

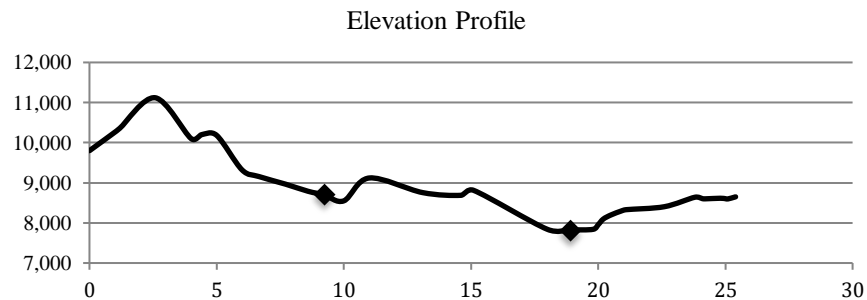
# Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit

## Virginia Lakes to Tuolumne Meadows

**Overview** Experience a section of Yosemite National Park that few visitors see. You will enter Yosemite from the east side of the Sierra, at Virginia Lakes, to cross the Sierra Crest into Yosemite National Park. Your path will lead you past expansive views, powerful waterfalls, cascading creeks, dense pine forests, and lush meadows as you travel through the granite peaks and glacial valleys of northern Yosemite.

Three of the six days are layover days to allow day trips to Miller Lake, McCabe Lakes, and Waterwheel Falls.

**Distance** 25.4 miles, 3,400' total gain and 4,550' loss on moving days.



**Preparation** Hikers should be able to walk ten miles, 1,500' elevation gain and 2,500' loss. You should acclimate to 8,000' to 10,000' for 1-3 days prior to the trip.

**Meet Up** Arrive at Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit by 7:00 AM where your gear will be weighed and you will be served breakfast. Your personal vehicles will be left in the pack station parking area.

**Trailheads** In – Virginia Lakes; Out – Tuolumne Meadows  
You will be ferried the one mile from the pack station to the trailhead. A pack station driver will pick you up at the Tuolumne Meadows Stable parking area located west of Lembert Dome, returning you to the Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit station.

**Maps** Tom Harrison Hoover Wilderness and Yosemite High Country Maps, paper or download onto phone/tablet.  
National Geographic 308 Yosemite NE: Tuolumne Meadows and Hoover Wilderness Trail Map

Apps for Smartphone/Tablet, download applicable areas prior to departure:

- Gaia GPS
- Topo Maps

**Wilderness Permit** Rock Creek Pack Station takes care of all permits required for the trip.

# Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit

## Virginia Lakes to Tuolumne Meadows

### **About the Area**

Granite dominates the geology of Yosemite National Park. You will approach the park through older metamorphic rock, but will drop into the younger granite as you enter the park. Glaciers played an essential role in shaping Yosemite's landscape. You will travel through the classic 2,000' deep U-shaped Virginia Canyon and follow the stair steps of the falls and cascades of the Tuolumne River

The trip moves through subalpine forest and the alpine zone. Expect to see western white pine, mountain hemlock, and lodgepole pine with many subalpine meadows that flower from July through August. The alpine zone of Yosemite begins near the 9,500-foot elevation. No trees grow in this zone due to the short, cool summers with long, cold, and snowy winters that are typical at these elevations. Many exposed granitic outcroppings, talus slopes, and boulder fields limit the amount of vegetation that grows here

Wildlife is abundant throughout Yosemite, but at higher elevations, fewer wildlife species tend to be found due, in part, to the lower complexity of the forest. Species likely to be found include golden-mantled ground squirrel, chickaree, marten, Steller's jay, hermit thrush, and northern goshawk. Reptiles are not common but include rubber boa, western fence lizard, and alligator lizard. Above treeline, the climate becomes harsh. Species such as pika, yellow-bellied marmot, white-tailed hare, Clark's nutcracker, and rosy finch are adapted to these conditions.

The above information is taken from the Yosemite National Park website. Select Learn About the Park>Nature> and then the topics you are interested in to learn more. <https://www.nps.gov/yose/index.htm>

# Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit

## Virginia Lakes to Tuolumne Meadows

**General** This trip passes many lakes and creeks, so available drinking water is not a problem in normal water conditions. Be prepared for creek crossings. Most of the crossings can be made on rocks or logs.

### **Moving** Virginia Lakes to Virginia Canyon

**Day 1** *9.2 miles, 1,550' gain, 2,650' loss*

The trail follows the north side of Blue Lake and then climbs fairly steeply in open forest to Cooney Lake in the first mile. The trail climbs 750' past the Frog Lakes on shale slopes to a saddle at mile 2.6. The rocky path descends steeply to the Green Lake Trail junction at mile four. Turn left at the junction toward Summit Lake and climb 170' in 0.4 miles to the lake. The trail drops steeply as it enters Yosemite National Park, turning into a gentle descent down through Virginia Canyon after the junction to Virginia Pass. The path down the canyon is through lodgepoles and meadows, with areas of trees downed by avalanches during high snow years. Camp is about 3.2 miles down canyon from the Virginia Pass junction.

Virginia Canyon is a destination in itself, but two layover days allow day trips to the beautiful Miller Lake and McCabe Lakes.

**Moving** *9.7 miles, 800' gain, 1,700' loss*

### **Day 2**

Follow the trail down to the junction with the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) at mile 0.8. Turn left, crossing Return Creek and McCabe Creek to climb 570' in one mile to the McCabe Lakes junction. Continue right to follow the PCT through open forest to a long meadow at mile four and then reenter the forest to continue the descent to the Tuolumne River at Glen Aulin. Leave the PCT before crossing the bridge, at mile 8.8, following signs toward Waterwheel Falls. A very brief climb offers a beautiful view down the canyon. Be sure to look behind you for views of Tuolumne Falls and Wolf Cascade. The trail drops along a cascade to follow a serene section of the Tuolumne River for a mile to our camp.

Plan to follow the Tuolumne River to Waterwheel Falls on the layover day.

# Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit

## Virginia Lakes to Tuolumne Meadows

**Moving** *6.5 miles, 1,050' gain, 200' loss*

**Day 3**

Return to Glen Aulin, turning right at mile 0.9 to follow the PCT toward Tuolumne Meadows. Ignore the wooden bridge crossing Cold Creek immediately to your left that goes to the Glen Aulin High Sierra Camp. Continue straight to cross the Tuolumne River on a metal bridge and then climb steeply for 0.2 miles to the May Lake junction. Continue left to follow the PCT another 0.2 miles to the base of Tuolumne Falls. Ignore your last-day urge to rush to the trailhead and leave the trail at the base of the falls to spend some time enjoying the power of the water. The trail swings away from the river twice, returning after a quarter mile to a series of cascades before crossing the river on a bridge at mile 2.2. A brief climb up a rippapped trail brings you to a magnificent view of northern Yosemite. Watch for the Little Devil's Postpile on the opposite side of the river as you leave the viewpoint. The path enters the forest, emerging at times to cross the polished rock at the base of a dome or touch the river with views of the Cathedral Range across the meadow. The trail crosses Dingley Creek at mile 3.7 and Delaney Creek at mile 5.3. A junction just past the Delaney Creek crossing shows the stables to the left and the PCT to the right. Most hikers follow the PCT, passing the Soda Springs connector, mile 5.9, and the John Muir Trail (JMT) junction, mile 6.1, before following a trail to the left to the stables parking lot, mile 6.2. If you pass through a gate and arrive at a gravel road, you missed the side trail. Follow the road to the left to the stable parking lot.

Plan to meet the pack station driver at 1:00 to return to the Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit station.

# Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit

## Virginia Lakes to Tuolumne Meadows

### Layover Day Trips

#### Virginia Canyon Camp

##### Miller Lake

*8.6 miles round trip / 4.3 miles, 1,300' gain, 500' loss to Miller Lake*

The day starts with a gentle descent down Virginia Canyon to the junction of the Pacific Crest Trail at mile 0.8. The trail to the right continues down the canyon before climbing 1,000' fairly steeply up Spiller Creek to a saddle at mile 4.6. Wonderful views to the west open up as the trail undulates another 1.4 miles to Miller Lake. The lake is shallow which makes it a good swimming lake. There are wonderful views across the canyon of the Tuolumne River as far as the Cathedral Range to the south from near the outlet of the lake or the low dome to the west of the lake. Return to camp by the same route.

##### McCabe Lakes

*6.8 miles round trip / 3.4 miles, 1,300' gain, 150' loss to Lower McCabe Lake*

Follow the trail down to the junction with the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) at mile 0.8. Turn left, crossing Return Creek and McCabe Creek and then climb 570' through forest in one mile to the McCabe Lakes junction. Follow the trail to the left, climbing an additional 730' in 1.5 miles to the lake.

#### Tuolumne River Camp

##### Waterwheel Falls

*4.4 miles round trip / 2.2 miles, 100' gain, 1,100' loss to Waterwheel Falls*

The day starts on a flat trail, cutting off bends in the river to arrive at the top of California Falls at mile 0.6. The trail drops beside the falls for 200' in 0.2 miles and then follows a placid section of the river for 0.4 miles. The path moves in and out of forest as it drops 550' over 0.6 miles to Le Conte Falls. The trail drops an additional 150' over 0.4 miles as the river swings away and then returns to the trail at Waterwheel Falls. Watch for a side trail to the left that leads to a great view of the falls. Take care to avoid the very slippery wet slick rock.

# Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit

## Virginia Lakes to Tuolumne Meadows

### Distances and Elevations

<i>Location</i>	<i>Moving Day Distance</i>	<i>Cumulative Distance</i>	<i>Elevation</i>
<i>Virginia Lakes</i>		0.0	9,800
<i>Cooney Lake</i>		1.0	10,250
<i>Frog Lakes Outlet Ridge</i>		1.2	10,350
<i>Hoover Lakes Junction</i>		2.6	11,100
<i>East end Summit Lake Boundary</i>		4.0	10,100
<i>Virginia Pass Junction</i>		4.4	10,200
<i>Virginia Canyon Camp</i>	9.2	5.0	10,200
<i>PCT Junction</i>		6.0	9,320
<i>McCabe Lakes Junction</i>		9.2	8,700
<i>Meadow Ridge</i>		10.0	8,550
<i>Glen Aulin Junction</i>		11.0	9,120
<i>Tuolumne River Camp</i>	9.7	13.1	8,750
<i>Glen Aulin Junction</i>		15.1	8,800
<i>May Lake Junction</i>		18.0	7,840
<i>Tuolumne Falls Bridge</i>		18.9	7,800
<i>Dingley Creek Crossing</i>		19.8	7,840
<i>Young Lakes Junction</i>		20.0	7,980
<i>Delaney Creek Crossing</i>		20.2	8,100
<i>Stable Jct</i>		21.1	8,350
<i>Soda Springs-Parsons Connector</i>		22.6	8,400
<i>JMT Jct</i>		23.8	8,640
<i>Stable Parking Junction</i>		24.1	8,600
<i>Tuolumne Meadows Stable</i>	6.5	24.2	8,600
		24.8	8,600
		25.0	8,600
		25.1	8,600
		25.4	8,650

\*Distances and elevations based on Tom Harrison maps. Data between trail junctions estimated based on TOPO! Software.

# Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit

## Virginia Lakes to Tuolumne Meadows

### Expected Campsite Locations

<i>Moving Day</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>Elevation</i>	<i>Latitude N</i>	<i>Longitude W</i>	<i>Miles</i>	<i>Gain</i>	<i>Loss</i>
1	Virginia Canyon	8,950	38.026	119.348	9.2	1,550	2,650
2	Tuolumne River	7,800	37.913	119.432	9.7	800	1,700
3	Tuolumne Meadows	8,650	37.881	119.360	6.5	1,050	200
<i>Total</i>					<i>25.4</i>	<i>3,400</i>	<i>4,550</i>

Note: Mileage is based on Tom Harrison maps. Distances between junctions and gain/loss data are estimated based on Gaia GPS and Guthook's PCT Hiker. Campsite latitude and longitude information is based on Yosemite National Park Stock Camp locations.

# Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit

## Packing Guide

Bring belongings in stout canvas or nylon duffels; side zipper recommended, ideal size approximately 14" x 32". It is a good idea to use a large plastic bag INSIDE of the duffel to protect contents from external moisture.

Sleeping bags can be in separate duffels, again, line the inside of the duffel against rain. Protect against spills by placing all cosmetics, soaps, medications, etc. into small plastic containers with close-fitting caps, THEN into sturdy resealable plastic storage bags.

- Tent (if RCPS is not providing), recommend ground cloth or footprint for protection
- Sleeping pad
- Sleeping bag, <3 pounds, 25°F or lower rating
- Day pack
- Goretex rain jackets & pants or poncho
- Light jacket (windbreaker)
- Heavy jacket (pile or down jacket)
- Shirts (R2 weight for warmth and t-shirts)
- Pants (RCPS recommends warm capilene and hiking shorts)
- Long underwear pants and top
- Underwear
- Socks (2 pair liner & 2 pair heavy)
- Sun hat
- Woolen or fleece cap
- Bandana
- Gloves, lightweight
- Medium weight hiking boots
- Camp shoes (running shoes, Crocs, sport sandals)
- Coffee mug (plastic or stainless steel for camp)
- Water bottles or hydration bladder, at least 2 liter
- Headlamp and extra batteries
- Pocket knife
- Sunglasses and/or RX glasses
- Insect repellent
- Lip balm and sunscreen
- Towel
- Biodegradable soap
- Toiletries
- Ear plugs
- Medications (if required)
- Personal first aid kit
- Optional items
  - Camera & extra batteries and memory cards
  - Trekking poles
  - Glasses leash
  - 50 ft. 1/4-in. rope and clothes pins/safety pins
  - Swim suit
  - Liquor (transfer to sturdy plastic bottles with well-fitting caps to save weight and protect against breakage)
  - Small whisk broom
  - Solar shower
  - Plastic trash bag (duffel liner)
  - Water filtering pump
  - Collapsible wash basin
  - Small pad of paper and pencil



# Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit

## Packing Guide

### **Fishing equipment (optional)**

- Rod-reel-line
- Metal rod case - Compact to carry on saddle, ideal LI Canvas creel (no tackle boxes)
- Leader material (1 lb.-3 lb.)
- Flies: Black gnat, mosquito, grey hackle, brown hackle, & royal coachman (No. 12-14 hooks)
- Bait: worms & Pautzke red eggs
- Egg hooks, worm hooks (No. 10-14)
- Split shot
- Lures (personal choice)
- Pliers
- Fishing license

### **Camp equipment provided by RCPS:**

- Folding chairs
- Light canvas fly when needed
- Tent if requested in advance
- Collapsing latrine (set up surrounded by tarp or in a privacy tent)
- Toilet tissue
- Shower enclosure or tent on layover days or when requested
- Coleman lantern (single) and extra mantles
- Food
- Coffee and hot chocolate, tea, usually herbal teas
- Grill, pots, pans
- Trays and plates
- Eating utensils
- Propane stove and fuel
- Light collapsible tables with table clothes
- Axe (cover blade)
- Shovel and rake
- Wash basins
- Firewood
- Crew of two packers and a cook

# Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit

## Packing Guide

### **LOW-IMPACT GUIDE FOR THE WILDERNESS USER**

We are dedicated to conducting our trips so that others following us will find the country unspoiled. Livestock is a natural part of the wilderness and when properly managed enhances man's enjoyment of our unmechanized wilderness area. Today, just as it was when the entire west was mostly wilderness, the horse and mule remain our companions and servants in wilderness travel. We practice and expect you to observe the following during your trip.

1. Keep on trail - do not cut switchbacks (corners).
2. Choose a tent site at least 100 ft. from water (THE LAW) where drainage will not be a problem, avoiding the need to trench. No tents or camp area allowed on grass or meadowlands.
3. When breaking camp, return the spot to its natural state and broadcast a covering of needles and cones. Scout the area to make sure nothing will be left behind. Remove the smallest pieces of aluminum foil and trash.
4. Utilize pre-existing fire rings where possible. Don't surround fires with rocks! Dig a hole in sand and cover when finished. When you leave camp, bury ashes from fire rings. Leave existing fire rings clean for the next user.
5. Pack out all trash. Don't bury garbage, scatter organic wastes or leave foil in campfire pit. Burn cans and flatten. On our group trips we have a bag for cans and aluminum foil.
6. Don't use soap (even biodegradable) in streams or lakes. Wash yourself, clothes and dishes away from water sources.
7. Bury human waste 200 ft. from water, campsites and trails. Dig a hole 4 to 6 inches deep and after use tamp with sod.
8. Don't pick flowers or cut branches from live trees. Use only downed wood for fires.
9. You are required to keep bears from eating your food at all times. Please ask for current regulations and suggestions on how to prepare for your trip.

### **REMINDERS TO HELP YOU & YOUR PACKER:**

1. Sleeping bags should be rolled tightly (long way) and personal items should be brought in duffel or safari bags securely fastened so they won't leak on the trail.
2. Fishing rods must be in metal or stout cases with secure ends.
3. Tent poles should be reduced to shortest size bundle possible and securely tied so poles won't slip out.
4. The pack boxes are about 24 x 10 inches and 15 in. deep (inside measure).