

Sequoia  
and  
Kings Canyon  
National Parks

**BACK COUNTRY**  
**TRAVEL . . . . .**





Backpacker in the High Country

N. P. S. - Peters

## TO THE WILDERNESS TRAVELER in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

Whether this is your first back country trip, or whether you are a veteran of wilderness and mountain traveling with stock, or hiking, we hope you will read this booklet thoroughly. It is designed to help make your stay in the mountains more enjoyable, and at the same time point out how you can assist the National Park Service in preserving this wilderness so that your grandchildren may also enjoy it.

In these parks one can still see and enjoy a fragment of the once vast wilderness that was America's heritage. Civilization is encroaching on the wilderness all over our land. What remains becomes increasingly precious to present-day Americans and will become even more precious in the future. The National Park Service is responsible for preserving these areas so that people for all time can have the kind and quality of enjoyment that only a wilderness can give.

Cover: Reflection Lake (National Park Service Photos)

Wilderness travel is increasing each year, and has now reached the point where camping and grazing restrictions are necessary to protect some of the more heavily used areas from permanent damage. With the increase in back country use it is more necessary than ever before that all who visit the wilderness assume their share of the responsibility in keeping these areas unspoiled and unmarked by human use. This can be accomplished ONLY if all of us work together.

## THE BACK COUNTRY

The 1,100 square miles of back country in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks that is accessible only by trail, contain the highest mountain (except Alaska), deep canyons, and some of the most rugged terrain in the United States. The Sierra Nevada Wilderness—embracing portions of Sequoia, Kings Canyon, and Yosemite National Parks; Sierra, Inyo, and Sequoia National Forests—is the largest roadless area in the United States outside of Alaska.

### TRAILS

There are about 1,000 miles of trail in the back country of these parks. Travel is by foot (backpacking) or on horseback only. Few of these trails can be called easy, and some are especially difficult because of topography and high elevations.

It would be impossible to mention all of the trails and places to go in a publication of this kind. For those of you planning your first back country trip, we suggest you get a copy of **Starr's Guide to the John Muir Trail and the High Sierra Region**. This book gives detailed descriptions of all the trails, the country, and campsites.

Back country trails are reached by 28 trail entrances so there are many trips to choose from, depending on what you want to do, and how much time you have. Unless you want an endurance contest to see how many miles you can cover, you will find it more enjoyable to take a shorter, more leisurely trip, with time to relax, fish, and just enjoy nature. Ten miles with a full pack is a good day's hike.

The key to the back country is the **John Muir Trail**, which closely follows the crest of the Sierra for 218 miles, from Yosemite Valley to Mount Whitney. Some of the most spectacular scenery in the Sierra is along this trail. The many lateral, or ap-

proach trails that join the John Muir Trail make it possible to take it by sections, entering and leaving by a different trail each trip. Suggested loop trips from the east side (Owens Valley), covering sections of the John Muir Trail are:

1. **North Lake (near Bishop) to South Lake**, via Piute Pass, Piute Creek, Evolution Valley, Muir Pass, and Bishop Pass. 53 miles.
2. **South Lake and Bishop Pass to: Taboose Pass** roadhead—43 miles and 3 passes to cross; **Sawmill Pass** roadhead—49 miles and 4 passes; **Baxter Pass** roadhead—51 miles and 4 passes; **Kearsarge Pass** roadhead — 56 miles and 5 passes.
3. **Kearsarge Pass to Whitney Portal** (near Lone Pine), via Whitney summit (14,496' elevation) —45 miles and 3 passes (two over 13,000').
4. **Shepherd, New Army, and Siberian Passes** are other east side entrances to the Sierra.

From the west side, the Evolution Valley section of the John Muir Trail is easily accessible from Florence Lake. Trails from Wishon and Courtright Reservoirs lead into the Blue Canyon, Tehipite, and Middle Fork of the Kings River country.

The **Cedar Grove** area in Kings Canyon is the starting point for several trails. The Copper Creek Trail, beginning at Road's End, goes to Granite Basin and Simpson Meadow, and a loop trip is possible with this trail and the Kennedy Pass-Hotel Creek Trail. The heavily used Bubbs Creek-Rae Lakes-Woods Creek Loop Trail starts at Road's End. The most critical grazing problems are along this route and you will probably encounter more people here than anywhere else in the back country. The Sphinx Creek Trail leads to Roaring River, where you can continue on over Elizabeth Pass to the High Sierra Trail; over Silliman Pass to Lodgepole; to the Horse Corral roadhead; or back to Cedar Grove on the Don Cecil Trail.

The **High Sierra Trail**, a close rival of the John Muir Trail for scenery, starts in the Giant Forest area and joins the John Muir Trail at Wallace Creek—48 miles. This trail offers many possibilities for side trips into the Great Western Divide country, Big Arroyo, Kern Canyon and Mount Whitney.

**Mineral King** is the starting point for several trails leading to the Big Arroyo, Hockett Meadow, Kern Canyon, and the Great Western Divide. There are several choices for loop trips starting and end-

ing here, or you can intersect the High Sierra Trail and come out at Giant Forest.

A trail from Balch Park goes to Hockett Meadow, and a trail from Quaking Aspen goes into the Kern Canyon.

### WHEN TO GO

The most favorable time of the year is between July 15 and October 1. Snow-filled passes and swollen streams can make earlier travel difficult and hazardous, or impossible. September trips are highly recommended; the crowds are gone, and the crisp days make a fall outing especially enjoyable.

### BACKPACKING

This is the most economical way to get into the back country. It is strenuous, but has many advantages as there is a greater choice of routes and campsites. You can go many places and camp in many spots that you could not with animals, because of grazing problems.

Proper equipment, with maximum utility and minimum weight, good physical condition, and good

### Family Backpacking Near Kearsarge Lakes

N. P. S. - Peters





planning are the keys to enjoyable back packing. The most important equipment items will be your pack and sleeping bag. A down sleeping bag, comfortable to plus 25° is ideal.

Menus for back country packing trips require careful planning. They must be nutritious, simple, substantial, light in weight and pretested at home. They should be easily prepared with minimum equipment. Many of the new dehydrated foods and freeze-dried meats make it possible to have delicious well-balanced meals with a minimum of weight. Many basic dehydrated food items are available at any grocery store, and specialized items are found in sporting goods and mountaineering supply stores. Backpackers can, and should, get by with 1½ pounds of food (dry weight) per day. Experienced hikers leave canned and bottled foods at home; they are heavy, and you are required to carry out the empty cans, bottles and foil when you leave. It is wise to repackage items such as sugar, cereal, dry milk, etc., in plastic bags; it saves weight and they fit into your pack better. Don't count on eating fish; you may go hungry if you do.

Don't load yourself down with heavy, unnecessary items and gadgets, or you trip will be an ordeal instead of the enjoyable outing it should be. Leave your axe and heavy frying pan at home, along with the kitchen sink. There is no need to carry water in most of the Sierra. Take only items you really need and leave behind all in the "might come in handy" category. With proper equipment and food, your total load for a week should be under thirty pounds.

Get in shape by taking week end hikes with full pack, and exercising; even then, take it easy the first day or two out.

The booklet **Backpacking in the Sierra Nevada**, by William C. Jones, contains excellent advice on equipment, foods, planning and suggested hikes.

## STOCK TRAVEL

There are several types of stock trips: 1) walking, with a burro or mule carrying your gear; 2) spot trips, where you hire a packer just to pack you into a base camp and then come back and get you at the end of your stay; 3) touring trips, where the packer and stock are with you for the entire trip. The first two make it possible for families with small children, or those who can't carry the loads required in back packing, to enjoy the wilderness at a minimum cost.

1. **Walking mules and burros:** You do your own packing and are responsible for the welfare of the animals. The packer you rent from will help you get started and then you are on your own.

The load limit on burros is generally 75 pounds, and 150 pounds for a mule. Lightweight equipment, and at least partial use of dehydrated foods will enable you to get by with fewer animals.

Some packers advocate hobbles; others recommend picketing the stock to keep them from wandering away when they are grazing, and at night. **Picketing is an undesirable practice**, as it can cause serious damage to the fragile meadows. Occasionally, **some areas have to be closed to picketing**, and sometimes to all grazing, because of picketing abuses. If you **must** picket, please follow these common sense rules and practices:

- a. It is not necessary to picket all of your animals. If you picket only the "lead" animal the rest will normally stay close by. The packer will tell you which one to picket.
  - b. Move the picket pin or stake at least once every 8 hours. This reduces meadow damage and the animal gets enough to eat.
  - c. Pull up your picket pin when you leave so later parties will not graze the same circle. Don't picket where someone else has already done so. You will save considerable time and work by getting a metal corkscrew "dog-stake" at a pet shop and using it for a picket pin.
  - d. **Don't picket on the shores of lakes or streams**, or where the meadow is wet or boggy. The worst damage can occur there.
  - e. Avoid heavily used campsites and popular small meadows.
  - f. Plan your trip to move to a new area at least every other day. **Some areas will be limited to one day's grazing, and some may be closed to all grazing.**
2. **Spot trips** are the most desirable of all stock trips from the conservation standpoint, since the grazing pressure on the meadows is greatly reduced. It is also the easiest way to enjoy the

wildernesses and you have more time to relax, fish or explore, and have fewer problems than you do with most moving trips, either backpacking or with burros.

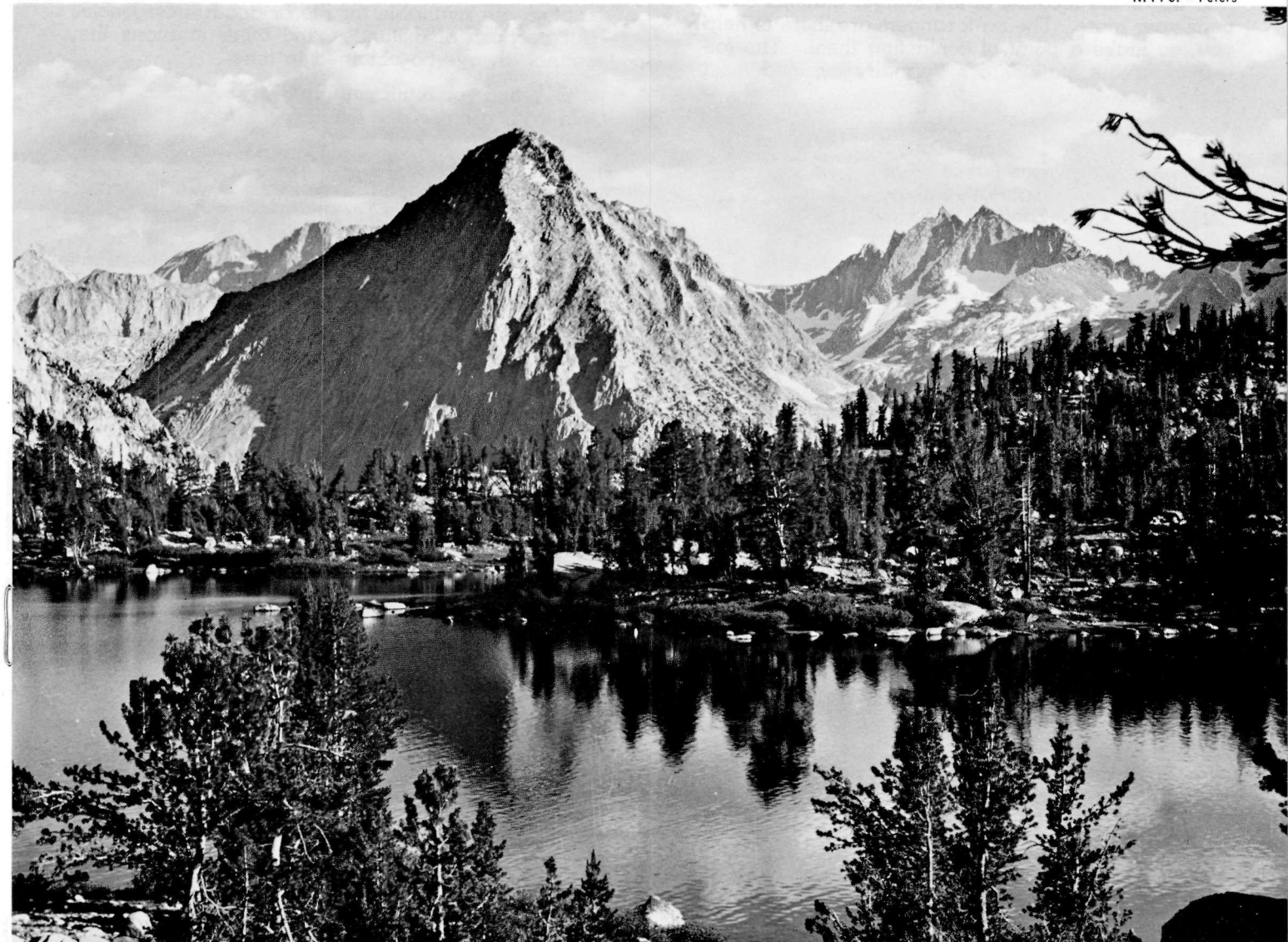
You can either ride with the packer to your base camp, or hike in and have your food and equipment packed in. If you decide to be only packed in and hike out with all your gear, remember you have to carry out all cans and bottles, so consider using dehydrated food.

On a spot trip it is YOU, not the packer, who is responsible for leaving a clean camp. If you want to spend most of your time in one place, be spotted in—don't rent burros.

If you are planning a stock trip, write for the list of pack stations authorized to pack and rent walking stock in these parks, and also for a copy of the grazing regulations and restrictions. Reservations should be made with the packer as early as possible.

Bullfrog Lake and East Vidette Peak

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## SUGGESTIONS - PRACTICES - MANNERS

1. **Know as much as possible about where you are going and what you are up against.** Obtain a good guide book such as **Starr's Guide**, and the U.S.G.S. topographic maps of the area into which you are going. **Going Light with Backpack or Burro** is highly recommended, as it contains valuable information on equipment, camping techniques, food and cooking, and the use, care, and packing of burros. These publications are available from the Sequoia Natural History Association, Three Rivers, California.

2. **Know the location of the Ranger Stations on or near your route.** The park rangers are there to help you, so make a point of contacting them. The following ranger stations are normally manned most of the summer:

McClure Meadow  
Le Conte Canyon  
Rae Lakes  
Charlotte Lake  
Scaffold Meadow  
(Roaring River)

Bearpaw Camp  
Hockett Meadow  
Crabtree Meadow  
Kern Canyon  
(Lewis Camp)

3. **Conserve wood** by keeping fires as small as possible. Firewood is scarce in many areas above 9,500' elevation. If you are traveling with stock it would be wise to bring a gasoline stove.

4. **Build your fires where others have had fires** in already established fireplaces. This conserves clean camping space and does not make new scars.

5. **Don't litter the trail.** While traveling, put your gum, candy, and cigarette wrappers in your pocket to start your next campfire.

6. Where there are no toilet facilities, go well away from campsites, trails, lakes, or streams. **Dig your latrine and cover it when leaving.**

7. **Burn your garbage.** Leaving food and garbage encourages bears and other animals to raid campsites. Do not bury it, or cans, as animals will dig it up, leaving an unsightly mess.

8. Enjoy the adventures of a wilderness experience. **Do not take unnecessary chances. Take care of your health and don't overdo.** A normally

minor illness can become serious in the high elevations; a cold can quickly turn to pneumonia. If you become ill, try to get out of the mountains, or at least to a lower elevation, while you can still travel. A summer rarely passes without several people becoming seriously ill or injured in the back country. This not only ruins the trip for the person and his companions, but it is expensive. The park does not own a helicopter, but can arrange for one in serious emergencies when evacuation is impossible by other means. Commercial helicopters are usually available—at \$130 or more an hour—and the costs must be borne by the group or individual. Military helicopters are available for life or death emergencies, but because of distances and other missions they cannot always be obtained in time.

9. **When you think you are lost, keep calm.** If you told your companions where you were going someone will soon be looking for you.

- Sit down. Try to figure out where you are. Use your head, not your legs. Do not panic.
- At night, in fog or storm, stop at once and make camp in a sheltered place. Gather plenty of dry fuel and build a fire in a safe place. (Put it out when you leave.)
- Three of anything — shouts, smokes, fires, etc — is a sign of distress. If seen or heard help will soon be on the way.

10. **It is never wise to travel alone;** but if you must, stick to the frequently used trails in case you become sick or injured.

11. With the increase in back country travel, it is more important than ever before that everyone **adhere to the rules of common courtesy and good mountain manners.** A wilderness outing can offer many things; but to most people it is the solitude, peace, and quiet that is most important. Yelling and unnecessary noise are out of place in the wilderness. Don't crowd the other fellow by camping beside him. Chances are if he wanted company he would have camped in one of the front country automobile campgrounds.

12. If you are hiking, use your freedom of movement and **avoid camping in the more popular and accessible areas** that large groups and spot parties must use, such as Rae Lakes and Crabtree Meadow.

13. **Be prepared for the weather.** Summer weather in the High Sierra is remarkably pleasant by mountain standards. You should, however, have a light-

weight ground cloth or some plastic that can be rigged for a tent if it should rain. Daytime temperatures are often in the upper seventies, but the nights are cold, occasionally down to freezing and below.

14. **Bring a first aid kit and a good supply of preventives** such as sunburn lotion (even if you have a tan), mosquito repellent, and something for chapped lips.

15. **Dark glasses are advisable** as there are many snowfields and large expanses of light-colored granite.

16. **Be alert for poison oak and rattlesnakes in the**

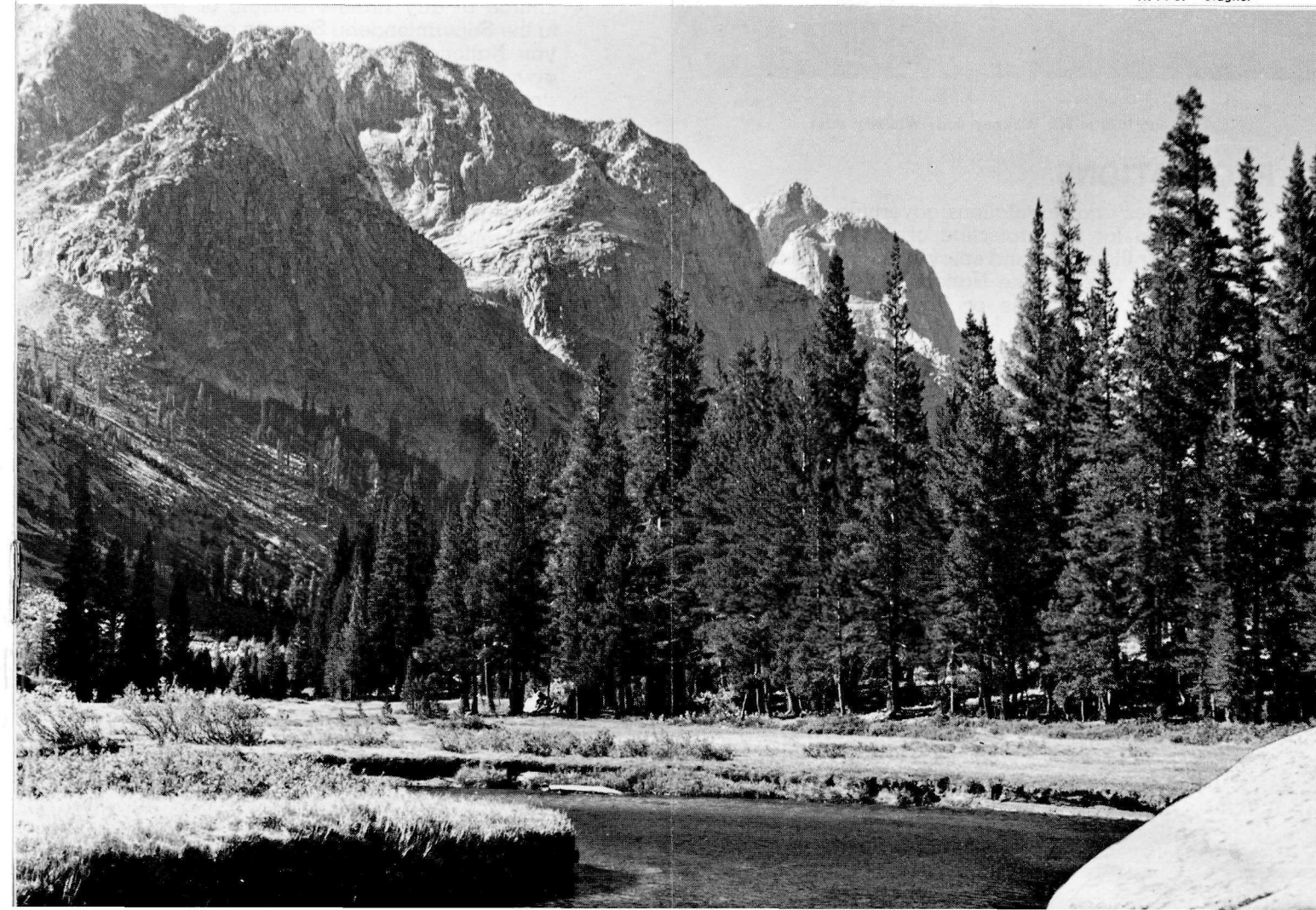
**lower elevations**—poison oak up to 5000 feet and rattlesnakes up to 9000', and occasionally higher—so be alert.

17. **Sign all trail registers.** It is from these travel figures that we determine which trails should have priority for maintenance and where ranger stations should be located. Signing all registers will also help us find you if you become lost or missing.

18. **For any further information** on back country or planning wilderness trips in these parks, please write Superintendent, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Three Rivers, California.

LeConte Canyon

N. P. S. - Stagner





N. P. S. - Jones

On the trail to Mt. Whitney near Whitney Pass

## REGULATIONS

The Rules and Regulations governing the Parks are designed for the protection of the natural features, and for the safety and enjoyment of the visitors. Congress has directed the National Park Service to enforce these regulations or laws, and a United States Commissioner is stationed at Park Headquarters. The regulations briefed below are especially applicable to wilderness travel:

1. **The use or even carrying of guns is prohibited.**
2. **Dogs or cats are not permitted** in any of the back country of the Parks—not even on leash.
3. **Motorcycles, or other motor vehicles, or bicycles, boats, or portable motors such as power plants and chain saws, are not permitted** in the back country.
4. **Destruction, injury, defacement, or removal or disturbance in any manner of public property or any natural features or object is prohibited.**

This includes:

- a. The shooting or molesting of **any** bird or wild animals, or the picking of flowers or other plants.
- b. The cutting, blazing, marking, driving nails in, or otherwise damaging of growing trees or standing snags. (No pine boughs or ferns for beds!)
- c. The writing, carving, or painting of name or other inscription anywhere.

- d. The destruction, defacement or moving of signs. This can cause other travelers considerable inconvenience.
5. **Collecting specimens of plants, minerals, animal life, or other natural or historical objects is prohibited without written authorization**, obtained in advance, from the Superintendent. Permits are not issued for personal collections.
6. **You are required to clean your camp before you leave.** Tin cans, foil, glass, worn out or useless gear, and other unburnables must be carried out of the mountains with you.
7. **Campfire permits are required for all back country travel.** They can be obtained free of charge at any Ranger Station, or by writing to the Superintendent, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Three Rivers, California, giving your itinerary, dates, number in party, and number of animals if using stock. All travelers must comply with conditions stated on permit.
8. **Smoking is not permitted while traveling** below the 7,000 foot elevation. (You may **stop** and smoke in a safe place.)
9. **California fishing regulations apply to these Parks.** A California license is required of all persons 16 years old, or older, who fish.
10. **Keep the waters clean.** Your activities must be governed to prevent the pollution of lakes and streams. Do not use soap directly in the water source, and don't throw wash water, fish entrails, garbage, or trash in the water.
11. **Pack outfits and saddle horses have the right-of-way on trails.** Hikers should get completely off the trail and remain quiet until the stock has passed.
12. **Loose herding of pack and saddle animals on park trails is prohibited**, except certain designated hazardous trails. If you are bringing your own stock into the Parks, write for a copy of the grazing and loose herding regulations.
13. **Taking short cuts on switchbacks is prohibited.** Keeping to the trails is safer, easier and prevents harmful erosion.

### EDITION OF 1964

This booklet has been published as a project of the Sequoia Natural History Association in cooperation with the National Park Service, to assist in protecting and preserving our National Parks by helping people use them wisely.

For sales publications and topographic maps pertaining to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, write to Sequoia Natural History Association, Three Rivers, California.

Carl & Irving--Tulare