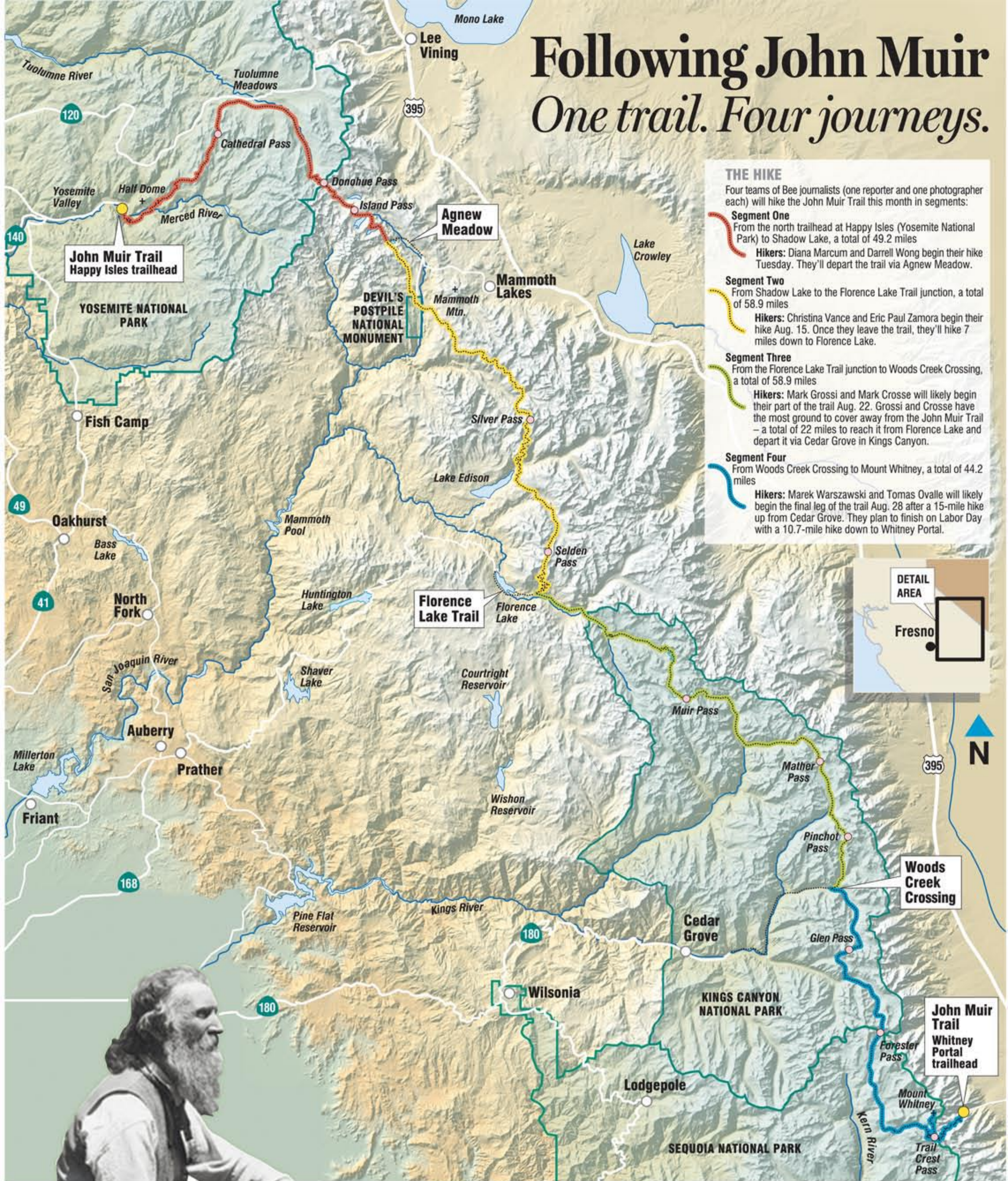


Following John Muir

One trail. Four journeys.



THE HIKE

Four teams of Bee journalists (one reporter and one photographer each) will hike the John Muir Trail this month in segments:

Segment One

From the north trailhead at Happy Isles (Yosemite National Park) to Shadow Lake, a total of 49.2 miles

Hikers: Diana Marcum and Darrell Wong begin their hike Tuesday. They'll depart the trail via Agnew Meadow.

Segment Two

From Shadow Lake to the Florence Lake Trail junction, a total of 58.9 miles

Hikers: Christina Vance and Eric Paul Zamora begin their hike Aug. 15. Once they leave the trail, they'll hike 7 miles down to Florence Lake.

Segment Three

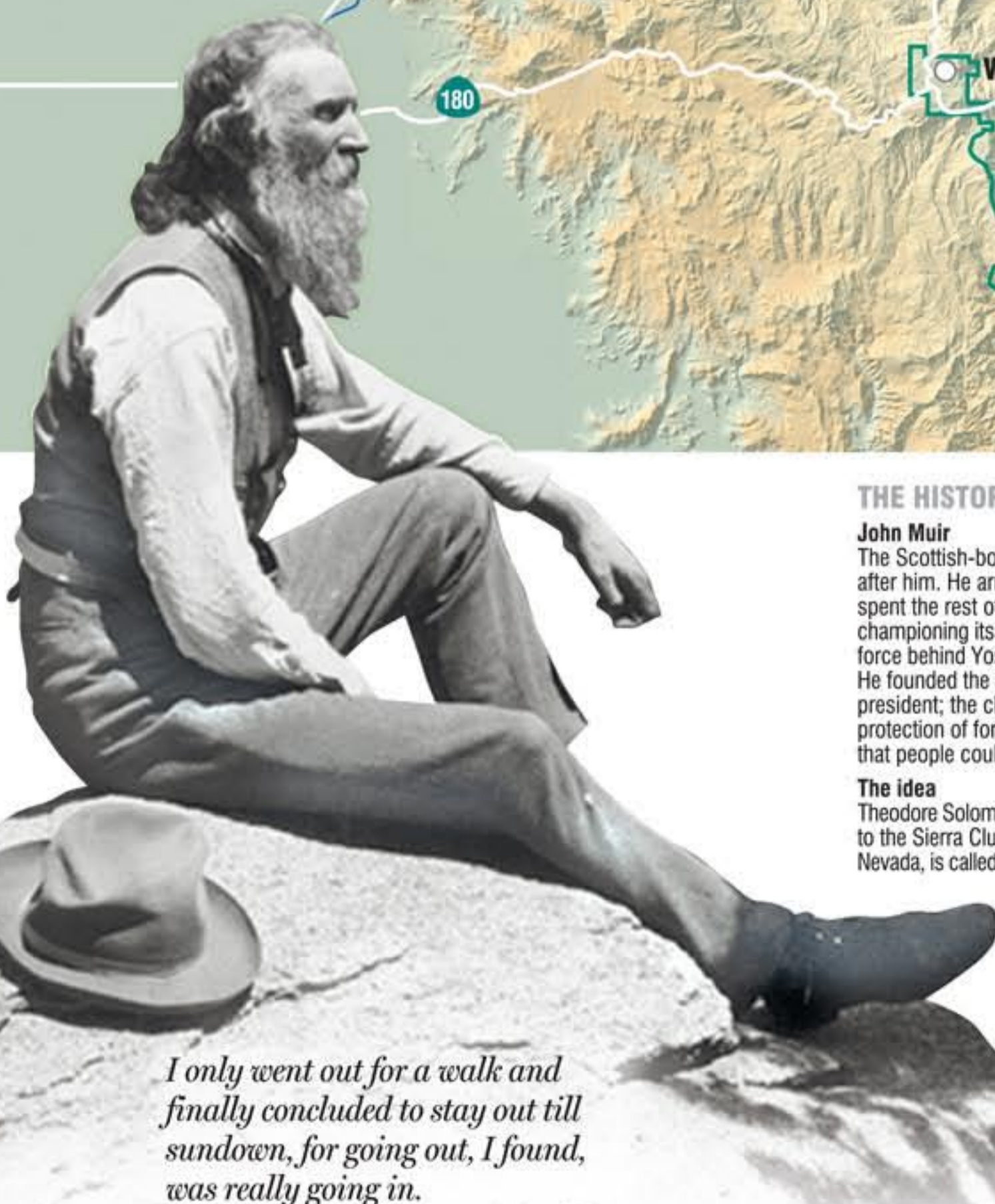
From the Florence Lake Trail junction to Woods Creek Crossing, a total of 58.9 miles

Hikers: Mark Grossi and Mark Crosse will likely begin their part of the trail Aug. 22. Grossi and Crosse have the most ground to cover away from the John Muir Trail — a total of 22 miles to reach it from Florence Lake and depart it via Cedar Grove in Kings Canyon.

Segment Four

From Woods Creek Crossing to Mount Whitney, a total of 44.2 miles

Hikers: Marek Warszawski and Tomas Ovalle will likely begin the final leg of the trail Aug. 28 after a 15-mile hike up from Cedar Grove. They plan to finish on Labor Day with a 10.7-mile hike down to Whitney Portal.



I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.

— John Muir

THE HISTORY

John Muir

The Scottish-born naturalist never hiked the trail named after him. He arrived in California in 1868 at age 29 and spent the rest of his life enjoying the wilderness and championing its preservation. He is credited as the driving force behind Yosemite becoming a national park in 1890. He founded the Sierra Club in 1892 and served as its first president; the club's mission included lobbying for the protection of forests and development of hiking routes so that people could enjoy their beauty.

The idea

Theodore Solomons, an explorer whose early contributions to the Sierra Club included detailed mapping of the Sierra Nevada, is called the father of the John Muir Trail. According to the Pacific Crest Trail Association, he is quoted as saying, "The idea of a crest-parallel trail came to me one day while herding my uncle's cattle in an immense unfenced alfalfa field near Fresno. It was 1894 and I was 14."

Building the trail

Muir died in 1914, and the next year the Sierra Club won the support of the state Legislature for the first \$10,000 to build the John Muir Trail. It was finished in 1938, the year of the 100th anniversary of Muir's birth.

ALONG THE TRAIL

Length

211 miles (the longest segment of the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail that is uninterrupted by towns and highway crossings)

Mode of travel

By foot or pack animal; no bicycles or motorized vehicles allowed. A Wilderness Permit is required.

Travel time

Typically three to four weeks. Most hikers carry a week's worth of food and gear, hiking out to resupply at intervals along the trail. In 2000, Peter Bakwin ran the John Muir Trail in 3 days, 22 hours, 4 minutes.

Highest point

Mount Whitney, 14,495 feet

Lowest point

Happy Isles trailhead in Yosemite Valley, 4,035 feet

Deepest ford

Evolution Creek, depth varies but crossings can be chest-high

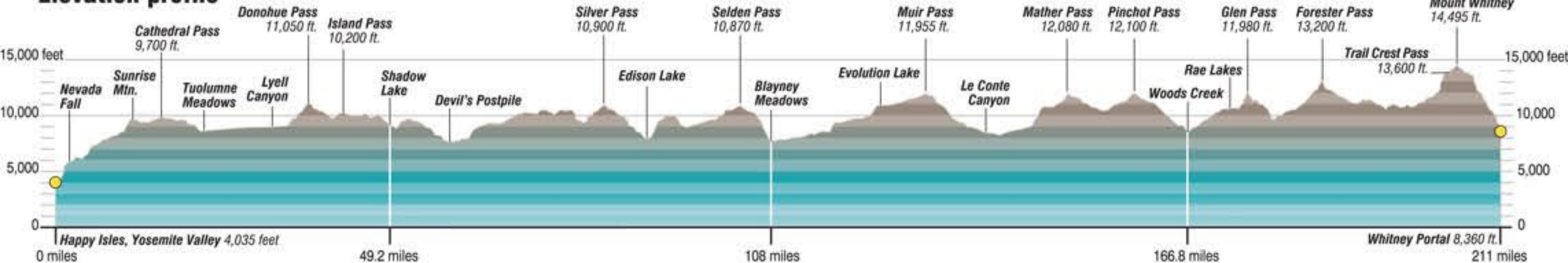
Toughest challenge

Starting from Whitney Portal and climbing 6,135 feet to Mount Whitney in a 10.7-mile hike

Second-toughest challenge

Descending Silver Pass to Mono Creek and climbing the next 2,200 feet in 4 miles over Bear Ridge (and resisting taking the ferry over Lake Edison for a burger at Vermillion Valley Resort)

Elevation profile



Sources: Sierra Club, USGS, National Geographic, TrailRunnermag.com, Library of Congress, Pacific Crest Trail Association