

# A Comprehensive, Multi-Dimensional Comparison of the Five John Muir Trail Map Packages/Guidebooks

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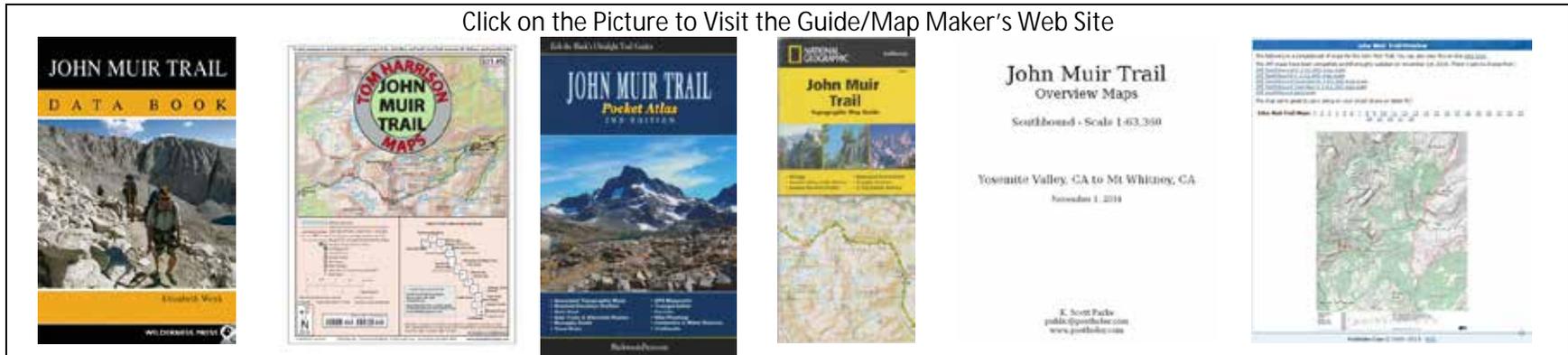
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## Introduction

The year 2014 showed that “America’s most famous trail”<sup>i</sup>, the John Muir Trail (JMT), had become so popular that 10 new books (or updated editions) of the JMT were published.<sup>ii</sup> Among these are two new guidebooks for hiking this 221 mile long trail.<sup>iii</sup> This means that aspiring hikers of the JMT now have five JMT map packages/guidebooks to choose from (listed in reverse publication date order):

1. Erik Asorson, 2014. Erik the Black’s John Muir Trail Atlas, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Published by Blackwoods Press. [Blackwoods Press Link](#).
2. K. Scott Parks (“Postholer”), 2014. John Muir Trail Southbound, Scale: 1:63,360. Free but copyrighted. [Download link](#).
3. National Geographic Society, 2014. John Muir Trail Topographic Map Guide. Published by National Geographic. [Amazon link](#).
4. Elizabeth Wenk, 2014. John Muir Trail Data Book. Published by Wilderness Press. [Amazon link](#).
5. Tom Harrison, 2014. John Muir Trail Map-Pack. Published by Tom Harrison Maps. [Tom Harrison Map Web Page](#).

Click on the Picture to Visit the Guide/Map Maker's Web Site



As someone who has hiked the JMT seven times (of which 5 were complete hikes, and 2 of them I completed at least 160 miles of the trail), and as lead moderator of the JMT Yahoo Group which currently has 3,625 members, I am interested deeply that accurate and in-depth guidebooks exist for the JMT.

The JMT trail is long and hard as it covers the highest part of the Sierra Nevada. Its average elevation is about 10,000 feet. Having organized a hiking group for each of the last 7 years, taking between 3-4 weeks to hike the JMT each time, it is not uncommon to see people, whether in my group or not, needing to exit the trail prematurely. Some years, it might be due to a foot or ankle injury. Other years, such as in 2011, when much of the trail was snowbound even in July and August, there are many leg injuries from slipping on the snow in trail runners. In 2014, many exited due to the extreme wet and cold weather that was prolonged for weeks. After the dry winters of 2013 and 2014 some exited due to breathing problems due to forest fires, including the famous Rim Fire as well as the Aspen Fire, French Fire, Portal Fire, and Meadow Fire.

John Ladd, co-moderator of the John Muir Trail Yahoo Group, and former lead moderator there, has a JMT Trail Hiker Survey [Facebook page](#)<sup>iv</sup> on various pictures of how bad the weather and fire conditions got in 2014. A snippet from that page is displayed on the following page.<sup>v</sup> John has conducted surveys of JMT hikers and has gotten responses from about 608 respondents about their 2014 JMT hike. John also provided me a subset of his survey responses which shows the need for the lateral trails to be displayed, based upon those who prematurely ended their hike and exited at points on the JMT that are not shown on all the guides reviewed (some of these locations are shown, some are not). For instance, all the guides show the way to Muir Trail Ranch, but rare is the displaying of the trail from Muir Trail Ranch to Florence Lake. Same with Vermilion Resort, all the guides show the lateral trail to the ferry landing, but few show the trail that either goes around Edison Lake or the full trail to the resort that goes over Goodale Pass if some decide to take the first lateral trail (from the North) that goes to the resort. Because of the number of tangent trails involved in going all the way from Bishop Pass to Southlake Trailhead, it is useful to know which way continues onto

the trailhead if one takes the Southlake / Bishop Pass exit. Below the picture, following, is the data that John Ladd shared with me, based upon 2014 responses.

 John Muir Trail Hiker Survey Photos ✓ Liked

### 2014 JMT conditions

Updated 15 minutes ago · Taken at John Muir Wilderness

There were some environmental challenges in 2104. Prolonged days and nights of rain -- and some hail and snow -- in July and early August. Bad smoke in August and September including a partial trail closure due to the September Meadow fire which flared up badly on September 2, burning along 4 miles of the Trail. First serious snow on September 21. Each picture here is provided with the kind permission of the photographers, identified in the description of each photo.



The grid of eight photographs illustrates various trail conditions in 2014. The top-left photo shows hikers on a rocky path through a forest. The top-middle photo shows a mountain landscape with snow patches, with text overlays: 'Squaw Lake - > Silver Pass 7/20/21', '5:15 am', and 'Near Silver Pass 5/20/2014'. The top-right photo shows a valley view. The middle-right photo shows a hiker on a rocky trail. The bottom-left photo shows a waterfall. The bottom-middle photo shows a hiker crossing a stream. The bottom-right photo shows a hiker on a rocky stream. The bottom-right photo shows a hiker in a smoky environment.

In Figure 1, I exclude typical locations which are displayed on all JMT guides (e.g., Tuolumne Meadows, Reds Meadow, Vermilion Resort via the Ferry).

**Figure 1. Survey Respondents Who Exited JMT Prematurely at Atypical Locations**

Lateral Trail Used by 2014 JMT Hikers Who Prematurely Exited Trail	Count
Inyo NF - Agnew Meadow	7
Inyo NF - Bishop Pass Trail / South Lake	16
Inyo NF - Onion Valley / Kearsarge Pass	13
Inyo NF - Piute Pass Trail / North Lake	1
Inyo NF -Taboose Pass	2
SEKI NP - Roads End via Bubbs Creek	6
SEKI NP - Shepherd Pass	1
Sierra NF - Goodale Pass Trail to Lake Edison	1
Sierra NF - Lake Edison walking around lake or on lakebed	4
Sierra NF - Lake Florence / Muir Trail Ranch (using ferry)	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>

I personally prefer map guides that will enable a group to exit the trail in the least amount of time if such a need arises. So I have a strong interest in reviewing and seeing which of these guidebooks are of most relevance to not only guiding one on a successful JMT hike but also on an aborted JMT hike. From the data, one can see that about 11% of those who hike the JMT will appreciate good lateral trail information in the map guide they choose.

Using Microsoft Excel, I have done a multi-dimensional comparison of these guidebooks. The Excel spreadsheet resides on Google Drive<sup>vi</sup> and one can make a copy of it for themselves, and if they desire, they can change the scoring formulas to meet their own needs. I set the scoring formula to be most fair and balanced for the dimensions I consider important.

The Excel Spreadsheet is reproduced below in a format suitable for a PDF file or HTML page.

The first table shows the dimensions and the data (facts) for each guidebook. On a second table, I repeat the same table, but assign a scoring formula to be able to rank (recommend) the more preferred guidebook to choose from. For those not familiar with some of the terms in the below table, the following table shows what these terms mean:

**Figure 2. Glossary Terms in the two tables.**

Term	Meaning	Term	Meaning
<b>JCT</b>	Junction as in a Trail Junction where two trails intersect	<b>JMT</b>	John Muir Trail
<b>MSRP</b>	Manufacturer’s Suggested Retail Price	<b>NOBO</b>	Northbound directed (starting at Whitney Portal and ending up at Yosemite Valley)
<b>SOBO</b>	Southbound directed (starting from Yosemite Valley and ending up at Whitney Portal)	<b>TH</b>	Trailhead (an ending or starting point of a trail, where it meets a resort or road)

**Table 1. Dimensions and data (facts) analyzed for each guidebook.**

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Which Measurement Value is Better?	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book (1:63360 Scale Map)*****
SOBO/NOBO Sequenced?	SOBO	NOBO	SOBO	SOBO	SOBO	SOBO
Map Scale	See next line	1:63,360	1:63,360	1:63,360	1:63,360	1:63,360
1 mile is the length of how many inches on the map?	Bigger	1	1	1	1	1
Weight of Guide/Map (oz)	Smaller	2.25	3.3	5.3	2.4	If using same paper used by Tom Harrison
Publication Year	Higher	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014
Waterproof Paper	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes or No
Tear Resistant Plastic	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes or No
MSRP Price	Lower	21.95	14.95	12.95	23.95	0*
Height of Document in inches	Smaller***	11	9.5	8.5	8	11
Width of Document in inches (closed, double the width when open for Nat'l Geo, Wenk, Erik's)	Smaller***	8.5	4.25	5.5	5	8.5
Number of sheets including cover/back (not pages)	Smaller***	14	24	67	24	17
Points of Interest Icons shown in Map Legend <sup>vii</sup>	More	7	33	13	25	19
Designations of different types of roads/trails/boundaries -- how many dash/line types shown in legend	More	5	17	7	9	11
Elevation Guide Profiles Displayed in Sections	Yes	No**	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of reference telephone numbers displayed	More	0	6	28	0	0
Extent of Emergency Information Given	Showing All 3 Types	Ranger Station Locations Only	Permit Office #s only	Ranger Station Locations, Emergency #s, and Permit Office #s	Ranger Station Locations Only	Ranger Station Locations Only
Number of Camp Sites Shown and or described that are adjacent to the JMT	More	23	279	279 <sup>viii</sup>	142	15

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Which Measurement Value is Better?	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book (1:63360 Scale Map)*****
Panoramic Photos of Surrounding Named Mountain Peaks At Passes (# of panorama pictures)	More	0	0	15	0	0
Lateral Trail (Sunrise High Sierra Camp to Tioga Road-Hwy 120) - Extent Shown (rounded to nearest quartile %)	More	100%	100%	75% (lacks ending arrow info)	100%	100%
Lateral Trail (Rush Creek Junction to Silver Lake TH on Hwy 158)	More	100%	100%	75% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	100%	50% (lacks ending arrow info)
Lateral Trail (Thousand Island Lake to Agnews Meadow TH/Bus Stop (PCT - High Route)	More	100%	100%	75% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	100%	100%
Lateral Trail (Thousand Island Lake to Agnews Meadow TH/Bus Stop (River Route)	More	100%	100%	75% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	100%	100%
Lateral Trail (Garnet Lake to River Route to Agnews Meadow TH/Bus Stop)	More	100%	100%	75% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	100%	100%
Lateral Trail (Shadow Lake to River Route to Agnews Meadow TH/Bus Stop)	More	100%	100%	100% (unlabeled trail dash thou)	100%	100%
Lateral Trail (Northern Devil's Postpile Jct to Devil's Postpile Campground/Bus Stop)	More	100% (tiny resolution thou)	100% (tiny resolution thou)	100% (in zoom-in mini-map)	100% (tiny resolution thou)	100% (PP camp not labeled)

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Which Measurement Value is Better?	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book (1:63360 Scale Map)*****
Lateral Trail (Red Cones to Mammoth Pass to either Lake Mary TH or Horseshoe Lake TH/Mammoth Bus Stop)	More	100%	100%	50% (lacks ending arrow info)	100%	100%
Lateral Trail (Mammoth Pass Cutoff Trail to Twin Lakes TH/Mammoth Bus Stop)	More	100%	100%	50% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	100%	100%
Lateral Trail (Duck Creek to Duck Pass to Mammoth Bus Stop)	More	100% (but bus stop not shown)	100%	100% (90% rounded but unlabeled end info on map but given in appendix)	100% (rounded, but a middle part of trail missing but referenced)	50% (lacks ending arrow info)
Lateral Trail (Goodale Pass Trail to Vermilion Valley Resort)	More	100%	100%	100%	100%	75% (lacks ending arrow info)
Lateral Trail (McGee Trail/JMT Jct to McGee Creek TH)	More	50% (has ending arrow info)	50% (has ending arrow info)	50% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	50% (has ending arrow info)	0% (but notes trail intersection; ending arrow equivalent info given in footnote on map page)
Lateral Trail (Mono Creek Trail/JMT Jct to Mosquito Flat TH via Mono Pass to gain access to Tom's Place for resupply)	More	50% (has ending arrow info)	25% (has ending arrow info)	25% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	25% (has ending arrow info)	50% (ending arrow equivalent info given in footnote on map page)
Lateral Trail (from Quail Meadows/Mono Creek to Vermilion Valley Resort via Ferry)	More	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Lateral Trail (from Quail Meadows/Mono Creek to Vermilion Valley Resort via Trail all the way to VVR)	More	100%	100%	100%	100%	75% (ending arrow equivalent info given in footnote on map page)

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Which Measurement Value is Better?	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book (1:63360 Scale Map)*****
Lateral Trail (from Vermilion Valley Resort to JMT via Bear Ridge Trail)	More	100%	100%	100%	100%	75% (lacks ending arrow info)
Lateral Trail (from Vermilion Valley Resort to JMT via Bear Creek Trail)	More	100% (more like 95% but beginning and ending points are shown, a piece in the middle is not shown)	100%	100%	100%	75% (lacks ending arrow info)
Lateral Trail (from JMT on Lake Italy Trail to Italy Pass to Pine Creek TH, to go to Bishop)	More	0% (but has an arrow pointing to off-map JMT Jct)	25% (more like 10% but has ending arrow info)	50% (lacks ending arrow info)	25% (jct named but unlabeled end info)	25% (but unlabeled end info)
Lateral Trail (from JMT Northern most access trail to Florence Lake then to Muir Trail Ranch)	More	100%	100%	100%	100%	75% (ending arrow equivalent info given in footnote on map page)
Lateral Trail (from Muir Trail Ranch to Florence Lake Ferry Landing)	More	100%	100%	50% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	50% (has ending arrow info)	0%
Lateral Trail (from Muir Trail Ranch headed Southbound to JMT)	More	100%	100%	100%	100%	75% (ending arrow equivalent info given in footnote on map page)
Lateral Trail (from JMT/Piute Creek Footbridge to Piute Pass TH at Northlake)	More	25% (has ending arrow info)	25% (has ending arrow info)	25% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	25% (more like 13% but has ending arrow info)	75% (lacks ending arrow info)
Lateral Trail (from Bishop Pass/JMT Jct to Bishop Pass TH at Southlake)	More	50% (has ending arrow info)	50% (has ending arrow info)	100% (but does not indicate that end is a TH on map)	100%	75% (ending arrow equivalent info given in footnote on map page)

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Which Measurement Value is Better?	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book (1:63360 Scale Map)*****
				but given in appendix)		
Lateral Trail (from Middle Fork Jmt Jct to Roads End TH via Middle Fork Kings River and Simpson Meadow Trails to reach Cedar Grove	More	25% (has ending arrow info)	25% (has ending arrow info)	25% (lacks ending arrow info)	25% (has ending arrow info)	0% (shows jct but does not label it)
Lateral Trail (from Taboose Pass/JMT Jct to Taboose Pass to TH to get into Bishop)	More	75% (has ending arrow info)	100%	75% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	75% (has ending arrow info)	75% (ending arrow equivalent info given in footnote on map page)
Lateral Trail (from Sawmill Pass/JMT Jct to Sawmill Pass then to Sawmill Creek TH, to get to Independence)	More	75% (has ending arrow info)	75% (has ending arrow info)	50% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	50% (has ending arrow info)	75% (lacks ending arrow info)
Lateral Trail (from Woods Creek/JMT Jct to Woods Creek Trail to Roads End TH to get into Cedar Grove)	More	25% (has ending arrow info)	25% (has ending arrow info)	25% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	25% (has ending arrow info)	25% (ending arrow equivalent info given in footnote on map page)
Lateral Trail (from Baxter Pass/JMT Jct to Baxter Pass to Oak Creek TH to get into Independence)	More	75% (has ending arrow info)	75% (has ending arrow info)	75% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	50% (has ending arrow info)	50% (lacks ending arrow info)
Lateral Trail (from Kearsarge Pass/JMT Jct to Kearsarge Pass (Northern Route) to Onion Valley TH to get into Independence	More	100%	100%	100%	100%	100% (more like 88%; ending arrow equivalent info given in footnote on map page)

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Which Measurement Value is Better?	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book (1:63360 Scale Map)*****
Lateral Trail (from Lower Vidette Meadow to Bubbs Creek Trail to Roads End TH to get into Cedar Grove)	More	50% (has ending arrow info)	50% (has ending arrow info)	50% (lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	50% (has ending arrow info)	25% (ending arrow equivalent info given in footnote on map page)
Lateral Trail (from Shepherd Pass Trail/JMT Jct to Shepherd Pass to Symmes Creek TH to get into Independence)	More	100% (more like 88% but has ending arrow info)	100%	100% (more like 88% but lacks ending arrow info on map but given in appendix)	50% (has ending arrow info)	75% (lacks ending arrow info)
Number of times Lateral Trail is complete or has starting/ending arrow information	More	29	31	28	30	19
Nbr of Lateral Trails where TH has GPS/Map coordinates shown or documented (Useful If hiker has GPS or GPS app on smartphone)	More	20	21	27	19	10
Amount of Information (Reviewer's Judgment, ranked in descending order)	More	3.0	4.0	5.0	4.0	3.0
Map Usability/Navigational Eye Appeal (Reviewer's Judgment, ranked in descending order)--Tie is allowed.	More	4.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	4.0

## Excel Footnotes

Footnotes	Description
*	One has to print out the guide so there is the cost of paper, ink and printer use.
**	One can guess the elevation through use of contour lines and printed elevations on map
***	Smaller is more portable but also causes guide to be less viewable,
	depends on one's eyesight if smaller is better. Physically, National Geographic uses 12 sheets of paper but staples them in the center so the consumer considers it 24 sheets of paper but in reality
	It is 12 sheets of paper. Everybody else uses a binding system limited to their page dimensions.

Footnotes	Description
	The advantage of what National Geographic has done, is that they wasted zero space of the page (aside from a vertical line down the center equal to the width of a staple). It is a most superior use of the printed page.
****	A lateral trail, even if not very popular, but has had to be used in one of my organized JMT hiking groups has a double weight score significance factor here. For rows that are not about lateral trails, the formula used to obtain the Tom Harrison JMT Map Pack is shown (substitute relative column number to determine formula for other columns). When an answer is zero, to avoid divide by zero, a hard score value is assigned). For Lateral Trails, points are in quartile percentages of 1 but a separate row at bottom assigns extra credits for showing starting or ending arrow information.
*****	During this review, Postholer (K. Scott Parks), updated his JMT maps to be in 4 flavors: NOBO or SOBO, 1:31,680 or 1:63,360 scale. The 1:63,360 scale shows the most amount of lateral trail coverage. However, the 1:31,680 scale map is advantageous in certain spots (such as the Muir Trail Ranch area). Postholer asked me to review just one of his maps, so I picked the 1:63,360 map scale SOBO version however if you go with Postholer maps, I recommend you download the other map to your smartphone. Note, Postholer shows lateral trails in orange lines, very nice.
<b>About reference phone numbers</b>	Phone numbers are counted as seen in document, however some of the same phone numbers may appear more than once in the document (I did not bother to discover unique phone numbers)
<b>Lacks ending arrow info</b>	On some maps when a bailout trail is not fully shown, an arrow is displayed which direction/trail to continue with how many miles to go "off map" in the arrow direction.

**Table 2. An identical reproduction of the above row titles but with a scoring suitable for ranking the guidebooks in preference order, shown with the score for each dimension and the formula used.**

Note, in the formula column, when an Excel formula is shown, it is the one used to obtain the Tom Harrison JMT Map Pack score for that row. Substitute relative column number to determine formula for the other columns. When an answer is zero, to avoid dividing by zero, a hard score value is assigned.

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Score Formula/Weight or Lateral Trail is Popular or Used (Score Weight)****	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book
SOBO/NOBO Sequenced?	1 if SOBO, 0 otherwise	0.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.000
Map Scale	None	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
1 mile is the length of how many inches on the map?	Length is score	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Weight of Guide/Map (oz)	=(MAX(\$D\$6:\$H\$6)-D6)/16	0.191	0.125	0.000	0.181	0.243
Publication Year	=(ABS((MIN(\$D\$7:\$H\$7)-D7)/10))+1	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Waterproof Paper	1 if Yes, 0 otherwise	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.000
Tear Resistant Plastic	1 if Yes, 0 otherwise	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.000
MSRP Price	=(MAX(\$D\$10:\$H\$10)-D10)/10	0.200	0.900	1.100	0.000	3.000
Height of Document in inches	=(1-D11/100)	0.890	0.905	0.915	0.920	0.890
Width of Document in inches	=(1-D12/100)	0.915	0.958	0.945	0.950	0.915

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Score Formula/Weight or Lateral Trail is Popular or Used (Score Weight)****	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book
Number of sheets including cover/back (not pages)	=(1-D13/100)	0.860	0.760	0.330	0.760	0.830
Points of Interest Icons shown in Map Legend	=(D14/MAX(\$D14:\$H14))*3	0.636	3.000	1.182	2.273	1.727
Designations of different types of roads/trails/boundaries -- how many dash/line types shown in legend	=D15/MAX(\$D15:\$H15)	0.294	1.000	0.412	0.529	0.647
Elevation Guide Profiles Displayed in Sections	2 if present, 0 otherwise	0.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
Number of reference telephone numbers displayed	=(D19/MAX(\$D\$19:\$H\$19))*3	0.000	0.643	3.000	0.000	0.000
Extent of Emergency Information Given	=# of Types * 2	2.000	2.000	6.000	2.000	2.000
Number of Camp Sites Shown and or described that are adjacent to the JMT	=(D19/50)*2	0.920	11.160	11.160	5.680	0.600
Panoramic Photos of Surrounding Named Mountain Peaks At Passes (# of panorama pictures)	2 if present, 0 otherwise	0.000	0.000	2.000	0.000	0.000
Lateral Trail (Sunrise High Sierra Camp to Tioga Road-Hwy 120) - Extent Shown (rounded to nearest quartile %)	See footnote ****	1.000	1.000	0.750	1.000	1.000
Lateral Trail (Rush Creek Junction to Silver Lake TH on Hwy 158)	1	1.000	1.000	0.750	1.000	0.500
Lateral Trail (Thousand Island Lake to Agnews Meadow TH/Bus Stop (PCT - High Route)	2	2.000	2.000	1.500	2.000	2.000
Lateral Trail (Thousand Island Lake to Agnews Meadow TH/Bus Stop (River Route)	2	2.000	2.000	1.500	2.000	2.000
Lateral Trail (Garnet Lake to River Route to Agnews Meadow TH/Bus Stop)	1	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Score Formula/Weight or Lateral Trail is Popular or Used (Score Weight)****	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book
Lateral Trail (Shadow Lake to River Route to Agnews Meadow TH/Bus Stop)	1	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Lateral Trail (Northern Devil's Postpile Jct to Devil's Postpile Campground/Bus Stop)	1	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Lateral Trail (Red Cones to Mammoth Pass to either Lake Mary TH or Horseshoe Lake TH/Mammoth Bus Stop)	1	1.000	1.000	0.500	1.000	1.000
Lateral Trail (Mammoth Pass Cutoff Trail to Twin Lakes TH/Mammoth Bus Stop)	1	1.000	1.000	0.500	1.000	1.000
Lateral Trail (Duck Creek to Duck Pass to Mammoth Bus Stop)	1	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.500
Lateral Trail (Goodale Pass Trail to Vermilion Valley Resort)	2	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	1.500
Lateral Trail (McGee Trail/JMT Jct to McGee Creek TH)	1	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.000
Lateral Trail (Mono Creek Trail/JMT Jct to Mosquito Flat TH via Mono Pass to gain access to Tom's Place for resupply)	1	0.500	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.500
Lateral Trail (from Quail Meadows/Mono Creek to Vermilion Valley Resort via Ferry)	2	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
Lateral Trail (from Quail Meadows/Mono Creek to Vermilion Valley Resort via Trail all the way to VVR)	2	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	1.500
Lateral Trail (from Vermilion Valley Resort to JMT via Bear Ridge Trail)	2	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	1.500
Lateral Trail (from Vermilion Valley Resort to JMT via Bear Creek Trail)	1	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	1.500
Lateral Trail (from JMT on Lake Italy Trail to Italy Pass to Pine Creek TH, to go to Bishop)	1	0.000	0.250	0.500	0.250	0.250
Lateral Trail (from JMT Northern most access trail to Florence Lake then to Muir Trail Ranch)	2	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	1.500

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Score Formula/Weight or Lateral Trail is Popular or Used (Score Weight)****	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book
Lateral Trail (from Muir Trail Ranch to Florence Lake Ferry Landing)	2	2.000	2.000	1.000	1.000	0.000
Lateral Trail (from Muir Trail Ranch headed Southbound to JMT)	2	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	1.500
Lateral Trail (from JMT/Piute Creek Footbridge to Piute Pass TH at Northlake)	2	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	1.500
Lateral Trail (from Bishop Pass/JMT Jct to Bishop Pass TH at Southlake)	2	1.000	1.000	2.000	2.000	1.500
Lateral Trail (from Middle Fork Jmt Jct to Roads End TH via Middle Fork Kings River and Simpson Meadow Trails to reach Cedar Grove)	1	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.000
Lateral Trail (from Taboose Pass/JMT Jct to Taboose Pass to TH to get into Bishop)	2	0.750	1.000	0.750	1.500	1.500
Lateral Trail (from Sawmill Pass/JMT Jct to Sawmill Pass then to Sawmill Creek TH, to get to Independence)	1	0.750	0.750	0.500	0.500	0.750
Lateral Trail (from Woods Creek/JMT Jct to Woods Creek Trail to Roads End TH to get into Cedar Grove)	1	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250
Lateral Trail (from Baxter Pass/JMT Jct to Baxter Pass to Oak Creek TH to get into Independence)	1	0.750	0.750	0.750	0.500	0.500
Lateral Trail (from Kearsarge Pass/JMT Jct to Kearsarge Pass (Northern Route) to Onion Valley TH to get into Independence)	2	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
Lateral Trail (from Lower Vidette Meadow to Bubbs Creek Trail to Roads End TH to get into Cedar Grove)	1	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.250
Lateral Trail (from Shepherd Pass Trail/JMT Jct to Shepherd Pass to Symmes Creek TH to get into Independence)	1	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.500	0.750

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Score Formula/Weight or Lateral Trail is Popular or Used (Score Weight)****	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book
Number of times Lateral Trail is complete or has starting/ending arrow information	=1/5th of times	5.800	6.200	5.600	6.000	3.800
Nbr of Lateral Trails where TH has GPS/Map coordinates shown or documented (Useful If hiker has GPS or GPS app on smartphone)	=1/10th of times	2.000	2.100	2.700	1.900	1.000
Amount of Information (Reviewer's Judgement, ranked in descending order)	=Rank/2	1.500	2.000	2.500	2.000	1.500
Map Usability/Navigational Eye Appeal (Reviewer's Judgement, ranked in descending order)--Tie is allowed.	=Rank/2.5	1.600	2.000	1.600	2.000	1.600

**Table 3 – Sum of Ranks and Recommendation Ranking**

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book
Sum of Ranks	58.556	77.750	78.694	66.693	56.416
Sum of Ranks rounded to nearest higher number divided by 10 -- done to make outcome significant and correct for insignificant tiny differences	60	80	80	70	60
Final Recommendation Ranking	Tie for 3rd	Tie for 1st	Tie for 1st	2nd	Tie for 3rd

**Table 4 – Which Document Covers Lateral Trails most thoroughly?**

Appendix Calculations (to aid in review text)	Score Formula/Weight or Lateral Trail is Popular or Used (Score Weight)****	Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Data Book	Erik the Black's JMT Atlas	Postholer's JMT Map and Data Book
Sum of Ranks for Lateral Trail Coverage		44.550	45.300	42.550	44.400	36.550
Relative position of Sum of Ranks for Lateral Trail	$=176/(MAX(\$176:\$M\$76))$	0.983	1.000	0.939	0.980	0.807

### All of the Authors Provide GPS or Electronic Map Files for the JMT

In the review above, I did not cover if the authors provide GPS files or electronic versions of their maps. I limited my review there to the information in the printed document only. However, all authors provide their information, or extra information in downloadable files.

[Tom Harrison](#) in conjunction with International Mapping<sup>ix</sup> provide maps, separately priced, in digital form that work with the GPS on the Iphone. See the next section for what they provide.

Elizabeth Wenk, with my computer and Excel help, has supplied the [John Muir Trail Yahoo Group](#) and [Climber.org](#) GPS files and Excel Spreadsheets that were used in the creation of her 5<sup>th</sup> edition JMT guidebook (both the full book and the data book).<sup>x</sup>

[Erik Asorson](#) (Erik the Black), provides with his book GPS file<sup>xi</sup>s and three digital planning document downloads for doing a JMT in his premium "John Muir Trail Package Deal".<sup>xii</sup> I have not used his GPS files and cannot speak from experience about how much additional information it provides.

[National Geographic](#) provides a GPX file for their waypoints and landmarks.<sup>xiii</sup>

The [link](#) for obtaining Postholer's JMT map guide is to a page that shows 4 electronic download variants of the JMT (hiking north or south, in 1:63,360 or 1:31,680 scale).

## Not Reviewed in the Dimension Tables Are Electronic-Only JMT Map Apps or GPS Device Mapping Aid

Not reviewed in the tables, but touched on here, are electronic-only JMT Map apps for smartphones or GPS devices. Postholer's maps, since they can be printed out, are not electronic-only.

In a future project I plan to contact them to see to what extent their apps support lateral trail information, to what extent to each trailhead (in quartile percentages), and if the GPS endpoints are included in their apps for lateral trails.

Here are the identified applications, in the below table. The app I use extensively and love is Halfmile's PCT for the Iphone. It is very good at lateral trail information in that it showed me if I was on trail (the lateral trail) all the way from the Le Conte Canyon / JMT / Bishop Pass Junction to the Southlake TH (parking lot), and same for coming from Onion Valley TH up and over Kearsarge Pass to the JMT. It also works as a great reference check where you are at on the JMT trail when the JMT and the PCT are one and the same trail (which is about 85% of the time).

There are some reviews of some of the JMT apps. I refer the reader to Inga Aksamit's [review](#), "Top 10 apps, maps, guides and gadgets for the John Muir Trail". An important item to consider is how to charge (or recharge) your smartphone that contains a JMT map app or GPS mapping aid. What I personally have used for two JMT hikes is the Goal Zero [Nomad 3.5 solar panel and Switch 8 recharger](#). If you are sharing gear, two Switch 8 rechargers and one Nomad 3.5 solar panel is all two people need (one charger each, ½ panel each), as on a typical day, one panel can charge two rechargers. I use four wire-gate style mini-carabiners from [Zpacks](#) to attach the panel to the top of my pack while I hike.

## The Best Accessory For Those Who Leave Electronics At Home

A dependable, lightweight analog altimeter is all one minimally needs beyond your map to know where you are on the trail. As the trail basically is a trip (at any one point of the hike) between two passes, where you know if you are descending or ascending, knowing what altitude you are at, will enable you to closely pinpoint where you are on the map. The [Sun Altimeter 2013](#) is a great non-electronic altimeter, very accurate, goes up to 15,000 feet, easy to reset, and lightweight. A compass would also be helpful if you have to exit the trail and the number of miles is considerable and your map does not show you all the twists-and-turns to take on the exit.

## Comments by the Map Guide Author Made Specifically for This Review

I asked each of the authors to provide commentary specially tailored for the audience of this review. Below are the comments provided in response to my request. I thank them for this courtesy. The order they appear is in the left-to-right order shown in the matrix above. Their quotes are indented below. Where their comment called for a response by me, or additional information needed to be conveyed, my response is NOT indented.

### Via Christopher Knoll at National Geographic:

For more than 125 years the National Geographic Society has been at the forefront of exploration and discovery. With the new “John Muir Trail Topographic Map Guide”, National Geographic is taking another step in opening the untamed world to the modern-day explorer. Through our Trails Illustrated line we have published a series of topographic maps that cover the spine of the Sierra Nevada. Our goal with the “John Muir Topographic Map Guide” was to create a single, high-quality product that would cover the entire length of the trail, provide important information to the traveler, and be user-friendly. With this in mind, the Topographic Map Guide is designed as a map-centric Swiss-army knife for the traveler.

Extensive research was conducted using a multitude of sources throughout the production process to differentiate this map product. As pointed out in this review, National Geographic’s Topographic Map Guide has the highest rating for map usability and navigational eye appeal as well as more lateral trail information compared to the other products. National Geographic Maps also teamed up with the Pacific Crest Trail Association to review and provide information. The design of this map guide allows hikers to easily locate their position on the page as they hike through some of the most beautiful scenery in the United States. What’s more, all proceeds from the purchase of National Geographic maps support the Society’s vital conservation, scientific research, and education programs.

Note, the comments of National Geographic were done when the draft only included the first edition of Erik the Black’s JMT Guide. With Erik’s second edition, the two guides tie in first place for “map usability and navigational eye appeal.”

Additionally, I asked Mr. Knoll what are the minimum number of supplemental National Geographic Map products to purchase to finish out all of the lateral trail information all the way to the trailhead of those lateral trails where their JMT product did not show 100% of the lateral trails. Mr. Knoll recommended their “205, Sequoia and Kings canyon National Parks, 1:80,000” and their “809, Mammoth Lakes, Mono Divide (Inyo and Sierra National Forests), 1:63,360” maps. Note, even with their JMT and these two additional maps, there is one lateral trail where coverage is not 100% and that is the “Lateral Trail (from Sawmill Pass/JMT Jct to Sawmill Pass then to Sawmill Creek TH, to get to Independence)”. Mr. Knoll informed me that: “JMT junction to Sawmill Creek Road is 11.3 miles via the Sawmill Meadows Trail. JMT Topo Map Guide shows 7.2 miles, 64% of lateral trail. Trails Illustrated 205 shows 8.7 miles, 77% of lateral trail.”

### From Tom Harrison:

“All the products you reviewed are really good, and they each have a different way of looking at the John Muir Trail. I recommend that your readers buy ALL of them!

Thanks again for doing this research and making it available to the outdoor community.”

Additionally, Tom Harrison provided some additional comments that need to be shared here. I asked him about his recommendation to buy all of them. His added explanation is definitely worth sharing.

“We have reprinted the JMT set several times since your 2007 copy. Also, we do not sell through Amazon but some other retailers do sell our maps there. We cannot guarantee that you will get the latest version on Amazon because we do not know how current the resellers’ inventory is. We only sell the most current editions on our web site at <http://www.tomharrisonmaps.com>.

To get lateral coverage of the JMT from my apps you would need the Mt Whitney High Country, Kings Canyon High Country, Mono Divide High Country, Mammoth High Country, and Yosemite High Country. Those apps cover the same area as the printed maps, and those printed maps were/are the base maps for the JMT set.

As for my comment, note that I said to buy all the products, not to bring all the products. They all have value in their own way and a lot of people do a lot of research before a big trip like the JMT. I encourage people to get as much information as they can, distill it into what they need, and put together the guides and maps that suit their own particular needs.”

#### **From Elizabeth Wenk:**

“Both my data book (reviewed here) and my full-length JMT guidebook are data-packed and accurate. I have personally visited every campsite listed in my guidebooks at least twice and provide not just a location but the information for people to select the “right” campsite for them. Locations are given as GPS coordinates, plotted on the maps, and by distance along the trail. The trails shown on the maps are based on my own GPS tracks, corrected to match high resolution aerial photos. I have hiked all but 2 of the lateral trails described in their entirety, most of them within the last 7 years. As described below, I consider the two main selling points of the book the maps and the breadth and accuracy of data provided. Labeled panoramas from many of the passes along the JMT are an extra bonus to help people be part of their surroundings.

For the 2014 update of my full-length JMT guidebook, I decided to create my own topo maps; these same maps are in the databook. The maps are built from the basics – the edited GPS track I collected on my 2013 JMT hike, GPS tracks of lateral trails, the digital elevation models (DEM) available from the USGS, and government data layers for streams, lakes, and roads. This allowed me to tailor the maps specifically to JMT users and also to ensure that I agree with every feature shown on the maps – especially the locations of every junction and trail. USGS maps, and maps derived from their data, have many trail segments in quite incorrect locations. Among other changes, I chose a 200-foot contour interval, versus the 80-foot contour interval used on similar scale USGS topos. This allows users to visualize the terrain, without making the maps too busy – I made the assumption that few people were using these maps for off-trail navigation and therefore did not require additional contour resolution. I also carefully centered the maps to show the route of the JMT as well as the surrounding ridges, giving a sense of place. One of my frustrations with many maps is that index contours have insufficient

labels, often making it difficult to ascertain the elevation of a given contour; I therefore worked to ensure this wasn't a problem on my maps. The locations of all campsites described in the appendix are plotted on the map, together with ranger stations, trail junctions, and distances at each trail junction.

Although I was unable to show the complete extent of all lateral trails, I made sure that 3 of the most important exits routes (Lake Edison to VVR, Bishop Pass to South Lake, and Kearsarge Pass to Onion Valley) were shown in their entirety. I also included "extra" maps for the Devils Postpile/Reds Meadow and Lake Edison areas, where a dense tangle of trails and many incorrect maps for the areas lead hikers astray.

The data book also contains basic introductory material and appendices with much additional information: 1) the distance and elevation gain/loss along all lateral trails used to exit the JMT in an emergency or when section hiking; 2) transit information and shuttle service contacts, should you need to exit at a different trailhead than expected; 3) details on all campsites, ranger stations, and food storage boxes; and 4) maps of the three standard endpoints, Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows, and Lone Pine.

While new updates are not on the immediate horizon, in the next edition I will include labels for all lateral trails and distances to the nearest trailhead directly on the map."

#### **From Erik Asorson (Erik the Black):**

"John Muir Trail Pocket Atlas 2nd Edition provides essential maps and trail information in a format that is lightweight, easy to pack and easy to read. Includes: full-color topographic maps, data tables, elevation profiles, resupply guide, town maps, GPS waypoints, public transportation, planning and permit information. The atlas measures 5 x 8 x 0.1 inches and weighs an ultralight 2.4 ounces."

Erik Asorson commented to me in another email a point that made me question one metric in my scoring. I had asked him why his final 2<sup>nd</sup> edition book lacked any phone numbers when he had earlier indicated to me they would be included. He responded:

"I decided to leave that out. My rationale is that a cell phone is probably not going to work on the trail due to lack of coverage and I don't want to encourage the false sense of security most people already have about carrying their phones. In the case that a phone did work in an emergency, I think the best thing to do would be to just dial 911 and let the operator coordinate the emergency services. They have access to up to date contact info for different agencies that might change after the book is published and they know who to call for different types of emergencies in different areas better than I would."

I went back to the review looking at that metric and see there are two metrics that score for phone numbers: "Extent of Emergency Information Given" and "Number of reference telephone numbers displayed". In the first, 2 points were awarded for emergency information provided. If I removed that score, nobody's relative position shifted. In fact, if I removed the score of 2 points for permit office information, again nobody's

relative position shifted. Everybody provided Ranger Station locations. From my vantage, having done the JMT seven times and seen the information needs of not only my groups but others who ask me for information on the trail. Contact information about boarding, transportation, and resupply services are often needed. I do not know how helpful 411 would be to obtain that information and certainly know one could not use 911 to get help there. However, one can print out and bring the one sheet [JMT Cribsheet](#) and have that information regardless of the map guide they choose.

### **From K. Scott Parks (Postholer):**

"First, a big "Thanks" to Roleigh for putting together the review. Hopefully, it will help you in making an informed decision!

Noting what is not readily obvious, 4 sets of the Postholer JMT maps are freely available, not just 1. Northbound, southbound and at 2 scales 1:63,360 and 1:31,680. These are PDF files made for printing on 8.5 x 11 paper or just carry them on your favorite electronic device.

The small scale 1:63,360 are great overview maps at 1 mile per inch, but like all maps at this scale much detail is lost. Not only are the smaller trail deviations lost, but land feature names like lakes, creeks, ridges, etc are lost as well. However, this scale is great for the 'big picture'.

The larger scale 1:31,680 maps at 1/2 mile per inch fill in all the gaps. You can see the switchbacks, lake shorelines, glacial moraines and generally get a better feel of the local area.

As a test for this review we made a set of maps at a scale of 1:80,000 and it improved our score. Put another way, unusable maps were an improvement. So, we think your review criteria might differ.

The map land cover reflects the actual vegetation on the ground, evergreen, deciduous, mixed, shrub and urban. You'll also find fire perimeters for the last 6 years. On other maps you'll only see hand drawn woodland polygons that generally denote forested areas. Other maps are made with 30-50 year scanned topo maps. Postholer JMT maps are created from the contour lines up, using the most current data available.

You'll also find a detailed elevation chart on each map showing lowest/highest elevations, trail distance on map and the 3 biggest climbs. Also noted are the closest resupplies within 90 miles of map center. The map declination is there also, calculated for June 2015 at map center. The public land areas are noted in the legend also.

While we've focused on bringing you some truly unique and usable maps, the maps lack ancillary information such as contact information. While contact information is certainly important to hikers, collecting volatile information wasn't our focus, creating the best possible maps is.

There is also a free data book available on the map preview/download page, which can be found here: <http://postholer.com/JMTMaps> "

I agree with Scott Parks here about the pros and cons of the two map scales. One could print out his two JMT maps (both SOBO scales) and have the one scale be on one side of the map paper, and the other on alternating (every other sheet) backs, as the one scale is 34 pages long, while the other is 17 pages long.

### Table 5 - Electronic Maps and GPS Files for Smartphones and GPS Devices

Note: some of these resources cost money, some are free for "registering". You will note that Tom Harrison has two mapping partners. I emailed him asking what is the difference between the two mapping partner products, as I only have those of Earthrover now. He replied (verbatim):

"The Earthrover app was developed by my first developer partner and yes, it has a pretty basic interface. It does the job with a minimal amount of bells and whistles, but sometimes you want more than just the basics. The International Mapping app was developed by another app partner and they had some fairly sophisticated coders who put a lot more work into the app. You can search by trail, facilities, land features, water features, etc. The underlying map for both apps is still a digital version of my printed map but the IM app just has a lot more interesting features. Whether it is more intuitive or not...I guess your mileage may vary. Digital apps have some inherent limitations and some people are just better at figuring out the best way to use an app."

The table below is sorted by Description then by Device.

Device	Description	Link	Exists on my Iphone
Kindle or PDF Reading Device (Iphone/Android/Kindle)	Elizabeth Wenk, John Muir Trail Data Book, 2014 (Kindle format)	<a href="http://www.amazon.com/John-Muir-Trail-Data-Book-ebook/dp/B00LDYFF4S/">http://www.amazon.com/John-Muir-Trail-Data-Book-ebook/dp/B00LDYFF4S/</a>	
Kindle or PDF Reading Device	Elizabeth Wenk, John Muir Trail:	<a href="http://www.amazon.com/John-Muir-Trail-Essential-Americas-ebook/dp/B00LKCPVKG/">http://www.amazon.com/John-Muir-Trail-Essential-Americas-ebook/dp/B00LKCPVKG/</a> If you want the JMT guide by Elizabeth Wenk in NOBO format, this is the only format available to	Yes

Device	Description	Link	Exists on my Iphone
(Iphone/Android/Kindle)	South to North edition: The Essential Guide to Hiking America's Most Famous Trail [Kindle Edition]	purchase.	
GPS Devices/Smartphone Apps that support GPX importing	Elizabeth Wenk's GPS files for her 5 <sup>th</sup> edition, John Muir Trail (2014) book	<a href="http://climber.org/data/JMT_Wenk.html">http://climber.org/data/JMT_Wenk.html</a>	Plan to for 2015
GPS Devices/Smartphone Apps that support GPX importing	Erik Asorson (Erik the Black)'s GPS file for his John Muir Trail Package Deal	See "John Muir Trail Package Deal" on this page, <a href="http://blackwoodspress.com/store/">http://blackwoodspress.com/store/</a>	
Android	Guthook's Guide: PCT Sierra High Sierra Attitude, LLC	<a href="https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.highsierraattitude.pctsierras">https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.highsierraattitude.pctsierras</a>	
Iphone	Guthook's Pacific Crest Trail Guide By Guthook Hikes, LLC	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/guthooks-pacific-crest-trail/id843792262?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/guthooks-pacific-crest-trail/id843792262?mt=8</a>	Yes
Iphone	Guthook's PCT: Central California By Guthook Hikes, LLC	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/guthooks-pct-central-california/id509016353?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/guthooks-pct-central-california/id509016353?mt=8</a>	Yes
Android	Halfmile's PCT By David Lippke	<a href="http://www.pctmap.net/android-app/">http://www.pctmap.net/android-app/</a> <a href="https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.tadteam.halfmilepct">https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.tadteam.halfmilepct</a>	
GPS Devices/Smartphone Apps that support GPX importing	Halfmile's PCT By David Lippke	<a href="http://www.pctmap.net/gps-url-loading/">http://www.pctmap.net/gps-url-loading/</a>	

Device	Description	Link	Exists on my IPhone
Iphone	Halfmile's PCT By David Lippke	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/halfmiles-pct/id521937514?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/halfmiles-pct/id521937514?mt=8</a>	Yes
Android	John Muir Trail Hiker By Guthook Hikes, LLC	<a href="https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.highsierraattitude.jmtguide">https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.highsierraattitude.jmtguide</a>	
Iphone	John Muir Trail Hiker By Guthook Hikes, LLC	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/john-muir-trail-hiker/id654614050?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/john-muir-trail-hiker/id654614050?mt=8</a> <a href="http://www.guthookhikes.com/apps">http://www.guthookhikes.com/apps</a>	Yes
Kindle or PDF Reading Device (Iphone/Android/Kindle)	Kathleen Dodge's Day and Section Hikes: John Muir Trail (Kindle Edition)	<a href="http://www.amazon.com/Day-Section-Hikes-John-Trail-ebook/dp/B006IZCFJK/">http://www.amazon.com/Day-Section-Hikes-John-Trail-ebook/dp/B006IZCFJK/</a>  This covers a few of the more popular section hikes of the JMT that involve some lateral trails, such as the Roads End segment, Onion Valley TH, South Lake TH, Florence Lake TH, and Vermilion Resort.	
Android	MapPack GPS Navigator Yosemite Appydays Ilc	<a href="https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.appydays.pelapps.mappackyos">https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.appydays.pelapps.mappackyos</a>	
Kindle or PDF Reading Device (Iphone/Android/Kindle)	Postholer's John Muir Trail Northbound and Southbound Maps, 2014 (PDF format)	<a href="http://postholer.com/databook/index.php?trail_id=4">http://postholer.com/databook/index.php?trail_id=4</a>	Plan to for 2015
Android	Tom Harrison Maps Griffin Systems, LLC (Includes Kings Canyon High Country and Mammoth High Country Tom Harrison Maps)	<a href="https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.griffinsystems.thmaps">https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.griffinsystems.thmaps</a>	
Iphone	Tom Harrison: Mammoth High	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tom-harrison-mammoth-high/id513305346?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tom-harrison-mammoth-high/id513305346?mt=8</a>	

Device	Description	Link	Exists on my iPhone
	Country 2012 By International Mapping		
<b>Iphone</b>	Tom Harrison: Mono Divide High Country 2012 By International Mapping	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tom-harrison-mono-divide-high/id578638705?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tom-harrison-mono-divide-high/id578638705?mt=8</a>	
<b>Iphone</b>	Tom Harrison: Mt Whitney High Country 2012 By International Mapping	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tom-harrison-mt-whitney-high/id573197669?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tom-harrison-mt-whitney-high/id573197669?mt=8</a>	
<b>Iphone</b>	Tom Harrison: Yosemite High Country 2012 By International Mapping	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tom-harrison-yosemite-high/id526147144?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tom-harrison-yosemite-high/id526147144?mt=8</a>	
<b>Iphone</b>	Tom Harrison's John Muir Trail Map By Earthrover Software	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/john-muir-trail-map/id379996717?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/john-muir-trail-map/id379996717?mt=8</a>	Yes
<b>Iphone</b>	Tom Harrison's MammothMap - Mammoth High Country Trail Map By Earthrover Software	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mammothmap-mammoth-high-country/id306917500?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mammothmap-mammoth-high-country/id306917500?mt=8</a>	Yes
<b>Iphone</b>	Tom Harrison's Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park Recreation	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sequoia-kings-canyon-national/id311431307?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sequoia-kings-canyon-national/id311431307?mt=8</a>	Yes

Device	Description	Link	Exists on my Iphone
	Map By Earthrover Software		
Iphone	Tom Harrison's Yosemite National Park Recreation Map By Earthrover Software	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/yosemite-national-park-recreation/id317791094?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/yosemite-national-park-recreation/id317791094?mt=8</a>	Yes
Selected Garmin Devices	Trailhead Series - Pacific Crest Trail micro SD/SD card or Download format	<a href="https://buy.garmin.com/en-US/US/prod91299.html">https://buy.garmin.com/en-US/US/prod91299.html</a>  In 2011, there was so much snow on the JMT that the trail was not visible for many miles as snow covered the ground. I used a Garmin Etrex GPS with this Micro SD Card and was able to visibly see the trail as I walked.	
GPS Devices/Smartphone Apps that support GPX importing	Various JohnMuirTrail Yahoo Group Member Uploaded GPX and KML files	Join the JohnMuirTrail Yahoo Group and then visit these folders: <a href="https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/johnmuirtrail/files/Planning%20and%20Transportation/">https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/johnmuirtrail/files/Planning%20and%20Transportation/</a> <a href="https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/johnmuirtrail/links/all/Maps_and_navigation_001262976905">https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/johnmuirtrail/links/all/Maps_and_navigation_001262976905</a> You can join the group here: <a href="https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/johnmuirtrail/info">https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/johnmuirtrail/info</a>	
Iphone	Yosemite Valley Trail Map By Earthrover Software	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/yosemite-valley-trail-map/id310445115?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/yosemite-valley-trail-map/id310445115?mt=8</a>	

## An Easy Way to Raise the Scores of the JMT Guides Reviewed

The reader may already have one of these five documents or based upon a visual review of the documents (before purchasing) or based upon reviewing the individual dimension data given above, may decide to get a document that tied for second place. For instance, Erik the Black's JMT guide and Tom Harrison's JMT package I have used (not in the same year) on one or more JMT hikes (at least two apiece). One can supplement these guides with a printed (or saved to your smartphone) copies of the John Muir Trail Cribsheet<sup>xiv</sup>, authored by myself and data confirmed periodically by Karpani Devi, plus a copy of Elizabeth Wenk's Master Excel Spreadsheet of her 5<sup>th</sup> edition's JMT Guide listing of campsites, waypoints and junctions.<sup>xv</sup> Most users who do this will tailor the Master Spreadsheet to show where they plan to camp each night

and only show the columns they want that will appear either in 8.5x11" paper or 8.5x14" paper, printed back-to-back, stapled. The JMT Cribsheet fits on one sheet of paper, printed back-to-back. It contains far more phone numbers and addresses contained in any of the guides listed above.

Some of the guide books (or map packages) reviewed scored low on the lack of reference information, including phone numbers shown. If a person brings the one-sheet (printed back-to-back) [JMT Cribsheet](#) in addition to the guide book you pick, the scores would benefit from an additional 12 percent up to an additional 33 percent just by bringing this one sheet of paper with you! See the below table 6.

**Table 6 – Improve the JMT Guide you prefer with the JMT Cribsheet (Sheet of Paper) Included**

Comparison Metric/Dimension	Score Formula/Weight or Lateral Trail is Popular or Used (Score Weight)	JMT Cribsheet by Roleigh Martin and Karpani Devi	Highest Achieving JMT Map Guide in these Two Metrics
Number of reference telephone numbers displayed	=(C2/MAX(\$C\$2:\$H\$2))*3	79.00	28.00
Original score for above row if not compared against the JMT Cribsheet:			3.00
Score for above row if compared against JMT Cribsheet:		3.00	1.06
Extent of Emergency Information Given	=# of Types * 2 (Max 8)	Ranger Station Locations, Emergency #s, and Permit Office #s, Miscellaneous (Transportation Solutions, Boarding Solutions, Packer/Supply Solutions)	Ranger Station Locations, Emergency #s, and Permit Office #s
Original score for above row if not compared against the JMT Cribsheet:			6.00
Score for above row if compared against JMT Cribsheet:		8.00	6.00

As you can see, bringing along just the JMT Cribsheet improves your JMT guide significantly. It's obvious, print out and bring the free [JMT Cribsheet!](#)

## Commentary, Suggestions and Recommendations

Tables 3 above gives the bottom line recommendations. Two documents, that of Elizabeth Wenk and National Geographic, tie for first place. Erik the Black's 2<sup>nd</sup> edition JMT Guide places second; the other two fee-based products tie for third place. If you print out and bring along the free [JMT cribsheet](#), the products become much more competitive. Nearly all if not precisely all of the five products can be judged #1 on one or more important set of metrics. Although the for-free product ranked third, Postholer's product is available in two map scales and I did not combine the best score points of each scale and give him a combined score.<sup>xvi</sup> Doing so, would have required me to do something similar for the other vendors, all of whom provide GPX files, and the lateral coverage on the GPX files were not analyzed here. Furthermore, two of the vendors have additional map products (National Geographic and Tom Harrison). Had I done this extra inclusion, the rankings would have shifted, putting one or more into a higher bracket than shown above. All of these products are superb and worthy of purchase, I agree wholeheartedly with Tom Harrison's comment above.

If you have Microsoft Excel you can download the [Excel scoring spreadsheet](#) used in this review, and change the weights of the various metrics, including setting some metrics to zero if they are not important to you. You can determine based upon your own criteria what is the single best guide that meets it.

Also join the John Muir Trail Yahoo Group, which has over 3400 members and has the world's largest collection of links and files on the JMT. There is a complete folder of GPS files there that can be downloaded if you become a (free) member of the Yahoo Group. Visit and join here: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/johnmuirtrail/info>

If one has a smartphone, they can download larger, complementary maps which will show the lateral trails in their completeness. See [Table 5](#) - Electronic Maps and GPS Files for Smartphones and GPS Devices above. If you have a smartphone, I recommend you download both scaled SOBO JMT maps from Postholer onto your smartphone in the event you do not choose to go with either of his maps for your printed version. Note what I mentioned about Postholer's map in the footnotes, that he colors the lateral trails that go to Trailheads from the JMT in orange which makes it very easy to see which lateral trails are exit opportunities versus those which are not.

**Table 7 – What Key Perspective Makes Each JMT Guide Rated #1?**

Guidebook Name	Key Metric Where Guide Ranks #1	Comment
Tom Harrison JMT Map-Pack	Ties with National Geographic in that if you combine the noted above supplemental maps, they provide 100% lateral trail coverage.	Tom Harrison’s additional maps are available in both print and electronic versions.
National Geographic JMT Topographic Map Guide	Ties with Tom Harrison in that if you combine the noted above supplemental maps, they provide 100% lateral trail coverage.	In addition, National Geographic in just the JMT Map Guide alone, scored the highest in lateral trail coverage and tied for first in “Map Usability/Navigational Eye Appeal (Reviewer’s Judgement)”
Elizabeth Wenk’s JMT Data Book	Had highest raw (unadjusted) review score, across the board. (When adjusted, National Geographic ties with Wenk’s guide.)	In addition, Elizabeth Wenk’s book is the only book that provides a panoramic view of named peaks at key passes. This is a great addition. Also highly appreciated is the zoom-in, separate map page on Devil’s Postpile area, which is the most confusing area to walk through without added map detail. Last, she provides detailed information on all possible campsites available.
Erik the Black’s JMT Atlas	Ties for first in “Map Usability/Navigational Eye Appeal (Reviewer’s Judgement”	In addition Erik’s book is the lightest weight JMT guide that is published in book form; his 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition book ranks 98% in lateral trail coverage, hardly different from the highest rated map guide in lateral trail coverage.
Postholer’s JMT Map and Data Book	Best price (free) JMT map guide, and has the most zoomed-in map coverage of the JMT.	Postholer’s other, free, SOBO JMT Map Guide that has a 1:31,680 scale provides the most detailed, zoomed-in topological guide on the trail. If one prints his two scaled maps on waterproof, tear-resistant paper (where the back of every other sheet has the 1:63,360 scale map), one would know more visually about the trail than all other map guides.

**What I Personally Take on a JMT Hike and Advise for Those Hiking With Me**

I personally own and have used all the guides reviewed in past JMT hikes except for the National Geographic guidebook as it was not published prior to my 2014 JMT hike (I hike the JMT each year, and will be doing my 8<sup>th</sup> annual JMT hike in 2015). I recommend to my hiking group that they bring a different guide book than what I bring so that overall we cover the most amount of territory/options the best. I do have printed out for the hiking group the JMT Yahoo Group [JMT Cribsheet](#) and the [Master Spreadsheet](#) of Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Guide Book, tailored (highlighted) for the planned camp spots. The printing is done in duplex mode, meaning each side of a sheet of paper contains printing. I use legal paper for the Master Spreadsheet of Elizabeth Wenk's JMT Guide Book tailored for our hike. As we get to each resupply point, we discard pages that have been traveled in a trash bin.

On my Iphone I currently have those items indicated in the far right column in the above [Table 5](#).

I plan on uploading the GPX SOBO file<sup>xvii</sup> for the JMT from Elizabeth Wenk's Master Spreadsheet on my Delorme [Inreach](#) Explorer GPS/Satellite Messaging device<sup>xviii</sup> I bought for 2014 and love. If another snowbound year occurs like 2011, I will use these GPX waypoints to stay on the trail even when it is not visible due to snow. I only used the Delorme device in 2014 for messaging<sup>xix</sup> (I love that it can obtain daily weather forecasts for the precise location one is hiking in). 2014 had so much rain, that it was good to know what was in front of us as we modified our schedule to handle horrid storm days.

## Ending Summary Statement

All five products are excellent products. I have used all of them except Postholer's and National Geographic's as both of their current-version reviewed products were released after I finished my 2014 JMT hike. I am fortunate in that the hiking group I form cooperate with me and together we end up having almost if not all of the products available to use on a hike (but not for each person, however). Thus when I go over the next day's plan with them in the evening, I find I'll look and emphasize one product over the other to make certain points.

## Review Endnotes:

<sup>i</sup> In backpacking magazines, the John Muir Trail has consistently been voted as the world's most famous remote wilderness trail. Elizabeth Wenk's subtitle to her book, John Muir Trail, is "The essential guide to hiking America's most famous trail."

<sup>ii</sup> Search Amazon with these words: "John Muir Trail in books 2014" (without the quotes) then count the distinct results with 2014 release dates.

<sup>iii</sup> Some texts still refer to the JMT as 210 miles long, but if you include going all the way to Whitney Portal, Elizabeth Wenk's GPS data shows it to be 220.8 miles long.

<sup>iv</sup> Permission granted by John Ladd and the individual photographers to use this snippet. Click on the link to see commentary and credit for each picture shown. See <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.703545913060808.1073741829.703516563063743&type=3>

<sup>v</sup> Permission has been sought to display the snippet of that Facebook page referred to in the immediate above endnote.

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<sup>vi</sup> The Excel Document is located here and is available to view or download.

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7L\\_TrVYTZWZRdnphYIAwdkZSm8/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7L_TrVYTZWZRdnphYIAwdkZSm8/view?usp=sharing)

It can only be used for personal use, any commercial or republication / reposting on the internet or on any electronic media must obtain beforehand written permission from Roleigh Martin ([roleigh@pobox.com](mailto:roleigh@pobox.com)). The Excel Spreadsheet is copyrighted by Roleigh Martin, 2014. All Rights Reserved.

<sup>vii</sup> From feedback I got after the final draft, the question was raised as to whether or not a map could have too many, irrelevant icons on the map, increasing a review score but not helping hikers. I agree. I am not going to change the score algorithm for this review but will in future reviews. It deserves considerable thought as to the “optimal” number and types of icons on a hiking map.

<sup>viii</sup> Wenk’s data book gives the campsite GPS coordinates, which means (assuming you are carrying a GPS) that you can find them easily. Elizabeth Wenk informs me that she heard from National Geographic that future printings of National Geographic’s JMT Guide will credit her for the camp sites they pinpoint by icon in their guide.

<sup>ix</sup> See Tom Harrison Maps listed on this page - <http://internationalmapping.com/app-titles>

<sup>x</sup> Obtain your download from [http://climber.org/data/JMT\\_Wenk.html](http://climber.org/data/JMT_Wenk.html)

<sup>xi</sup> The link to his GPS file(s) is on page “G” of his book. Erik also offers at <http://blackwoodspress.com/store/> JMT Package deal that offers additional documentation (in e-book form) for JMT hikers but his base package includes the book and the GPS files.

<sup>xii</sup> See this page, <http://blackwoodspress.com/store/>

<sup>xiii</sup> See link on this page: [http://www.natgeomaps.com/ti\\_1001](http://www.natgeomaps.com/ti_1001) -- the download link is here: <http://images.natgeomaps.com/GPX/JohnMuirTrail.gpx>

<sup>xiv</sup> Obtain your download from <http://climber.org/data/JMTCribSheet.pdf>

<sup>xv</sup> Obtain your download from [http://climber.org/data/JMT\\_Wenk.html](http://climber.org/data/JMT_Wenk.html)

<sup>xvi</sup> K. Scott Parks asked me to only score one of his two different scaled-maps. I chose the one giving him the best score, due to increased lateral trail coverage.

<sup>xvii</sup> I spent a couple of days figuring out how to most easily upload GPS (GPX) files to a Delorme and found this software the hands-down the best to use, it costs a little money but they support you if you have questions. <http://www.expertgps.com/default.asp>

<sup>xviii</sup> See <http://www.inreachdelorme.com/product-info/inreach-explorer.php>

<sup>xix</sup> Having done the JMT 7 times, I know the trail very well, it’s when it’s covered in snow that I want a GPS device.