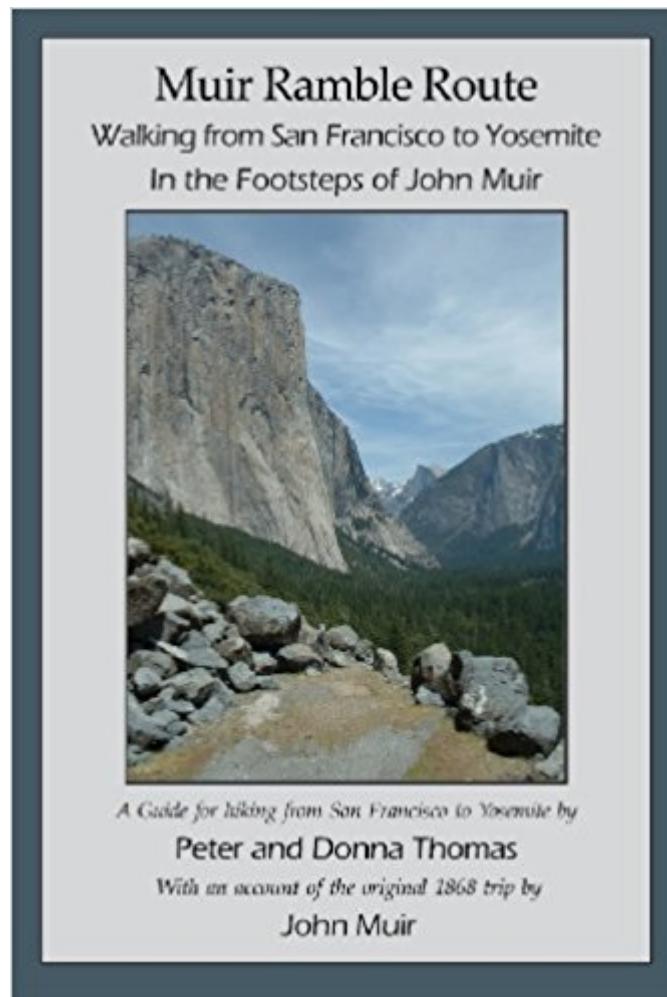


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Muir Ramble Route



Synopsis

This book is really three books in one. It is a guidebook for a walking/cycling route across California that follows John Muir's footsteps from San Francisco to Yosemite via the Pacheco Pass. It is an adventure book, telling the story of Peter and Donna Thomas' 2006 ramble across California to discover that route. And finally it is a history book, presenting in its entirety and for the first time, the complete story of John Muir's first trip to Yosemite. That trip was taken in 1868, the year before Muir's "First Summer in the Sierra," and it has never been published before, existing in obscurity, in Muir's various writings, until it was reconstructed by Peter and Donna in preparation for their walk to Yosemite in his footsteps.

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Customer Reviews

Muir Ramble Route: By Peter and Donna Thomas When John Muir wrote: "The great poets, philosophers, prophets, able men whose thoughts and deeds have moved the world, have come down from the mountains." He was too humble to imagine that he would become a great poet, philosopher and prophet whose thoughts and deeds moved the world. He was, however, keenly aware of the spiritual trails that Moses and Jesus blazed and he was ready, willing and able to blaze his own trails. However, he had no way of knowing that on March 28, 1868, at age 29, his walk from San Francisco to Yosemite Valley would drastically alter his life and influence the course of Western Civilization. Two of his great deeds were founding The Sierra Club and being considered the "Father of the US National Park System. Currently there are over

400 US Parks, monuments, reserves and wilderness areas that host over 71 million annual visitors. Perhaps, however, his greatest achievement has been to encourage his millions of followers to use the wilderness as a means of exploring the physical, mental and spiritual dynamics of their personhood. Muir experienced a "born again" moment on his first visit to Yosemite and thereafter his mantra was; "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul." Peter and Donna Thomas were inspired to embark on an extraordinary, 4-part journey, retracing the footsteps of Muir on his legendary walk from San Francisco to Yosemite Valley.¹⁾ They began with exhaustive research about Muir, his walk and related circumstances.²⁾ After careful preparation, they actually began their walk at the intersection of Davis St. and Broadway in San Francisco and ended at Yosemite Valley. Along the way they took copious notes about the flora, fauna and historical landmarks as well as noting the current human factors that require necessary detours and trail modifications.³⁾ Then they thoughtfully and meticulously co-authored, *Muir Ramble Route*, featuring Peter's carefully written text along with Donna's creative drawings and maps. The book is a wonderfully insightful blend of Muir's walk, nature study and a trail guide for any who may want to follow Muir's original walk.⁴⁾ And finally, they have proposed establishing a designated MRR trail, which would encourage others to make the 300-mile trek. This will require the cooperation of cities, counties, state and private property owners to allow access and minimal camping (or lodging) facilities approximately every 10 miles. *Muir Ramble Route* is superbly written and belongs on the bookshelf of John Muir lovers and lovers of the great outdoors. Note: This review has been greatly influenced by the fact that, for 24 years, I taught a high school advanced biology class that featured John Muir and the wilderness ethic. Each year, The Class had the privilege of spending one week in the Yosemite backcountry, one week at Grand Canyon and one week studying the biology of California's north coast. Lowell H. Young Author: Biodesign Out For A Walk

Much of my appreciation of John Muir's contributions and love of the California he describes in this book comes from my parents and elders. And this book, while generally popular with long-term aficionados, may not be promoted enough to reach every interested person. There's much more in this book than just the famous High Sierra, whose Pacific Crest trail is called "The John Muir Trail" for a long stretch in the Sierras. Many other "John Muir" trails exist in California too--along the coast, in the Central Valley and Sierra foothill towns--and this book gives you good information if you're "rambling" through some of these areas. I had a chance to spend time with someone who lives right

on the old stage-coach road to Yosemite National Park, and I was fortunate enough to hike around and find some of the specific rocks, bends in the river and so forth that Muir mentions in two chapters of this little book. It's not meant to be a comprehensive summary of everything you would like to know, but a specific piece in the very large picture of John Muir's life and legacy.

This labor of love is the culmination of years of research on how to retrace John Muir's 1868 "ramble" from San Francisco to Yosemite. The challenge for the authors was how to contend with all the "civilization" of the 21st century Bay Area and San Joaquin Valley and still make someone consider, attempt and relish the effort of this 300 mile journey themselves. The book is broken down into seven trip sections starting with taking the ferry from San Francisco and ending at Sierra Club's Le Conte Memorial Lodge in Yosemite Valley. Since John Muir did not keep a specific journal of this, his first trip to Yosemite, the Thomases have seamlessly woven together in Muir's own words from other writings, the route of his trip, how he did it, and what he saw along the way. Then they did it themselves. Peter and Donna obviously did a tremendous amount of research but this book does not feel ponderous, overly scholarly or environmentally preachy. Rather, they ask themselves throughout: are we traveling in the literal footsteps of John Muir--difficult to do when contending with a major highway; are we traveling in the spirit of Muir--continually enthralled by the beauty of this traverse of the state. And they succeed for themselves and for the memory of Muir and for the rest of us who might want to try this journey of both body and spirit. This guidebook leaves little out but the effort and focus and optimism a user should be prepared to expend to meet it halfway. The directions are meticulously detailed with any number of options in how to negotiate this combination of urban, suburban, exurban, agricultural and finally, pristinely wild habitat that the Ramble entails. It may seem strange to discuss ferry schedules, Bay Area Rapid Transit, Bay Area hotels and restaurants, taxi companies, light rail and carpooling in a book that deals with Yosemite, but all that information is truly needed in this instance. Each section, in addition to careful mileage outlines, Donna's lovely maps, and Peter's own journal entries, has a Resources section that includes transportation, accommodation options, side trips, map sources, books, and particularly contacts for planning a particular leg of the trip. And all legs can be done in any or no particular order though late spring is the best time of year. The authors' hope is obviously that their Muir Ramble Route becomes, if not some "official" trail, at least increasingly more available to the hiker wanting to walk in the steps of this John Muir adventure. They fully realize we cannot turn back the clock but they challenge all to see the potential in finding the glory of the outdoors everywhere, starting even as this trip does in the densest jungles of civilization. The Thomases are to be commended for their

efforts. And we, who like to hike, bird, botanize, look at Bridal Veil Falls, and long to find beauty wherever we are, with a little effort on our own, will benefit from this unique guide.

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