

CALIFORNIA GIRL SCOUT BACKPACKERS

Evolution Valley/Evolution Basin

Florence Lake Trail – Western Sierra

Itinerary provided by Girl Scouts San Diego

Created: January 2020

Distance: 36 miles, out and back (not including day hikes)

Starting Trailhead: Florence Lake

Finishing Trailhead: Florence Lake

Best Months: July - September

Permit Limit: 15 people

Preview: Both Evolution Valley and Evolution Basin are world class highlights along the iconic John Muir Trail (JMT). Approaching from the west allows for an easy, forested ascent over three days giving ample opportunity to gently acclimate. Hiking up from Goddard Canyon Junction into Evolution Valley is likely one of the most stunning trail sections in the High Sierra.

Girl Scout Progression Points: Develop itinerary-building skills for week-long trips. Build skills in bear awareness, moving camp to camp, creek crossings, true wilderness day hikes, and navigation. Day hikes into Darwin Bench or around The Hermit require advanced cross-country route-finding map, compass, and travel skills.

Key Risks:

- Kaiser Pass Road – This one-lane road is slow going. Be safe!
- Black Bear Country
- Altitude & Elevation Gain
- Weather
- Lingering Snow in Evolution Basin
- Stream Crossings – Evolution Creek can be difficult in early season. An alternate route is available upstream early season. Caution and good judgment must be exercised here.

Sample Itinerary (By Day):

1. Drive to Edison Lake. Along the way, stop in Prather to pick up your permit at the Pineridge Ranger Station. The local Vons makes outstanding sandwiches if you want to 'take away' your dinner. Spend the night camping at Jackass Meadows below Florence Lake, or catch the afternoon ferry and camp on the trailhead side of Florence Lake.
2. 8 miles to Piute Creek Crossing.

DISCLAIMER: Although California Girl Scout Backpackers attempts to keep the content contained in their itineraries up to date and accurate, it is up to each individual to check the accuracy of such information on their own. We assume no liability or make representations or warranties (expressed or implied) of any kind regarding the information provided.

3. 4 miles to Evolution/Goddard junction.
4. 6 miles to Colby Meadow; great camp sites at Darwin Creek crossing.
5. Day hike to Evolution Basin.
6. Day hike option to Darwin Bench or McGee Lakes.
7. Return along the JMT to Piute Creek Crossing.
8. Hike out to Florence Lake.

Itinerary Options:

- Evolution Basin – 12 miles round trip from Colby Meadow to Wanda Lake. The basin's beauty will leave you speechless.
- Cross-country around The Hermit (requires excellent route-finding and cross-country travel skills).
- Darwin Bench: Also requires superior route-finding and cross-country travel skills.
- Return to Florence Lake along the same route with a possible side trip to Muir Trail Ranch or Blayne Hot Springs.

Permits Needed:

- Wilderness Permit Required
 - High Sierra Ranger District (in Prather): 559-855-5355
 - Permitting Office: 29688 Auberry Rd. Prather, CA 93651
 - Permits can be reserved 1 year in advance:
<http://files.meetup.com/824870/wildernesspermit.pdf>

Resources & Safety Management:

- 24-Hour Dispatch (Emergency): 559-565-3195
- SEKI Wilderness Office: 559-565-3766
- Sequoia Kings Canyon National Park: <http://www.nps.gov/seki/planyourvisit> You will cross into Kings Canyon NP at the Piute Creek Crossing. Information specific to the remainder of your route to Evolution Basin can be found at this website.
- Florence Lake: <http://www.florence-lake.com> This is the trailhead and they provide the ferry service across the lake as well, eliminating 4 miles of trudging around the lake. Camping is available at Jackass Meadow near Florence Lake. There is also a store at the lake where you buy ferry tickets.
- Lodging/Showers: Mono Hot Springs is 15 minutes from Florence Lake.
- Guidebook: Sierra South by Kathy Morey.
- Topo Maps: 7.5 minutes – Ward Mtn., Mt. Henry, Mt. Darwin (Optional: Florence Lake, Mt. Goddard)

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Evolution Valley with Mt. Darwin and The Hermit in the Distance

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