

CALIFORNIA GIRL SCOUT BACKPACKERS

Cottonwood Lakes Basin

Horseshoe Meadows to Cottonwood Lakes Basin

Itinerary provided by Girl Scouts San Diego

Created: December 2019

Distance: 11 miles round trip

Starting Trailhead: Horseshoe Meadows (out of Lone Pine)

Finishing Trailhead: Horseshoe Meadows

Best Months: June through October

Permit Limit: 15 people

Preview: This 5-day trip into the Golden Trout Wilderness is an excellent bridge to more advanced backpacking: Easy - Moderate backpacking at elevations between 10,000 and 11,000 feet. The terrain is gentle and ideal for backpackers of all levels. Five lakes dot the Cottonwood Basin with numerous lakes located within a couple easy miles. The basin is a great place for a base camp with excellent day hike destinations nearby if conditions permit.

Girl Scout Progression Points: Learn to plan an easy itinerary to a base camp and augment with great day hikes. Learn to backpack in bear country, and cross streams safely. The gentle, open terrain allows cross-country navigation from lake to lake.

Key Risks:

- Black Bear Country
- Altitude & Elevation Gain
- Weather
- Lingering Snow (Old Army Pass is often snow-covered into July and New Army Pass can have a cornice of snow lingering into July.)

Sample Itinerary (By Day):

1. Drive to Lone Pine, pick up permit at Eastern Sierra Interagency, buy lunch and take-out dinner. Drive up to Horseshoe Meadows backpackers' "Cottonwood Lakes" Trailhead campground, relax, and acclimate overnight at 10,000 feet. (The "Cottonwood Pass" Trailhead campground is nearby, but is a different trailhead).
2. Backpack into Cottonwood Lakes Basin. Set up a base camp near Lake 3. Muir Lake also makes an excellent uncrowded base camp just east of the other lakes.

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3. Day hike and explore the basin and surrounding area. Excellent day trips include touring the Cottonwood Lake Basin towards Old Army Pass and hiking to the top of New Army Pass (elevation 12,300'). Cross-country travel is straightforward between Muir Lake and the rest of the basin.
4. Second amazing day hike.
5. Hike out, showers (Whitney Portal Store Hostel) & lunch in Lone Pine, souvenir stop at the Eastern Sierra Interagency, drive home.

Itinerary Options:

- As listed above.

Permits Needed:

- Wilderness Permit Required: Reserve a Cottonwood Lakes Trailhead permit exactly 6 months in advance for best chance of reserving. www.recreation.gov

Resources & Safety Management:

- Whitney Portal Hostel: www.whitneyportalstore.com
- Eastern Sierra Interagency (pick up permit here, 1 mile south of Lone Pine): 760-876-6200
- S. Inyo Hospital (Lone Pine): 760-876-5501
- Lone Pine Sheriff (number to call for emergencies/in-town contact): 760-876-5606



Cottonwood Lakes Basin with Mt. Langley in the Distance

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