

Enjoying the Loop

As shown in the map below, the High Sierra Loop covers an area in the heart of Yosemite National Park. The network of trails that makes up the Loop is over a hundred miles long, but you may choose combinations of trails to "tailor-make" a trip that suits your experience, preference, and time schedule. You can visit one or two of the camps in a weekend, but if you have more time, you have your choice of camps and routes. A round trip, visiting all six camps, takes about a week during which you will cover some 65 miles.

If not staying at the High Sierra Camps, you may camp at any of the many designated trail camping sites located at the Camps and elsewhere along the Loop. Using these camping sites gives you the opportunity to vary the length of a day's hiking and to enjoy many interesting and beautiful places for overnight stops.



Park Guidelines

Because of the popularity of the Loop trails, some regulations are necessary, not only to protect and preserve the fragile wilderness, but also to assure that all may share its beauty with safety and enjoyment. ● Dogs or other pets, on or off the leash, are never allowed on the trails. Neither are motorcycles or trail bikes. ● Smoking is not allowed while hiking. You may smoke while stopped, however, but be extremely careful with all fire. ● In the trail camping sites, avoid trampling the turf or small shrubs. Use only as much firewood as you need and leave a clean campsite by carrying out all litter with you. ● You may not camp just anywhere along the trail, but only in the designated trail camping sites (shown on the map inside by triangles Δ). Campfire permits are required if you are not staying at the High Sierra Camps. Permits are easily obtained at the Visitor Centers or at the ranger stations.

High Sierra Loop

This guide details all the trails between the six High Sierra Camps. The trails take you through some of the most spectacularly scenic wilderness in Yosemite National Park. The Loop trip, which can be taken a few segments at a time, offers a variety of terrain, beautiful lakes and streams, and panoramic views, all of which are a part of the wonderful feeling of Yosemite's High Country.

The table below summarizes key information on the major trails described in this guide, comparing them as to climb, length and time required. Times are those required by an average hiker going one way, including normal rest stops. You should allow extra time for meal stops, camera stops, or just enjoying the view.

Trail Facts

	Climb (feet)	Descent (feet)	Miles (one-way only)	Hours
Tuolumne Meadows Camp to Glen Aulin	+130	-930	6.8	3.5
Glen Aulin Camp to May Lake Camp	+1,840	-340	8.2	5.5
May Lake Camp to Sunrise Camp	+1,890	-1,870	8.6	6.0
Lake Tenaya to Sunrise Camp	+1,890	-680	5.0	4.5
Happy Isles to Sunrise Camp	+4,130	-680	13.1	9.0
Tuolumne Mdws. to Sunrise Camp via Cathedral Pass	+1,710	-920	7.8	5.0
Sunrise Camp to Merced Lake Camp	+340	-2,480	10.0	5.0
Happy Isles to Merced Lake Camp	+3,620	-440	13.2	8.0
Merced Lake Camp to Vogelsang Camp				
Via Fletcher Creek Trail	+3,240	-290	7.7	6.5
Via Vogelsang Pass Trail	+4,010	-1,060	8.3	7.5
Vogelsang Camp to Tuolumne Meadows Camp				
Via Rafferty Creek Trail	+240	-1,690	6.8	3.0
Via Evelyn Lake and John Muir Trails	+720	-2,170	11.6	5.5

Other Where-to-Hike Maps

You will enjoy using the other Where-to-Hike Maps on Yosemite, each covering a different area of the park:

- Happy Isles** ● *Day and overnight trips from Happy Isles.*
- Rim Trails** ● *Hiking trails north and south from Yosemite Valley.*
- Tuolumne Country** ● *Day and overnight trips from Tuolumne Meadows and Tioga Pass.*
- Tuolumne to the Postpile** ● *The John Muir Trail from Tuolumne Meadows to the Devils Postpile.*
- Snow Trails** ● *Winter trails and oversnow vehicle routes.*

Cover: Emeric Lake, near the Fletcher Creek Trail between Merced Lake and Vogelsang. —All photos by Richard Fouquet.

A WHERE-TO-HIKE MAP
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YOSEMITE

High Sierra Loop 50¢

A guide to the trails connecting the six High Sierra Camps

TUOLUMNE MEADOWS ● MAY LAKE ● SUNRISE
● GLEN AULIN ● VOGELSANG ● MERCED LAKE



The High Sierra Camps

The High Sierra Camps make it possible to enjoy the Loop trip traveling very light. At each camp, accommodations are in tent-cabins, with bedding provided. Hot meals are served family style. Even the luxury of a hot shower is available. The camps are operated by the Yosemite Park and Curry Company and are usually open between early July and early September. Because of the popularity of the

camp, advance reservations are essential.

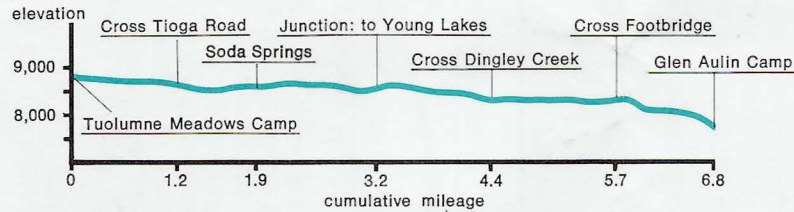
It is possible to make the trip on horseback. Groups leave Tuolumne Meadows on saddle trips of varying lengths, visiting the camps. Week-long hiking trips visiting all six camps and guided by a naturalist leave from Tuolumne Meadows. Arrangements should be made in advance with Yosemite Park and Curry Company.

Tuolumne Meadows to Glen Aulin

Follow the secondary road westward from the Tuolumne Meadows High Sierra Camp to the base of Lembert Dome and then to Soda Springs, where the trail begins. For the first three miles, the trail is more or less level, and frequently out of sight of the river. Then, the terrain becomes more rocky and the river enters a gorge. In this next stretch before crossing the footbridge, watch across the river for a miniature Devils Postpile located on the opposite bank. The formation is a lava plug, formed 9.5 million years ago. As the

lava cooled, it cracked into columns, fragments of which are visible.

Below the footbridge, the trail remains close to the river giving many close-up views of the cascades. The last falls in this series, the White Cascade, tumbles into a pool right at the High Sierra Camp. The Camp and the adjacent campsite are reached by crossing two bridges. Glen Aulin, the wooded area of aspens after which the Camp is named, is actually a mile further downstream.

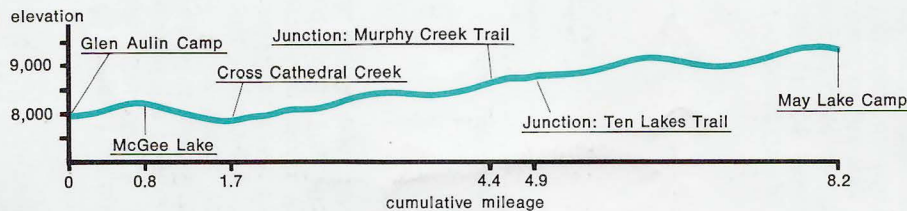


Glen Aulin to May Lake

If your time permits, a day's side trip down the Tuolumne River will bring you to several spectacular waterfalls: California, LeConte and Waterwheel. The farthest of these is 3.5 miles from Glen Aulin and about 1,300 feet lower in elevation.

From Glen Aulin, the trail to May Lake climbs to McGee Lake a mile away. From there, you descend to cross Cathedral Creek. (Overnight camping is permitted here, but late in the season Cathedral Creek may go dry.) Continuing, the trail

climbs gradually through forest, passing the junction of the Murphy Creek Trail to Lake Tenaya. After passing another junction, to the Ten Lakes area, the May Lake Trail begins a long, steep climb where the going will be slow. While ascending, you get a good view of the whole Tuolumne Meadows area, including Mt. Conness, Lembert Dome, and Lake Tenaya. There is another steep section shortly before reaching May Lake.



Seen from the High Sierra Camp, Mt. Hoffmann rises steeply above May Lake.



Vogelsang Peak, 11,516 feet high, makes a backdrop for Vogelsang Camp.

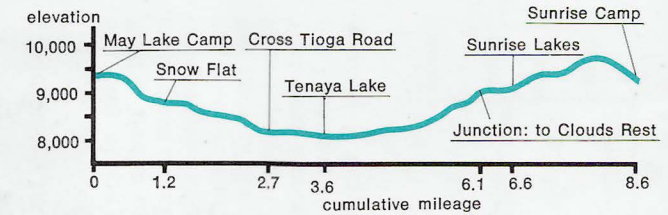


McGee Lake, on the trail between May Lake and Glen Aulin. Mt. Conness in the distance.

May Lake to Sunrise Camp

Leaving May Lake Camp, you descend 1.2 miles to Snow Flat on the old Tioga Road. Turn left, and follow the path of the old road, now abandoned and unpaved, down to the modern Tioga Road. The view from the trail includes the whole Cathedral Range, Tenaya Lake, Clouds Rest and Half Dome.

When you reach the modern Tioga Road, turn left and follow it eastbound to Tenaya Lake. At the lake take the Forsythe Trail south, climbing the wall of Tenaya Canyon in a series of switchbacks. At the top of the climb, Forsythe Trail forks with the Sunrise Lakes Trail which goes to the left. At the junction take a short walk to the right to the top of the ridge and see an unusual view of Tenaya Canyon, Half Dome, and Mount Hoffmann. Return to the junction and take the Sunrise Lakes Trail 2.5 miles east to Sunrise Camp. The Camp is located at the northwest edge of a large and beautiful meadow. The trail camping site is in a wooded area a short distance west.



Where to Start

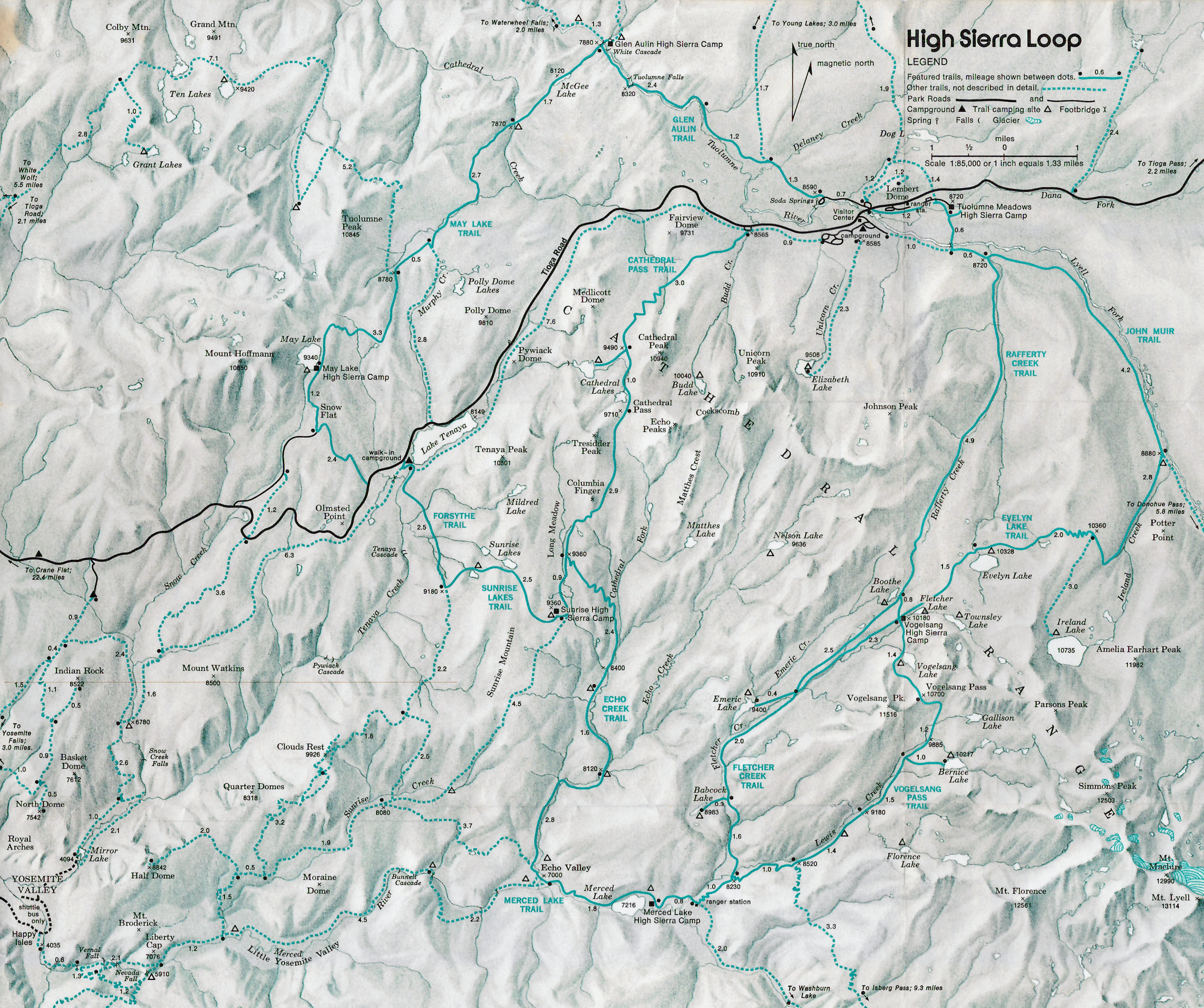
Strictly speaking, the Loop starts and ends in Tuolumne Meadows and most people making the entire circuit of all six camps will set out from there. However, there are several other points of access.

One of the easiest camps to reach is **May Lake**, only 1.2 miles from Snow Flat. Automobiles may be parked at Snow Flat which is a mile north of the Tioga Road on the May Lake turnoff west of Olmsted Point.

At Tenaya Lake, you may leave your car in the parking area at the west end of the lake and take the Forsythe and Sunrise Lakes Trails to Sunrise Camp, 5.3 miles away.

From Tuolumne Meadows, you can reach Sunrise Camp by taking the trail over Cathedral Pass to the Camp, a distance of 7.8 miles. The trail starts from the parking area at Budd Creek, 1.5 miles west of the Visitor Center.

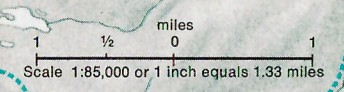
From Yosemite Valley, you can reach either Sunrise Camp or the Merced Lake Camp. Leave from Happy Isles by the Mist Trail or, if your pack is heavy, by the Merced Lake Trail. In Little Yosemite Valley, a mile above Nevada Fall, there is a junction with the Clouds Rest Trail to the left. Take this to the Sunrise Trail which leads to Sunrise Camp 13.1 miles from Happy Isles. From Little Yosemite Valley, the Merced Lake Trail follows the river upstream to the Merced Lake Camp, 13.2 miles from Happy Isles.



High Sierra Loop

LEGEND

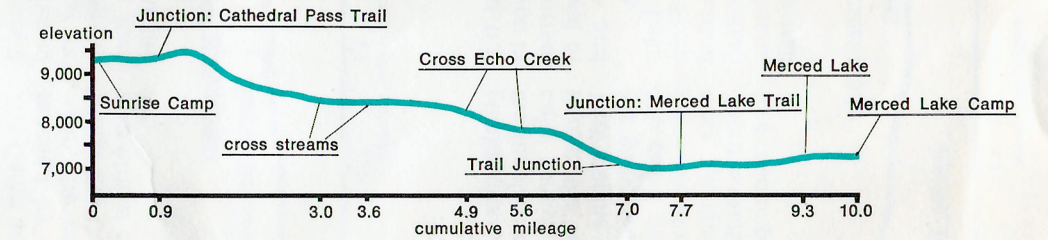
Featured trails, mileage shown between dots.
 Other trails, not described in detail.
 Park Roads and
 Campground ▲ Trail camping site △ Footbridge X
 Spring † Falls † Glacier



Sunrise Camp to Merced Lake Camp via Echo Creek Trail

From Sunrise Camp, the easiest route to Merced Lake Camp initially takes you 0.9 miles north towards Cathedral Pass. There, the trail to Merced Lake forks to the east, climbing through forest over a low saddle and then steeply down into the canyon of the Cathedral Fork of Echo Creek. While descending, you have a good view of some of the distinctive features of the Cathedral Range; Columbia Finger, Cathedral Peak, Echo Peaks, and the knife-like edge of

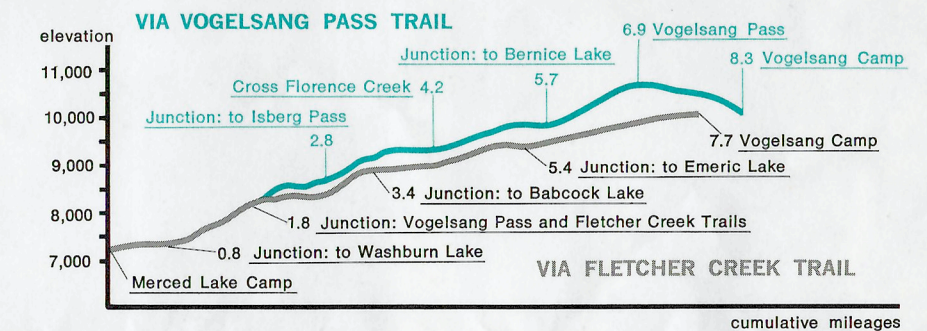
Matthes Crest. The trail parallels the Cathedral Fork and, for a mile, is almost level. Camping is allowed in this area and also at the point 1.6 miles further on where the trail crosses Echo Creek for the first time. From there, you descend almost continually, following Echo Creek down to the Merced River. From this point, it is 2.3 miles upstream along the Merced River to Merced Lake. The High Sierra Camp is located at the far end.



Merced Lake to Vogelsang

Two miles from Merced Lake, you have a choice between two very beautiful trails, the Vogelsang Pass Trail and the Fletcher Creek Trail. The Vogelsang Pass Trail, to the right, follows Lewis Creek upstream passing Florence Lake and the outlet creek from Bernice Lake. Hiking along either of these creeks will bring you to attractive lakes where camping is permitted. At the head of Lewis Canyon, the trail climbs to Vogelsang Pass, the highest point of the Loop, and a fantastic view (see photograph below). From the pass,

it is 1.4 miles downhill to Vogelsang Camp. The Fletcher Creek Trail climbs steeply from the junction near Merced Lake, staying close to Fletcher Creek most of the way to Vogelsang. Side trips to Babcock, Emeric or Boothe Lakes for scenery or camping are well worth the short extra distance. Emeric Lake is particularly beautiful. Babcock Lake is smaller and surrounded by deep forest. Boothe is also small, but more open. It is only a quarter mile from Vogelsang, but 300 feet lower in elevation.



Vogelsang to Tuolumne Meadows

There are again two choices of route for this part of the Loop. The Rafferty Creek Trail is shorter by almost four miles, following a more direct route along Rafferty Creek descending through meadows and open forest. With two miles left to go, the trail reaches the floor of the Lyell Fork Canyon and is level from there on. Follow the signs to the Tuolumne Meadows High Sierra Camp (or the Tuolumne Meadows Lodge, as it is also known). If not staying at the High Sierra

Camp, follow signs to the campground 1.3 miles west of the High Sierra Camp. The other route from Vogelsang, though longer, is more interesting and offers a variety of scenery. The trail leads past Fletcher Lake, past Evelyn Lake and down to the Lyell Fork of the Tuolumne River where the route joins the John Muir Trail. Taking this famous trail to the north, it is 5.6 miles to Tuolumne Meadows, practically level all the way.



The sweeping panorama east and south from Vogelsang Pass includes Gallison Lake, Simmons Peak, Mt. Maclure, Mt. Florence, Bernice Lake and the Clark Range (l. to r.). Vogelsang Pass (10,700 feet) is the highest point on the Loop.

