

Your guide to *Connoisseurs'*  
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# The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

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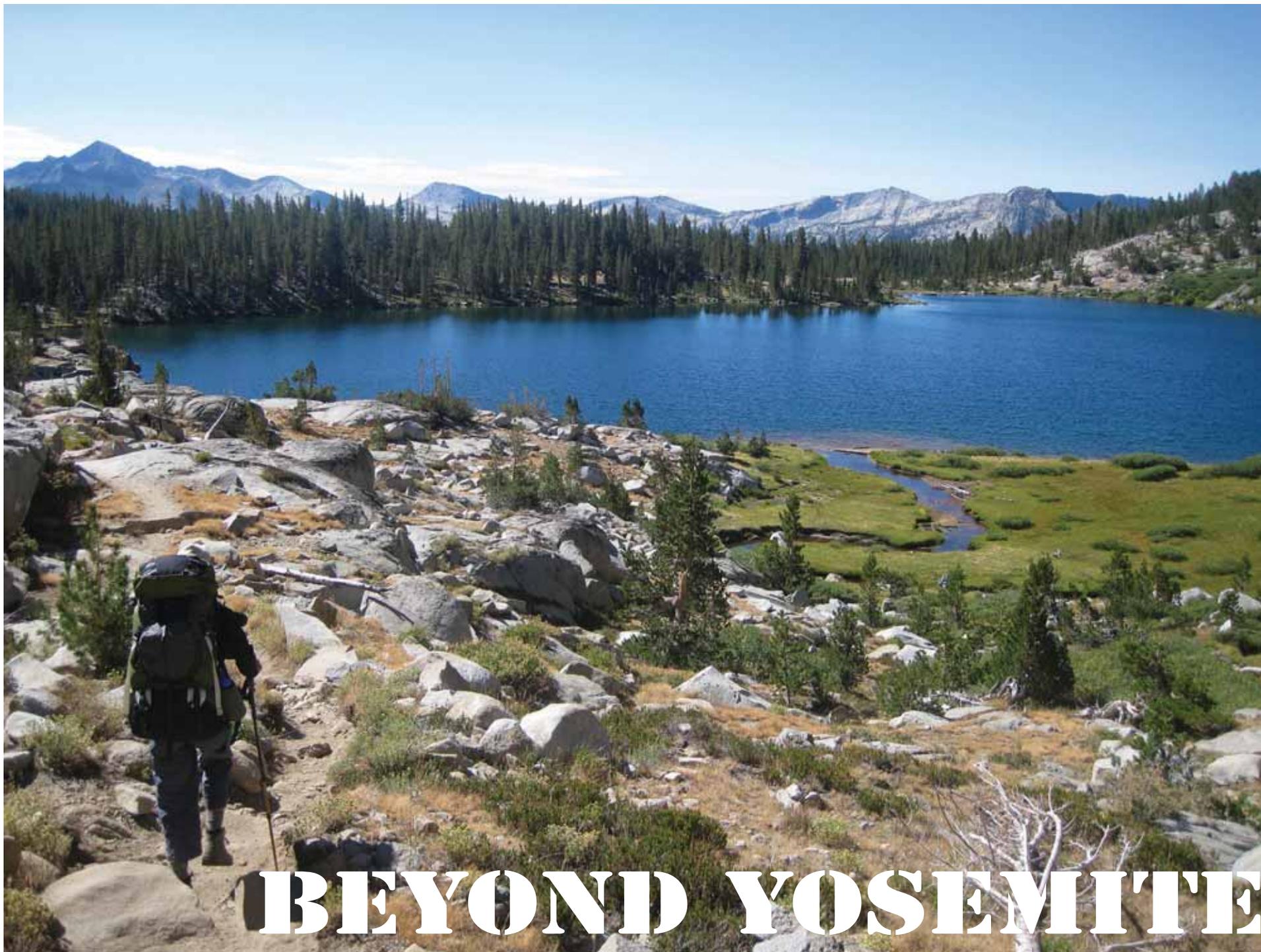


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Amazing vistas await those who explore the High Sierras on foot [See Destinations - Section 2]



# BEYOND YOSEMITE

**Ashley Holt**, who grew up in Atherton, on the trail below Selden Pass on Day 7 of the trek.

*Photo by Frances Freyberg of Menlo Park*

## Amazing vistas await those who explore the High Sierras on foot

### BY FRANCES FREYBERG

**About the author:** Frances Freyberg of Menlo Park is a photographer specializing in vibrant color portraits of people, wildlife, nature and architecture from her travels to more than 50 countries. Her photographs can be found in the Portola Art Gallery at the historic Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park, in private collections, and online at francesfreyberg.com.

### On the cover

Ashley Holt descends Koip Peak Pass on Day Two of a long-distance hike through the High Sierras. In the distance are Alger Lakes. *Photo by Frances Freyberg of Menlo Park.*

**Y**osemite National Park is a hiker's paradise, with countless trails crisscrossing the stunning granite landscape from the top of Mt. Lyell to the foothills near El Portal. But while Yosemite's day hikes are world-class, the truly stunning vistas and solitude of California's high country wilderness await those who strap on a backpack and set out on a multi-day expedition.

What lies beyond the borders of California's most visited national park? Stretching along the High Sierras, from Yosemite Valley to Mt. Whitney, the 212-mile John Muir Trail (JMT) is one of the country's most famous long-distance hikes. It passes through beautiful and diverse scenery: sun-dappled lodgepole pine and aspen forests, stark granite peaks, secluded alpine lakes, and

peaceful meadows with meandering streams.

The grandeur of the landscape is matched only by the challenge of traversing it. Backpackers ascend and descend more than 10 passes through the Sierra Nevada range, hiking at altitudes of 9,000 to 12,000 feet for most of the trip. The high point of the trail, literally and metaphorically, is 14,497-foot Mt. Whitney — the highest peak in the continental United States.

### Ups and downs on the trail

I hiked a slightly shortened version of the JMT with my friends Ashley Holt (who grew up in Atherton) and Erin Conlisk, traveling from north to south in the late summer of 2008. We started just east of Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite at the Mono/Parker Pass trailhead

and joined the JMT (which actually starts in Yosemite Valley) at Garnet Lake on the second day of our 16-day journey. We calculated our total distance at just on 200 miles.

The JMT is certainly not for the faint of heart or weak of sole. Blisters are just the beginning of a hiker's woes on the trail. Sore muscles, bruised hips, bloody noses and altitude headaches are part of the daily JMT experience. Fitfully sleeping on a 1-inch pad, eating powdered soups and power bars every meal, washing yourself and your few dirty clothes in cold mountain streams, and digging a hole for your toilet each morning probably won't appeal to the 5-star hotel crowd. And that's

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**John Muir Trail by the numbers** ■ 212 miles (200 for our modified route) ■ 16 days on the trail ■ 10 mountain passes ■ 3 good friends ■ Countless memories

**BEYOND YOSEMITE**

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ignoring the daily 12.5-mile hike, carrying a 40-50 pound pack.

On Day One, the novelty of the experience made it fun, and, of course, I still had clean clothes. On Day Two, I wondered why we hadn't chosen a nice beach holiday instead. On Day Three, having lost the trail several times and exposed my embarrassingly inadequate training, I was just about ready to call it quits.

But by Day Four, I finally started to understand why people hike the JMT over and over again. It's not until you get far enough from paved access roads that you really get to experience the vast beauty and solitude of the High Sierras. Once we passed Devil's Postpile National Monument (the last easy car access to the northern part of the trail), we usually met only 10 to 20 hikers each day. Most of the time, it felt as if we had the entire mountain range to ourselves.

Sleeping on a bed of granite admittedly isn't comfortable, but it's the thick blanket of stars overhead that makes it worthwhile. Few experiences compare to watching the sun rise over a glassy alpine lake, the surround-

ing mountains touched by the morning light, and the air so still that you can hear the fish jumping.

**More than just a pretty view**

While the scenery alone is easily worth the trip, it's the friendships, the self-confidence and the funny stories that remain long after the hike is over. Hikers will cheer one another up grueling mountain climbs, swap route and campsite recommendations, and even share their equipment and coveted snacks when needed. On the trail, acquaintances quickly become friends, and friends become family.

Finally, there's something about pushing your body and mind to the limit — relying only on your strength and your friends to see you over the next mountain pass — that's uniquely humbling and confidence-building at the same time.

For most people, hiking the JMT is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. But whether you hike it once or every summer, in full or in part, take the time to explore the Sierras on foot. It's the best way to experience California's beautiful high country wilderness. ■



*Photo by Frances Freyberg of Menlo Park*

**Peaceful Grouse Meadows** in the early morning light of Day 10 of the trek.

**More information**

■ <http://johnmuirtrail.org> ■ "John Muir Trail: The essential guide to hiking America's most famous trail" by Elizabeth Wenk and Kathy Morey ■ Go to [is.gd/cZTpP](http://is.gd/cZTpP) (case-sensitive) for a day-by-day account of our hike, with photos.

**TOWN OF WOODSIDE**

**INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR ARCHITECTURAL AND SITE REVIEW BOARD**

The Architectural and Site Review Board reviews and makes recommendations to the Director of Planning and Building on residential, site design and commercial applications.

Meetings are held on the first and third Monday of each month, 4:30 p.m. Appointment is for an unexpired term through January 2011

Interested residents may request information and applications Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.-12 noon and 1-5:00 p.m. at the Town Clerk's Office, 2955 Woodside Road, by telephone at (650) 851-6790, or through the Town's web site at [www.woodsidesidetown.org](http://www.woodsidesidetown.org). Deadline for applications is Tuesday, July 20, 2010, 5:00 p.m.

**Not much time to sign literacy 'declaration' at library**

By **Renee Batti**

*Almanac News Editor*

**M**enlo Park Library patrons have until Wednesday, July 14, to put their John Hancock on a document passing through town on its way to Washington, D.C., after traveling thousands of miles across the country: the Declaration of the Right to Literacy.

The declaration, in the form of a scroll, was scheduled to arrive at the library on July 9, although it was delayed in transit from Sacramento. But a copy of the declaration was put on display that day, and parchment paper was available to sign by all who support the declaration's assertion that all U.S. residents, "regardless of age or status, (should) be able to read and write in order to participate fully and equitably in our democracy," and that the country's educational system needs to be transformed to achieve that end.

The scroll has already been signed by thousands of people,

according to organizers of the project, who aim to present the scroll to President Obama in September.

Menlo Park Mayor Rich Cline said he intends to add his signature to the scroll, joining mayors and other elected officials from around the country. Others signing the scroll include business and church leaders, service providers, adult literacy students, volunteers, educational organizations, and community residents from all over the country, according to a press release.

The Declaration of the Right to Literacy was conceived at a 2009 convention of the Literacy Powerline, a national group working to increase literacy. The project has been endorsed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, according to the press release.

The declaration states, in part, that "the global competitiveness and economic security of our nation and well-being of our citizens are seriously held back by widespread low literacy in

the United States." Therefore, it continues, "literacy must be a national priority and an integral part of our country's public policies, supported by an educational system that equips all learners to make informed decisions, manage their lives effectively, and achieve their fullest potential and contribution."

Locally, the scroll project is sponsored by Project Read-Menlo Park and the Menlo Park Library. It has been placed on a table in the library's main hall, according to Outreach Librarian Roberta Roth, who is also on the Project Read staff.

The Menlo Park Library is at 800 Alma St.

Project Read has offered free English-language tutoring to adults in the community since 1985. The program currently has more than 100 adult learners and 90 volunteer tutors, according to Ms. Roth.

Go to [literacypowerline.com](http://literacypowerline.com) for more information about the declaration project. ■

**County to receive funds for energy retrofit job training, placement**

San Mateo County will receive \$2.5 million from the U.S. Department of Labor for the Human Services Agency's Home Energy Retrofit Occupations (HERO) project, Rep. Anna G. Eshoo,

D-Menlo Park, has announced.

The grant is part of \$13.7 million allocated by the Department of Labor for job training programs at community colleges and organizations in California, according to

a press release from Rep. Eshoo's office.

HERO provides unemployed workers — often veterans — with training, and assists with job placement.