San Francisco, Sacramento, Fresno, Merced, Mammoth Lakes or Reno, and we give details how to proceed on from there. Her book includes Los Angeles though and how to utilize public and private transport

from there. Impressive and indicative of the thoroughness of the author's attention to detail. I highly recommend this book to all JMT enthusiasts, including those who have done the trail and want to revisit their walk from home. Getting the panoramic images with the peaks labeled is very interesting information to show one just what you're seeing (or have seen) on the trail. If you plan on doing the trail the first time or the nth time, this book is a must. An incredible accomplishment by an incredible researcher who is very attentive and considerate to the needs of her audience.

Wow! Talk about receiving a wonderful gift--this book is it. You can stop flipping back-and-forth between map pages and trail descriptions and camp site possibilities. It is all right here in one place. The campsites on maps in each section of the trail guide provide the biggest improvement I see in the new edition. I am section hiking the JMT and chose to start in the middle and avoid the permit hassles at either end of the trail, so I very much appreciated the NOBO guide (which will still be available on line) last year. I am looking forward to using the new guide as I continue SOBO this year.

Had this in the top pocket of my pack when llama-packing most of the trail. I'd often pull it out as I'd walk to check on where I might be getting to or what I might be seeing. Although a very eager forest service ranger was bad mouthing the book (complaining it promoted illegal campsites, though that ranger's grip on the actual regulations was a bit over the top), there are really only two substantial complaints, neither fatal. One is that the book highlights particular campsites in a table at the end, and indeed some are questionable as the Forest Service has stricter rules on legal campsites than the parks; there are a large number of other places you can camp if you look (some of this is mentioned in the text). It is worth noting that the backcountry rangers in the parks have been replacing traditional fire rings with rock-lined fire pits; the presence of these well-constructed pits is a clue that a campsite is approved even if within 100' of water. The other is that the maps are a bit cruder than necessary; listing a few specific elevations on the maps might help. (Note that Sequoia has lowered the maximum elevation where you can have fires to 10,000' in the Kern backcountry, though that does not affect the campsites highlighted here). Given the tightening of permits at both ends of the Muir Trail, one could hope that future editions might expand a bit on the main alternatives to access the trail, especially the now-very-popular southern entry/exit through Horseshoe Meadows; most helpful would be a map or two for the busiest of these (the Mammoth entry points are reasonably well covered; it is the points south of the Muir Trail that could benefit most). One caution: this describes north-to-south travel. South to north is available as an online

supplement.

Great book, so incredibly helpful. We used this while planning our whole JMT trip this year, and it made everything so much more simple and manageable. It can be daunting starting to plan a trip like this! Elizabeth Wenk also posted updates to the book based on the Ranger Guides this year on a Facebook page I follow. Really good resource and follow up. I'll be taking the book on the trail with me (: Would recommend to any aspiring JMT adventurer, though if you're planning on going NOBO, be sure to buy the e-book. This book is written more for Southbound travelers.

Hiking the JMT has been on my bucket list for years. I plan on hiking it next summer and I have no doubt this guide will be helpful. It's well-written so a pretty quick read. I actually read it cover-to-cover in a couple hours on a rainy night in Mt Rainier National Park (while backpacking of course). I'd probably get the digital copy so I didn't have to bring the bulk or maybe tear pages out, but I'd definitely want some copy with me as a resource.

You can tell that E Wenk loves everything about the High Sierra from flora to fauna, from aquatic to geologic as well. She does a great job describing the minutiae in a way to draw you in and cause you to want to keep an eye out for John Muir's favorite plant or bird and encourages you to sleep at least one night under one of his favorite trees! It's not about the miles you put in... it is more about what she does not want you to miss as you are putting in the miles.

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