

# John Muir

## Short biography

**John Muir** (1838 – 1914), also known as “John of the Mountains”, was a Scottish-American naturalist, author, environmental philosopher and early advocate of preservation of wilderness in the United States. He was born in Dunbar, East Lothian, Scotland. In 1849, Muir's family immigrated to the United States.

Although he spent the majority of his life in America, Muir never forgot his roots in Scotland. He held a strong connection with his home country and Scottish identity throughout his life and was frequently heard talking about his childhood spent amid the East Lothian countryside. He returned to Scotland on a trip in 1893, where he met one of his Dunbar schoolmates and visited the places of his youth that were etched in his memory. He also never lost his strong Scottish accent after many years living in America.

When he was 22 years old, John Muir enrolled at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, paying his own way for several years. Records showed his class status as "irregular gent" and, even though he never graduated, he learned enough geology and botany to inform his later wanderings.

In September 1867, Muir undertook a walk of about 1,000 miles (1,600 km) from Kentucky to Florida, which he recounted in his book *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*. He had no specific route chosen, except to go by the "wildest, leafiest, and least trodden way I could find".

## Writing becomes his work



J.Muir, circa 1875

Muir's friend, zoologist Henry Fairfield Osborn, writes that Muir's style of writing did not come to him easily, but only with intense effort. "Daily he rose at 4:30 o'clock, and after a simple cup of coffee laboured incessantly . . . he groans over his labours, he writes and rewrites and interpolates." Osborn notes that he preferred using the simplest English language, and therefore admired above all the writings of Carlyle, Emerson and Thoreau. "He is a very firm believer in Thoreau and starts by reading deeply of this author." His secretary, Marion Randall Parsons, also noted that "composition was always slow and laborious for him. . . . Each sentence, each phrase, each word, underwent his critical scrutiny, not once but twenty times before he was satisfied to let it stand." Muir often told her, "This business of writing books is a long, tiresome, endless job." During his career as writer and while living in the mountains, Muir continued to experience the "presence of the divine in nature," writes Holmes.

His letters, essays, and books telling of his adventures in nature, especially in the Sierra Nevada of California, have been read by millions. His activism helped to preserve the Yosemite Valley, Sequoia National Park and other wilderness areas. The Sierra Club, which he founded, is a prominent American conservation organization. The 340 km John Muir Trail, a hiking trail in the Sierra Nevada, was named in his honour. Other such places include Muir Woods National Monument, Muir Beach, John Muir College, Mount Muir, Camp Muir and Muir Glacier. In Scotland, the John Muir Way, a 130-mile-long route, was named in honour of him.

## Of Nature and Theology

Muir believed that to discover truth, he must turn to what he believed were the most accurate sources. In his book, *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* (1913), he writes that during his childhood,

his father made him read the Bible every day. Muir eventually memorized three-quarters of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament. Muir's father read Josephus's *War of the Jews* to understand the culture of first-century Palestine, as it was written by an eyewitness, and illuminated the culture during the period of the New Testament. But as Muir became attached to the American natural landscapes he explored, Williams notes that he began to see another "primary source for understanding God: the Book of Nature." According to Williams, in nature, especially in the wilderness, Muir was able to study the plants and animals in an environment that he believed "came straight from the hand of God, uncorrupted by civilization and domestication." As Tallmadge notes, Muir's belief in this "Book of Nature" compelled him to tell the story of "this creation in words any reader could understand." As a result, his writings were to become "prophecy, for [they] sought to change our angle of vision."

Muir biographer Steven Holmes notes that Muir used words like "glory" and "glorious" to suggest that light was taking on a religious dimension: "It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the notion of glory in Muir's published writings, where no other single image carries more emotional or religious weight," adding that his words "exactly parallels its Hebraic origins," in which biblical writings often indicate a divine presence with light, as in the burning bush or pillar of fire, and described as "the glory of God."

### Seeing Nature as home

Muir & family, circa 1888



Not surprisingly, Muir's deep-seated feeling about nature as being his true home led to tension with his family at his home in Martinez, California. He once told a visitor to his ranch there, "This is a good place to be housed in during stormy weather, . . . to write in, and to

raise children in, but it is not my home. Up there," pointing towards the Sierra Nevada, "is my home."

Finally settling in San Francisco, Muir immediately left for a week-long visit to Yosemite, a place he had only read about. Seeing it for the first time, Muir notes that "He was overwhelmed by the landscape, scrambling down steep cliff faces to get a closer look at the waterfalls, whooping and howling at the vistas, jumping tirelessly from flower to flower." Theodore Roosevelt about John Muir: "I was interested and a little surprised to find that, unlike John Burroughs, John Muir cared little for birds or bird songs, and knew little about them. The hermit-thrushes meant nothing to him, the trees

and the flowers and the cliffs everything." He later returned to Yosemite and worked as a shepherd for a season.

Muir was a loyal, dedicated husband, and father of two daughters, "his heart remained wild," writes Marquis. His wife understood his needs, and after seeing his restlessness at the ranch, she would sometimes "shoo him back up" to the mountains. On some occasions he took his daughters with him. Muir often used the term "home" as a metaphor for both nature and his general attitude toward the "natural world itself," notes Holmes. He often used domestic language to describe his scientific observations, as when he saw nature as providing a home for even the smallest plant life: "the little purple plant, tended by its Maker, closed its petals, crouched low in its crevice of a home, and enjoyed the storm in safety." Muir also saw nature as his own home, as when he wrote friends and described the Sierra as "God's mountain mansion." He considered not only the mountains as home, however, as he also felt a closeness even to the smallest objects: "The very stones seem talkative, sympathetic, brotherly. No wonder when we consider that we all have the same Father and Mother." In his later life, Muir devoted most of his time to the preservation of the Western forests. He petitioned the U.S. Congress for the National Park bill that was passed in 1890, establishing **Yosemite National Park**. The spiritual quality and enthusiasm toward nature expressed in his writings inspired readers, including presidents and congressmen, to take action to help preserve large nature areas. He is today referred to as the "Father of the National Parks" and the National Park Service has produced a short documentary about his life.

John Muir has been considered "an inspiration to both Scots and Americans". Muir's biographer, Steven J. Holmes, believes that Muir has become "one of the patron saints of twentieth-century American environmental activity," both political and recreational. As a result, his writings are commonly discussed in books and journals, and he is often quoted by nature photographers such as Ansel Adams. "Muir has profoundly shaped the very categories through which Americans understand and envision their relationships with the natural world," writes Holmes. Muir was noted for being an ecological thinker, political spokesman, and religious prophet, whose writings became a personal guide into nature for countless individuals, making his name "almost ubiquitous" in the modern environmental consciousness. According to author William Anderson, Muir exemplified "the archetype of our oneness with the earth", while biographer Donald Worster says he believed his mission was "...saving the American soul from total surrender to materialism." On April 21, 2013, the first ever John Muir Day was celebrated in Scotland, which marked the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, paying homage to the conservationist.

### **Establishing Yosemite National Park**

Muir threw himself into the preservationist role with great vigour. He envisioned the Yosemite area and the Sierra as pristine lands. He thought the greatest threat to the Yosemite area and the Sierra was domesticated livestock—especially domestic sheep, which he referred to as "hoofed locusts". In June 1889, the influential associate editor of *Century* magazine, Robert Underwood Johnson, camped with Muir in Tuolumne Meadows and saw firsthand the damage a large flock of sheep had done to the grassland. Johnson agreed to publish any article Muir wrote on the subject of excluding livestock from the Sierra high country. He also agreed to use his influence to introduce a bill to Congress to make the Yosemite area into a national park, modelled after **Yellowstone National Park**.

### **Native Americans**

Muir's attitude toward Native Americans evolved over his life. His earliest encounters were with the Winnebago Indians in Wisconsin (his first home in USA), who begged for food and stole his favourite horse. In spite of that, he had a great deal of sympathy for their "being robbed of their lands and pushed ruthlessly back into narrower and narrower limits by alien races, who were cutting off their means of livelihood." His early encounters with the Paiute in California left him feeling ambivalent

after seeing their lifestyle, which he described as "lazy" and "superstitious". Ecofeminist philosopher Carolyn Merchant has criticized Muir, believing that he wrote disparagingly of the Native Americans he encountered in his early explorations. Later, after living with Indians, he praised and grew more respectful of their low impact on the wilderness, compared to the heavy impact by European-Americans. Muir was given the Stickeen (Muir's spelling, coastal tribe) name "Ancoutahan" meaning "adopted chief".

### Legacy

During his lifetime John Muir published over 300 articles and 12 books. He co-founded the Sierra Club, which helped establish a number of national parks after he died and today has over 2.4 million members.

Muir has been called the "patron saint of the American wilderness" and its "archetypal free spirit." As a dreamer and activist, his eloquent words changed the way Americans saw their mountains, forests, seashores, and deserts, said nature writer Gretel Ehrlich. He not only led the efforts to protect forest areas and have some designated as national parks, but his writings presented "human culture and wild nature as one of humility and respect for all life."

### Tributes and honours

California celebrates John Muir Day on April 21 each year. Muir was the first person honoured with a California commemorative day when legislation signed in 1988 created John Muir Day, effective from 1989 onward. Muir is one of three people so honoured in California, along with **Harvey Milk Day** and **Ronald Reagan Day**. East Lothian in Scotland also celebrates John Muir day.

The following places are named after Muir:

Mount Muir 1 mile south of Whitney

Mount Muir (elevation 4688') in Angeles National Forest north of Pasadena, California

Muir's Peak next to Mount Shasta, California (also known as Black Butte)

Muir Glacier, Alaska

John Muir Trails in California, Tennessee, Connecticut, and Wisconsin

John Muir Wilderness (southern and central Sierra Nevada)

Muir Pass Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, the divide at 11,955' above sea level, between Evolution Creek and Middle Fork of Kings River

Muir Woods National Monument just north of San Francisco, California

Muir Beach, California

John Muir National Historic Site in Martinez, California

Camp Muir in Mount Rainier National Park

John Muir College, one of the six undergraduate colleges of University of California, San Diego

John Muir Highway - a section of California State Route 132 between Coulterville and Smith Station at California State Route 120. This road roughly follows part of the route Muir took on his first walk to Yosemite.<sup>[68]</sup>

The main-belt asteroid 128523 Johnmuir

John Muir died of pneumonia in Los Angeles, California. His CV includes the following occupations: Engineer (he almost lost his eye due to an industrial accident), naturalist, philosopher, writer, botanist and geologist.

## My contacts with the name Muir

1.



In 1974, when I was a student at Cheshire College of Agriculture, my fellow student was Hector Muir from Scotland. Hector was a big, strong young man (standing on the left), but with no serious interest in any sport or natural science. I wonder, was he related to JM?

2.



In 1999, when with a group of keen travellers, we climbed the Mount Whitney where very briefly we followed **John Muir Trail**. The summit of Mount Whitney is the southern terminus of the John Muir Trail. Our party took two days to climb to the top of Mt. Whitney (4421m). This photo shows the way to Mt. Whitney. On the way up, there are two camps and we stayed at one of them for one night. On our way down, we did it in one go.

3.

In 2013, when travelling with VP towards Yosemite NP, we approached Sierra Nevada and were looking for a place to stay for the night. The Mt. Whitney was so close to our route, that I vaguely remembered parking there in 1999, so I chose the same car park below Mt. Whitney as then. I knew there were so many cars there, because of the numerous climbers going up to the mountain, that we would not be even noticed staying in our car over night.

Driving slowly and looking for a suitable spot, we approached a small group of people, when a young woman from that party, walked directly to our car. As she approached I stopped, opened the window, and in the twilight, I saw a happy and smiling face. She had asked me: "Are coming for us?" I said "No, I am not." But she still continued to smile. I just had to ask her "Why do you still smile when I am obviously not the person you expect?" She replied "We have just done a three weeks long walk on John Muir Trail, and are waiting for a car to take us back home."

Well, if I'd ever seen a happy face, that was it! So if this was what a walk on JMT does to people isn't that marvellous!

4.



During our 2013 visit to Yosemite NP, I went to an evening lecture presented by an actor playing John Muir. The National Park has this wonderful facility called "The Theatre", where they present various programmes that might interest the visitors (by the way, I had noticed it in other NP in USA). At the time we were camping there this man, who played a part of John Muir all over the States, was there and giving a talk. He was

dressed like J. Muir and he spoke like J. Muir (in his Scottish accent). It was an unforgettable evening for two reasons.

For a start, I met a friendly American and we had a jolly good discussion while we waited for the show. I told him a joke about an American tourist in Mexico, while he responded



with this question: "What's better, to go to a church service, sit there and think of fishing and mountains, or to go fishing and walking into the mountains, and think of God?" The actual performance by that actor was simply entertainment, like for the kids. A bit of showmanship, I thought. It was all right, there were children there, so it was meant to be a family show.

5.



When at Yosemite NP I bought a beautifully illustrated book by John Muir MY FIRST SUMMER IN THE SIERRA. And finally this year, 2016, on our visit to Yellowstone National Park, I had bought my second book by J. Muir - THE YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK. Also, I bought this lovely post card with a quote from J. Muir.

### Some quotes from the above mentioned two books

#### THE YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK - by John Muir

Editor's preface by William R. Jones, *former Chief Park naturalist, Yosemite national Park*

"**The Yellowstone National Park** was penned by John Muir, the explorer-naturalist, in 1898. It was then published as an article in *Atlantic Monthly* and again in 1901 as a chapter in Muir's book *Our National Parks*. It may well be his most literary piece of nature writing. At least it does contain his most-often quoted expression, in bold type below within its longer version:

*"Walk away quietly in any direction and taste the freedom of the mountaineer...**Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves. As age comes on, one source of enjoyment after another is closed, but Nature's sources never fail.**"*

Californians naturally claim Muir, as that state was his adopted home, as was its Yosemite and the Sierra Nevada his stomping ground for many years. There is where he developed and practiced his skills as geologist and botanist plus mountaineer and writer as well as conservationist. And so it will likely come as a surprise – even a shock and disappointment – to many persons that this favourite quotation was inspired not by Yosemite of the Sierra Nevada but by the Yellowstone of the Rocky Mountains.

Muir said he wasn't ever satisfied with his writing until he had read it aloud and it sounded right. Try that yourself and read aloud those passages that appeal to you most. You'll find some almost musical in composition, and will enjoy them-and the world they portray-still more. And that is why Muir lived and wrote: to share the joys he found outdoors. You'll see his purpose was not in vain, for this little booklet of his writings will help you enjoy Yellowstone, or nature anywhere, still more.

*William R. Jones*

Well, because I am getting on, I personally like the last part of his quote: "**As age comes on, one source of enjoyment after another is closed, but Nature's sources never fail.**"

Here are some quotes from this lovely little book (notice how colourfully John Muir writes):

The air is electric and full of ozone, healing, reviving, exhilarating, kept pure by frost and fire, while scenery is wild enough to awaken the dead. It is a glorious place to grow in and rest in; camping on

the shores of the lakes, in the warm openings of the woods golden with sunflowers, on the banks of streams, by the snowy waterfalls, beside the exciting wonders or away from in scallops of the mountain walls sheltered from every wind, on smooth silky lawns enamelled with gentians, up in the fountain hollows of the ancient glaciers between the peaks, where cool pools and brooks and gardens of precious plants charmingly embowered are never wanting, and good rough rocks with every variety of cliff and scaur are invitingly near for outlooks and exercise (*note: "scaur"- precipitous craggy part of mountain side*).

However orderly your excursions or aimless, again and again amid the calmest, stillest scenery you will be brought to a standstill hushed and awe-stricken before phenomena wholly new to you.

Most of the dangers that haunt the unseasoned citizens are imaginary; the real ones are perhaps too few rather than too many for his good. The bears that always seem to spring up thick as trees, in fighting, devouring attitudes before the frightened tourist whenever a camping trip is proposed, are gentle now, finding they are no longer likely to be shot; and the rattlesnakes, the other big irrational dread of over-civilised people, are scarce here, for most of the park lies above snake-line. Fear nothing. No town park you have been accustomed to saunter is so free from danger as the Yellowstone.

...All these and a host of others call you to camp. You may be a little cold some nights, on mountain tops above the timber-line, but you will see the stars, and by and by you can sleep enough in your town bed, or at least in your grave. Keep awake while you may in mountain mansions so rare.

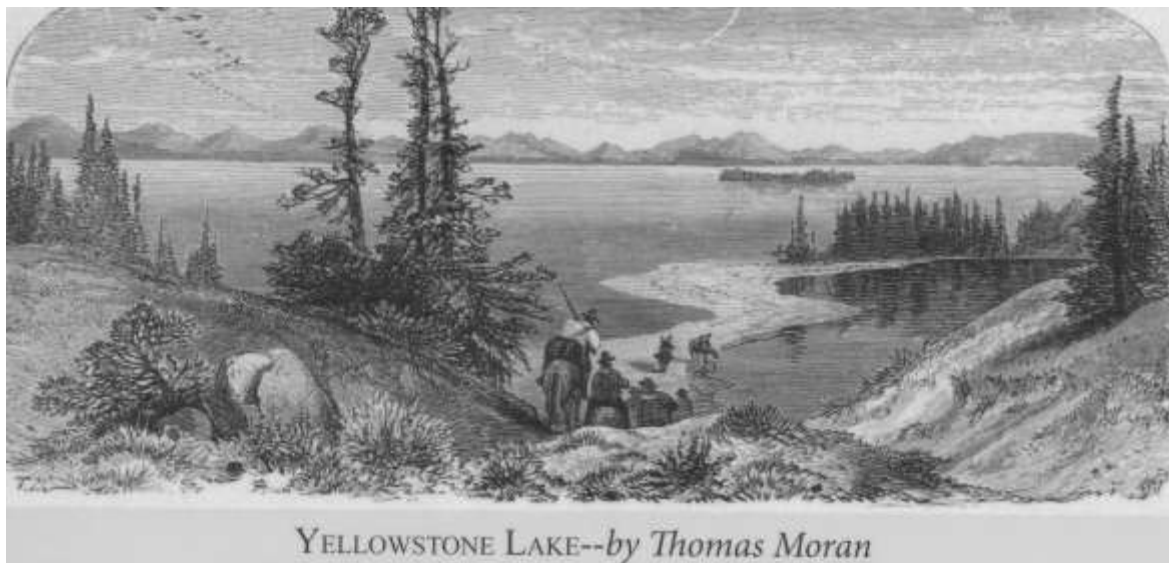
Perhaps you have already said that you have seen enough for your life time. But before you go away you should spend at least one day and night on a mountaintop, for a last general, calming, settling view.

A thousand Yellowstone wonders are calling, "Look up and down and round about you!"

The sun is setting; long violet shadows are growing out over the woods from mountains along the western rim of the park; the Absaroka range is baptized in the divine light of the alpenglow, and its rocks and trees are transfigured. Next to the light of dawn on high mountain tops, the alpenglow is the most impressive of all the terrestrial manifestations of God.

Now comes the gloaming [evening twilight]. The alpenglow is fading into early, murky gloom, but not to let your town habits draw you away to the hotel. Stay on this good fire mountain and spend the night among the stars. Watch their glorious bloom until the dawn, and get one more baptism of the light. Then, with fresh heart, go down to your work, and whatever your fate, under whatever ignorance or knowledge you may afterward chance to suffer, you will remember these fine, wild views, and look back with joy to your wanderings in the blessed old Yellowstone Wonderland.

--John Muir



YELLOWSTONE LAKE--by Thomas Moran

*Most of the drawings in the book are done by artist Thomas Moran*



## MY FIRST SUMMER IN THE SIERRA – By John Muir

In the early summer of 1869, when John Muir left on foot for the high country of California's Sierra Nevada in the company of 2,050 bleating sheep, he had no idea the journey would utterly transform his life and, in doing so, change of our nation's history.



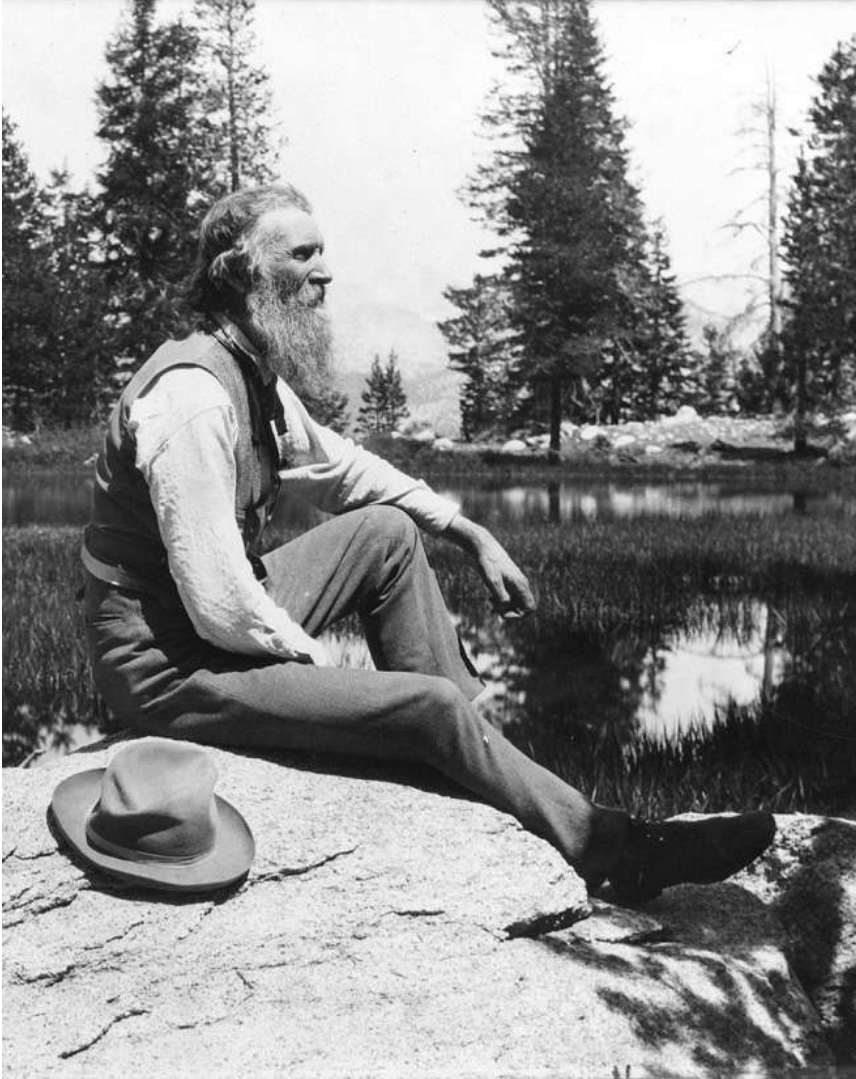
*Yosemite Valley and the Merced River*

Walking great distances – experiencing his adopted land through the soles of his shoes- was nothing new to Muir. Two years earlier he had ambled a thousand miles from Indiana to Florida, and now, living in San Francisco, he had an opportunity to see a place he had read about in magazine, It was called Yosemite, nearly 200 miles away.

Having spent the wet winter of 1868-69 cooped up in a “dismal little hut” near the town of Snelling, reading Shakespeare, baking sourdough bread, and earning a dollar a day by tending a flock of sheep, Muir was aching to stretch his long legs once more when seasons changed. Pat Delaney, one of the many mutton barons of the area, planned to move his herd up to the headwaters of the Merced and Tuolumne rivers, fattening them on the alpine meadows of the public domain for the summer, high above the sweltering heat of the Central Valley. He invited Muir to come along, and the Scottish born wanderer jumped at the chance.

He accepted because it would permit him to drink in more of the mountains he had tasted only briefly the year before. And he accepted because, at the age thirty-one, he was still searching for a direction to his life. Little did he know that Delaney's sheep would lead him to his destiny. In his notes we read “the greatest of all the months of my life,”

Muir once said, is “like the life of a glacier, one eternal grind.” *My First Summer in the Sierra*, his best and most enduring book, extends the analogy. Just as the unforgettable granite domes of Yosemite, so impressive, impassive and seemingly impermeable, were moulded and shaped by patient glaciations, each journal entry here has been sculpted and polished by the man who considered glaciers proof of “Nature as a poet, an enthusiastic workingman.”



“Everything in Nature called destruction must be creation, a change from beauty to beauty,” Muir advises us in these pages, distilling what he learned during his life-changing three and a half months in the Sierra. In the mountains he called the Range of Light, such insights come more easily, he said, because “everything is perfectly clean and pure and full of divine lessons...until the hand of God becomes visible.”

Muir’s journal records the date of this revelation as June 6, 1869, only four days into the trip. They had reached an elevation of about 800m above sea level and made the transition from black oaks to yellow pines. Through an opening in the woods, Muir could see snowy peaks, seemingly within reach and extending an

irresistible invitation. Here Muir experienced what he calls a “conversion ...complete and wholesome”. Muir would reiterate it through his summer journal and then preach it for the rest of his life, ultimately inspiring millions of Americans to consider the bounteous continent they inhabited as something sacred, something to treasure and preserve rather than commercialize and exploit.

Everything Muir believed, everything that defined him as a person radiates from these pages. We meet both the wide-eyed youngster in the throes of first experience and the wise old man of the mountains (now with an editor’s pen) refining them with the insights of a lifetime. Muir the mystic is present, but equally so is Muir the scientist.

The same day of his absolute conversion to the religion of nature, June 6, Muir writes lengthy descriptions of the sugar pine and incense cedar, the Douglas squirrel, and nearly a dozen plants (many of them defined only by their Latin binomial). He discourses the beauty of clouds (“sky mountains in whose pearly hills and dales the streams take their rise”) but also on the essential role they play in the cycles of natural world.

That first summer in Sierra, John Muir fell in love with Yosemite and found his voice, which he used to awaken a nation to a “beauty beyond though everywhere, beneath, above, made and being made for ever.” He would use it to save Yosemite’s high country as a national park, protecting the alpine meadows from the descendants of Delaney’s sheep, the voracious “hoofed locusts” whose harm, he declared, “goes to the heart.” Generations of Americans concerned about the fate of nature in their country would look to him as the headwaiter of their environment.

*From the foreword by DAYTON DUNCAN and KEN BURNS*

This time I have selected just one quote from this book (what a colourful description!):

“Our shepherd is a queer character and hard to place in this wilderness. His bed is a hollow made in red dry-rot punky dust besides a log. Here he lies with his wonderful everlasting clothing on, wrapped in a red blanket, breathing not only the dust of the decayed wood but also that of the corral, as if determined to take ammonia snuff all night after chewing tobacco all day. Following the sheep he carries a heavy six-shooter swung from his belt on one side and luncheon on the other. The ancient cloth in which the meat, fresh from frying pan, is tied serves as a filter through which the clear fat and gravy juices drip down on his right hip and leg in clustering stalactites. This oleaginous formation is soon broken up, however, and diffused and rubbed evenly into his scanty apparel, by sitting down, rolling over, crossing his legs while resting on logs, etc., making shirt and trousers water-tight and shiny. His trousers, in particular, have become so adhesive with the mixed fat and resin, that pine needles, thin flakes and fibres of bark, hair, mica scales and minute grains of quartz, hornblende, etc., feathers, seed wings, moth and butterfly wings, legs and antennae of innumerable insects, or even whole insects, such as the small beetles, moths and mosquitoes, with flower petals, pollen dust and indeed bits of all plants, animals and minerals of the region adhere to them and are softly imbedded, so that far from being a naturalist he collects fragmentary specimens of everything and becomes richer than he knows. Man is a microcosm, at least our shepherd is, or rather his trousers. These precious overalls are never taken off, and nobody knows how old they are, though I may guess by their thickness and concentric structure. Instead of wearing thin they wear thick, and in their stratification have no small geological significance.”

### John Muir Trail

*John Muir in 1907*



The **John Muir Trail (JMT)** is a long-distance trail in the Sierra Nevada mountain range of California, passing through Yosemite, Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks. The length is 338.6 km, with an elevation gain of approximately 14,000 m. For almost all of its length, the trail is in the High Sierra backcountry and wilderness areas. For about 260 km the trail, follows the same footpath as the longer Pacific Crest Trail.

The vast majority of the trail is situated within designated wilderness. The trail passes through large swaths of alpine and high mountain scenery, and lies almost entirely at or above 2,400 m in elevation. About 35% of the trail, including the entirety of the last 48 km, lies above 3,000 m. The trail has been described as "America's most famous trail"; known for its relative solitude, the trail sees about 1,500 thru-hiking attempts each year (including Pacific Crest Trail thru-hikers), many fewer than the number of attempts on comparable walks such as the southern portion of Appalachian Trail or the Way of St. James.

The primary hiking season is usually from July through September, though snow may linger on the higher passes well into August following heavy snow years. Early season hikers – including Pacific

Crest Trail thru-hikers headed north for Canada – have to contend not only with the snowpack and icy slopes near the passes, but with streams swollen with snowmelt. Trail conditions are less demanding later in the season after the snowmelt concludes, and the weather generally remains pleasant for hiking through September. Weather during the hiking season is generally sunny and dry, but afternoon thunderstorms are not uncommon. The trail is used primarily by backpackers and day-hikers, but also by runners, trail riders, and pack trains. Backpackers travelling at a modest pace usually complete the trail within three weeks.

A permit is required to hike the JMT, which is obtained from the national park or forest where the hiker begins the hike. This single permit is valid for the entire hike. Permit reservations can be hard to obtain for JMT thru-hikers, but a portion of permits are reserved for walk-ins. Backpackers entering the Sierra backcountry on multi-day trips are generally required to carry their food in approved hard-sided storage containers known as bear canisters to protect their food and other scented items from theft by black bears, which are common in the region. About 75-90 percent of hikers hike north to



south, from Yosemite Valley to Mt. Whitney. There are advantages to starting in Yosemite Valley and hiking south. Although there is a significant net altitude gain this way, starting at a lower altitude allows the hiker time to acclimatize to the elevations of the trail rather than immediately having to tackle a climb to the summit of Mount Whitney. In addition, there are several resupply points convenient to the JMT during its northern half (Tuolumne Meadows, Reds Meadow, Vermillion Valley Resort, Muir Trail Ranch), allowing the hiker to carry a lighter food load early in the hike and also to exit the trail easily if problems arise. The southern half of the JMT is more remote and generally higher in elevation, thus making it more appropriate for the second half of the hike when maximum conditioning has been attained.

### **In 1903 president Theodore Roosevelt accompanied Muir on a visit to Yosemite**

Muir told the president about state mismanagement of the valley and rampant exploitation of the valley's resources. Even before they entered the park, he was able to convince Roosevelt that the best way to protect the valley was through federal control and management. After entering the park and seeing the magnificent splendor of the valley, the president asked Muir to show him the real Yosemite. Muir and Roosevelt set off largely by themselves and camped in the back country. The duo talked late into the night, slept in the brisk open air of Glacier Point, and were dusted by a fresh snowfall in the morning. It was a night Roosevelt never forgot.