



BASIC TRAILS

Yosemite's Uncrowded Hidden Gems



*Your Guide to the Park's
Best-Kept Secret Trails*

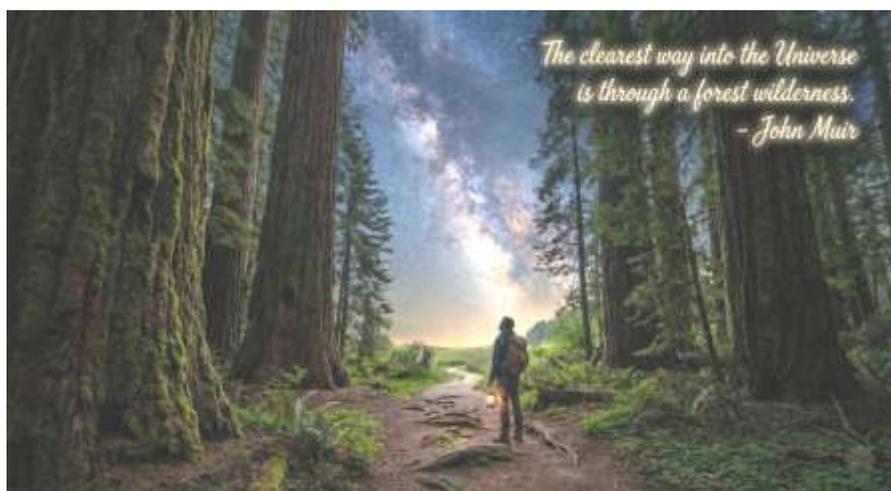
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While every effort has been made to validate the accuracy of the information in this guidebook, if you find anything that you would like to add to this guidebook, either a correction or information that you think would be of interest to our readers, feel free to drop us a line at basictrails@basictrails.com



*The clearest way into the Universe
is through a forest wilderness.
- John Muir*

Also by Basic Trails

- The Official Guidebook to Hiking, Snorkeling and Camping in Conway National Park and the Whitsunday Islands



Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Southern Miwok Tribes who were the original inhabitants of Yosemite National park

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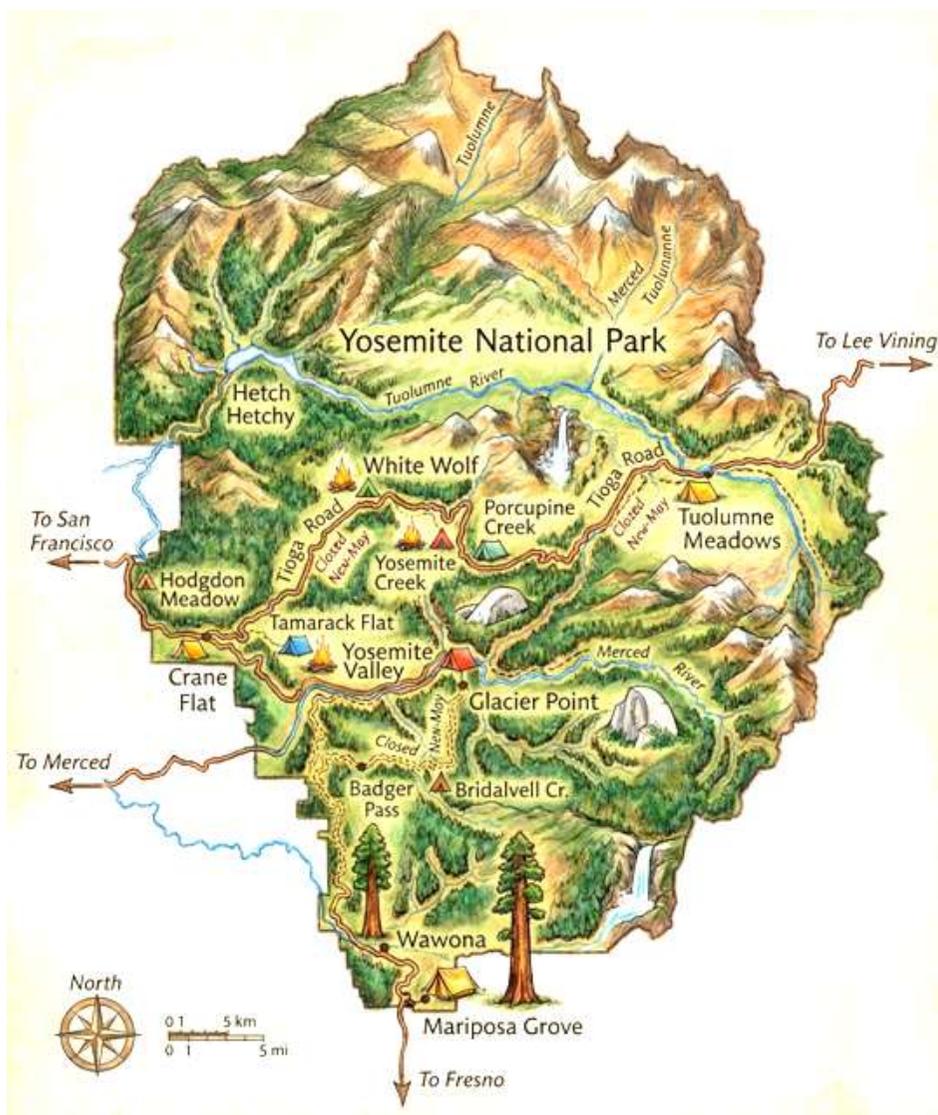
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Introduction

Yosemite National Park is bordered by Sierra National Forest to the southeast and Stanislaus National Forest to the northwest in California USA.

The park is managed by the National Park Service and covers 759,620 acres across four counties. Designated a World Heritage Site in 1984 and first protected in 1864, Yosemite National Park is best known for its numerous clear waterfalls concentrated within a small area. Almost 95 percent is designated wilderness.

Key attractions include Tuolumne Meadows, Dana Meadows, the Clark Range, the Cathedral Range, and the Kuna Crest. The park also sports three groves of giant sequoia trees - the Mariposa Grove (200 trees), the Tuolumne Grove (25 trees), and the Merced Grove (20 trees).



Using this Guide

After having personally visited Yosemite many years ago, it left me lasting impressions of awe and wonder that have stayed with me ever since. I especially remember the bears! Since then, I have seen many Yosemite guidebooks. However just recently during the last few years have people begun sharing their secret regions of Yosemite that are not only rarely visited, but beautifully secluded gems that sport some of the most beautiful places on earth. Many of these are located in West Yosemite. I have also included in this edition some of the more popular Yosemite locations, because they are convenient if you have very limited time. However this book has been written primarily on how to find Yosemite's rarely visited hidden gems.

The best way to plan your trip to Yosemite using this guide is to skim through the pages of hiking trails. You will than find certain trails that call out to you; your soul feels drawn to. After reading the trail specifics, visit these locations. You will find that locations that your soul yearns to visit will be the most rewarding. Try this again while planning your next visit and see if another set of trails calls out to you and so on.....

Yosemite National Park: A Masterpiece Carved by Nature

Yosemite National Park is consistently ranked amongst the most beautiful and impressive national parks in the United States. Situated in California's Sierra Nevada mountains, Yosemite offers a landscape filled with natural wonders that inspire awe in even the most well-traveled visitors. Towering waterfalls, ancient giant sequoia groves, and massive granite cliffs define Yosemite's unmatched scenic beauty. For those seeking a respite from modern life, Yosemite presents an opportunity to reconnect with nature in a pristine wilderness setting unlike any other national park.

Forged by ice and time, Yosemite National Park isn't just a destination; it's a pilgrimage. Tucked into the rugged spine of California's Sierra Nevada, this is a landscape of superlatives where the scale of nature doesn't just impress—it humbles. The Valley floor is the heart, but the backcountry is the soul. If the crowds feel modern, this guidebook lists the less traveled trails. Whether you're a seasoned thru-hiker or a weekend wanderer, Yosemite offers a reconnection with the wild that few places on Earth

can match. Here are just a few of the gems you'll discover:

El Capitan & Half Dome: These aren't just rocks; they are the sheer, vertical myths of the climbing world, towering thousands of feet above the pines.

The Big Three Waterfalls: Feel the "Yosemite Coat"—the fine mist of Bridalveil, Vernal, and the thundering Yosemite Falls.

Ancient Sentinels: Wander through groves of Giant Sequoias, living monuments that redefine your perspective on time itself.

Yosemite is more than a photo op; it's a sensory overhaul. It's the scent of sun-baked pine needles, the bone-deep vibration of a waterfall in peak flow, and the unexpected sight of a black bear foraging in a sub-alpine meadow.

In a world that moves too fast, the High Sierra invites you to slow down. It's a place to trade the digital hum for the rustle of wind through the incense cedars. From the "mythical" scale of the

granite walls to the subtle detail of a mountain wildflower, Yosemite is a masterclass in wonder.

Why Should I Visit Yosemite?

One of the primary reasons to visit Yosemite is its breathtaking landscapes. The park is home to some of the most renowned natural landmarks in the world. Upon seeing El Capitan, a massive granite rock that appears to ascend endlessly into the sky, one cannot help but feel humbled. Half Dome, another iconic peak, has a unique shape that stands out in any photograph, but is even more impressive when viewing it at its base. It is amazing sights such as these that represent a small part of what makes Yosemite so special.

Another reason to include Yosemite on your bucket list is its waterfalls. Yosemite Falls, one of the tallest in North America, is a sight one soon will not forget. In the spring, when snow from the mountains melts, the waterfalls are at their fullest, crashing down with incredible power. Bridalveil Falls and Vernal Falls are also worth witnessing up close, each offering a different, yet equally beautiful perspective of Yosemite's natural raw beauty.

Yosemite also offers activities to suit every type of traveler. If you enjoy hiking, you'll find innumerable

trails that range from easy walks to challenging climbs. Trails like Mist Trail take you right by the waterfalls, while others like the hike to Glacier Point provide a panoramic view of the entire park. For those seeking a challenge, climbing Half Dome is an adventure that requires strength and determination, but the reward is an unforgettable vista from the top. Glacier Point Parking lot is one of the main departing points for just about all the major trails in Yosemite. However the road to Glacier Point is closed during winter.

For visitors who prefer a more relaxed experience, Yosemite's peaceful valleys and quiet meadows are perfect for enjoying a picnic lunch and immersing oneself in the surrounding beauty. The wide-open spaces of Yosemite Valley offer the chance to sit by a gently flowing river, practice nature photography, or simply take in the view of the surrounding mountainside. Camping in any of Yosemite's 10 major campgrounds and watching the sun set behind the mountains and then stargazing renews one's spirit like no other.

Yosemite is also a special place where one can feel deeply connected to nature. The giant sequoia trees, some of which are over a thousand years old, stand tall and proud, reminding us how ancient and

powerful nature can be. Walking through Mariposa Grove where these trees grow is an experience that makes one feel small, yet fills one with awe and wonder. It's a reminder of just how small we really are when it comes to the raw power of mother nature.

Isn't Yosemite too crowded?

The special thing about Yosemite is it can balance its popularity with its sense of wilderness beauty. Even though it attracts visitors from all over the world, the park remains a place where one can find solitude and quiet moments; if you know where to find them. The aim of this guide is to find those sought after places of solitude as well as the best kept gems in the park. Whether you're watching a waterfall from a distance or sitting by a warm crackling campfire in the evening, this guide provides you with all the information you'll ever need to enjoy one of the best experiences in Yosemite National Park.

Logistics Simplified

In addition to planning your adventure, this guide offers practical travel advice such as the entrances to Yosemite Park, maps of all the major campgrounds in Yosemite, Wawona and Tuolumne,

how to use the free shuttle, public transport to the park, seasonal peak visitation times, dates of yearly festivals and where to find the much sought after mysterious "moonbows".

Some of the more than 40 trails in this guide contain the gem symbol which means the destination is one of beauty and awe. Each hike description in this guide includes details on distance, difficulty level and scenic highlights to expect as well as crowd ratings, how long it takes to hike the trail, GPS parking locations, GPS viewpoints, an , simple trail map and detailed instructions to get to the start of the trail. You'll learn which trails are family-friendly (many are in east Yosemite), Yosemite's climate, as well as the Yosemite's challenging backcountry hikes that go deep into the wilderness as well as day hikes where you can relax, kick off your boots and unwind by a beautiful river. This guide also includes roadside waterfalls and overlooks as well as practical advice for planning your trip based on season and landscape. There are also maps to roadside waterfalls. At the end of this guide is an index that you can use to find information by keyword.



Details are also given on the most secluded campgrounds and nearby towns that stock food as well as free climbing locations. Tips are also offered to help you fully experience the natural beauty and avoid crowds, such as watching sunsets over the mountains or sitting by a campfire under the stars.

Whether you're looking for a short, easy hike or a multi-day backcountry adventure, this guide provides information to help you plan an unforgettable journey.

Hidden Caves and Spectacular Waterfalls

Inside this guide you will also find 4 of Yosemite's much sought after caves and 7 spectacular waterfalls as well as maps to Yosemite's 2 hidden natural rock water slides.

With comprehensive trip planning information, any adventurer using this guide will be well-prepared to thoroughly enjoy their time in any area of Yosemite National Park.

Whether visiting for a weekend getaway or extended stay, this guide aims to help explorers of all interests schedule a memorable experience in

Yosemite. From iconic sights to hidden gems, discover everything this guidebook has to offer. If you're looking for a guidebook that will lead you to the best awe inspiring places in Yosemite, this book should definitely be on your Yosemite Bucket list.

In summary, Yosemite is a destination that offers something for the adventurer, the nature lover, and the person seeking tranquility. Use this guide as your map to incredible landscapes, waterfalls, trails, and ancient trees to create happy lasting experiences that will last a lifetime.

Trail Environment at a Glance

East Yosemite – This section of the guidebook has a lot of open exposed hikes.

North Yosemite – This section of the guidebook has a lot of rural Hikes

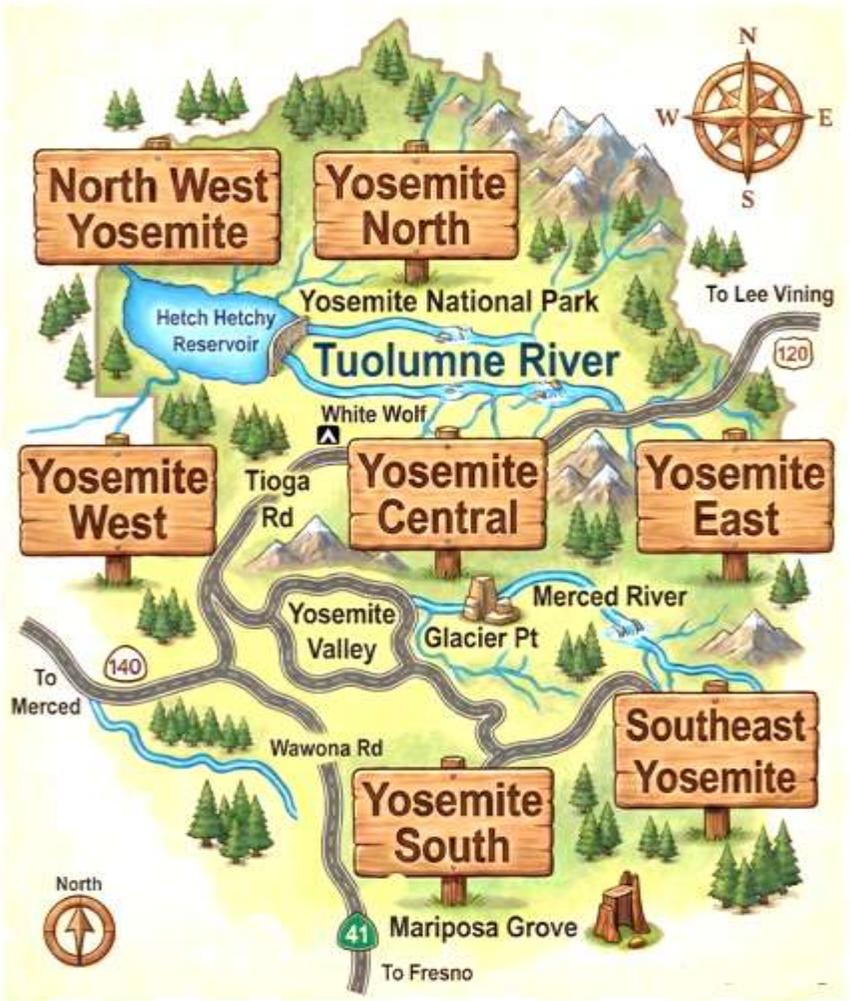
South Yosemite – This section of the guidebook has a lot of shaded wooded Hikes.

Yosemite Central – This section of the guidebook has a lot of tourist activity

**EXPLORE THE BEAUTY
AND WONDER OF
YOSEMITE VALLEY!**

Yosemite Trail Sections

Your guide book is divided into a number of sections. Yosemite North, South, East and West. This makes it a breeze to find which spots are more rural (east) and which have the most popular attractions (central and north).



This guidebook is best used with a compass, because some trail descriptions involve trail directions involving the 4 cardinal points. Also all maps in this guidebook point north. A GPS or if you have smartphone coverage can help you more easily find the locations of areas mentioned in this guide where the GPS coordinates are given. A fitness watch that measures distance can also be of benefit to use with this guide as some trail directions use distance to find specific markers and trailheads. Note that the maps shown in this book are not to scale.

Your Safety

Slips, trips, and falls are the leading cause of accidental death in Yosemite National Park, accounting for roughly 35% of fatalities in some studies. Between 2007 and 2023, there were 53 recorded deaths from falls, making it the number one cause of death during that period, followed by natural causes and drowning. Due to the abundance of granite, Yosemite National Park is generally ranked as having one of the highest numbers of fall-related fatalities in the U.S. National Park System.



Elevation

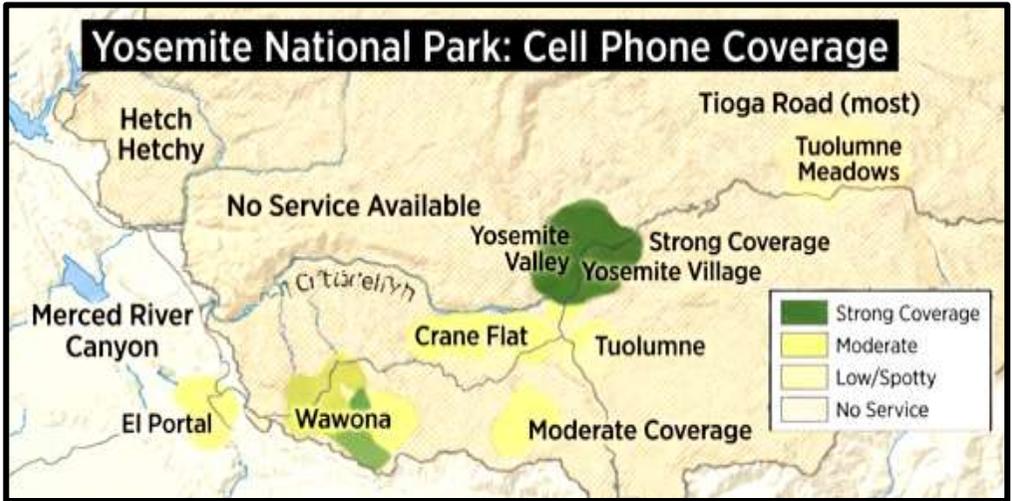
The main Yosemite Valley is at an altitude of 4,000 feet above sea level. Regions like Tuolumne in east Yosemite and as well as the rim of Yosemite Valley can reach as high as 8,000 feet above sea level. If you are arriving from a low elevation state such as California or New York, you may experience mild altitude sickness within the first few days of being at high altitude. Symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, dizziness, fatigue, loss of appetite and difficulty sleeping. These symptoms begin a few hours after arriving at a high altitude, but usually feel mild at first. After a few days of hiking your body will adjust. Knowing the seasonal wind direction can be of help when hiking open and exposed regions. Yosemite winds blow from the west for 7 months (March 11 to October 16), peaking in late June.

Cellular Phone Coverage

Navigating Yosemite National Park requires a shift in digital expectations. Due to the park's iconic granite walls—which act as formidable physical barriers to radio frequencies—cellular coverage is a

rare luxury rather than a standard utility. For the vast majority of visitors, the park is a "sea of wilderness" punctuated only by a few "islands" of connectivity. Statistically, roughly 90% of Yosemite is a total cellular dead zone. If you were visualizing this on a map, the vast majority of the park's 1,200 square miles would be entirely blank. Understanding where these gaps are is essential for safety and logistics:

- The Backcountry: Once you venture more than a mile away from developed roads or villages, expect total silence. This applies to the entire High Sierra wilderness area.
- Tioga Road (Hwy 120): This 47-mile stretch is almost entirely disconnected, with the notable exceptions of Crane Flat and Tuolumne Meadows.
- Merced River Canyon (Hwy 140): The steep, winding walls of the canyon effectively swallow signals for most of the drive between Mariposa and the Valley.
- Hetch Hetchy: This remote northwest corner of the park, including the reservoir, offers virtually no cellular access.
- Cliff Shadows: Geography matters even in "serviced" areas. Standing at the base of El Capitan or other deep canyon floors can result in a lost signal because the massive granite walls block the line of sight to nearby towers.



Getting to Yosemite

Highways 120, 140 and Tioga Road provide access to Yosemite. Portions of these roads at higher elevations may close due to snow. Tioga Road leads to the high country and Tuolumne Meadows but this road usually closes from November to late May/June. Glacier Point Road which is inside the park, leads to Glacier Point but usually closes from November to May. Mariposa Grove Road also inside the park, leads to Mariposa Grove but usually closes from December to April, sometimes permitting only

shuttles when open. Tire chains may be required due to heavy snow. From spring through fall, expect the following wait times when arriving at Yosemite through the following entrances:

- At South Entrance (via Highway 41 and Oakhurst):

One to two hours

- At Arch Rock Entrance (via Highway 140 and Mariposa): 30 minutes

- At Big Oak Flat Entrance (via Highway 120 from the west and Groveland): 30 minutes

- At Hetch Hetchy Entrance: Varies depending on parking availability at Hetch Hetchy, but could be up to two hours

- At Tioga Pass Entrance (via Highway 120 from the east and Lee Vining): 30 minutes

These time estimates may vary. To avoid delays, try arriving by 8:00 a.m. in the morning, in the early afternoon, or after 5:00 p.m. Congestion and delays tend to be worse on weekends, especially Saturdays and holidays.

Consider taking the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) bus to access the park instead of driving. Once inside, use the free shuttle system to get around destinations like Yosemite Valley. When the bus is full on busy days you may have to wait for multiple buses to get a seat. Walking or biking is recommended when possible. If planning a day trip to Tuolumne Meadows which is only accessible during the season when Tioga Road is open, typically May/June through November, aim to arrive no later than 9:00 AM. If arriving during peak hour, be sure to bring adequate food, water, and other supplies in your vehicle so as to be prepared for long wait times.

How to Avoid paying a Yosemite Entrance Fee

Local residents with eligible zip codes stamped on their driver license can drive through Yosemite National Park without needing an entrance fee and in certain cases without needing a reservation. The eligible zip codes are shown in the table on the following page.

Ahwahnee	93601	Lee Vining	93541
Bass Lake	93604	Mammoth	
Benton	93512	Lakes	93546
Big Oak		Mariposa	95338
Flat	95305	Midpines	95345
Bishop	93514	Moccasin	95347
Bootjack	95338	Mono Lake	93541
Buck		Mt. Bullion	95338
Meadows	95321	Nipinnaw-	
Catheys		assee	93601
Valley	95306	North Fork	93643
Coarsegold	93614	Oakhurst	93644
Coulterville	95311	O'Neals	93645
Crowley		Raymond	
Lake	93546	Swall	93653
El Portal	95318	Meadows	93514
Fish Camp	93623	Wishon	
Greely Hill	95311	Cove	93669
Groveland	95321		
Hornitos	95325		
June Lake	93529		

Geology and History

Yosemite's geology is characterized by granite and remnants of older rock. About one million years ago, glaciers formed and cut the iconic U-shaped Yosemite Valley as it moved downslope. Native Americans inhabited the region for nearly 4,000 years prior to European American settlers entering in 1851. The word "Yosemite" is derived from

yohhe'meti, meaning "they are killers" in the local Miwok language. Previously, the region had been called "Ahwahnee" ("big mouth") by its only indigenous inhabitants, the Ahwahneechee people. In 1890, John Muir successfully advocated establishing Yosemite as a national park, helping pave the way for the National Park System.

Yosemite's first concession was established in 1884 when John Degan and his wife opened a bakery and store. In 1916, the National Park Service granted a 20-year concession to the Desmond Park Service Company to operate hotels, stores, camps, a dairy, garage, and other park facilities.

Park Regulations

Yosemite allows pets in some areas as long as they are leashed. Drones are generally prohibited from being launched, landed or operated in the park. When camping or on extended picnics, visitors must properly store food to protect it from bears. Backcountry camping requires a permit.

Sightseeing

Today, Yosemite draws around four million visitors annually, with most visitors enjoying their time in

many of the lakes, ponds, streams and hiking trails in the seven square mile valley. The park offers thousands of unique features including iconic attractions such as Vernal Falls and El Capitan.

Over 800 miles of trails are open to hikers, ranging from easy walks to challenging mountain hikes and overnight backpacking trips. Free climbing is also popular, particularly on formations such as Half Dome and El Capitan. The park contains more than a dozen campgrounds.

The Wawona Tree, also known as the Tunnel Tree, was a giant sequoia located in the Mariposa Grove. It was 234 feet tall and 90 feet in circumference. In 1881, a carriage-wide tunnel was cut through the tree, making it a popular tourist attraction through which carriages and automobiles could pass. However, the tunnel permanently weakened the tree, which fell in 1969 under heavy snow, at an estimated age of 2,100 years.

Yosemite Traffic

Yosemite has some of the most rural concentrated moving traffic per square mile in the United States. According to the U.S. National Park Service, traffic congestion in the valley is heavy during the peak

summer season from June to August. A free shuttle bus system operates in the valley when parking is often full and transit options are also available from nearby cities.

When is the best time of year to visit Yosemite? Between May and September is when the weather is perfect and when all the shuttles, attractions, roads and trails are open. It is also when most of the visitors start arriving, but if you take note of the gems and secluded areas noted throughout this book, you should still be able to enjoy the quiet places and secluded gems all to yourself.

Swimming, Rafting, and Boating

Many visitors enjoy swimming in Yosemite's alpine lakes and rivers. The warmer lakes may reach temperatures over 70°F by midsummer, providing refreshing relief. Sections of the Merced River through the valley are also swimmable, though the water remains cool despite hot air temperatures. Popular swimming holes dot the major rivers, such as in lower Tenaya Creek and at Cascades Picnic Area. During summer months, east valley spots average in the low 60s while west locations are in the mid-60s. The South Fork Merced River offers

numerous rock-lined pools near its covered bridge.

Food Options in Yosemite

Yosemite Village

The grocery store in Yosemite Village is well-stocked to purchase supplies for day hikes or backpacking trips in the park. It carries a wide selection of food options.

Tuolumne Meadows

The small store in Tuolumne Meadows focuses on hiking provisions and usually has sufficient inventory for backpacking. However, selections may be limited compared to larger markets.

Crane Flat

While the store in Crane Flat also emphasizes hiking supplies, it caters more to car campers' needs and has a narrower assortment of backpacking foods.

Wawona

The market in Wawona is the smallest in Yosemite Valley. Though a few essentials can be found, it would not be advisable to rely solely on this location for extended backcountry excursions.

North Wawona

A modest store in North Wawona, this store offers limited selections but is not primarily aimed at serving backpackers' requirements.

Getting to Yosemite on Public Transport

Amtrak has a combination of bus/train services to Yosemite Valley and provides limited services to Tuolumne Meadows and White Wolf during July and August, being only available during weekends in June and September.

Greyhound provides service to Merced. At Merced, transfer to YARTS to access the Yosemite Valley. YARTS also provides limited services to Tuolumne Meadows, White Wolf and Crane Flat during July and August.

Shuttle Services

A free shuttle provides access around Yosemite Valley. The Valleywide shuttle: This shuttle stops at all the major regions in Yosemite Valley, with shuttles departing every 12 to 22 minutes from 7 am to 10 pm.

The East Valley Shuttle: This shuttle only runs between Curry Village, Pines campgrounds, Yosemite Village and trailheads in the eastern portion of Yosemite Valley. Shuttles depart every 8 to 12 minutes from 7 am to 10 pm.

The Mariposa Grove Shuttle

This shuttle runs from Mariposa Grove Welcome Plaza to the Mariposa Grove. Service starts around April 1, ending around November 30.

Badger Pass Ski Shuttle

The shuttle is free and runs to Badger Pass from Yosemite Valley from mid-December to March.

Glacier Point Access

A one-way ticket can be purchased on the Glacier Point Tour from Yosemite Valley Lodge to Glacier Point. People will then hike down to Yosemite Valley. Service is available when Glacier Point Road is clear, which is usually late May through October.

The Hikers' Bus

The Tuolumne Meadows hikers' bus departs from Yosemite Valley and runs to Tuolumne Meadows Visitor Center, stopping at trailheads along Tioga

Road. Service is from approximately mid-June until early September.

YARTS 120 East Bus

This is a paid service running between Yosemite Village and Mammoth Lakes, with stops at Tuolumne Meadows, Crane Flat and White Wolf. This service runs daily from July through September.

YARTS 120 North Bus

A paid service running between Yosemite Village and Sonora. This service stops at Big Oak Flat (Hodgdon Meadow), Buck Meadows area, Crane Flat, Groveland, and Jamestown/Sonora. This service runs mid-May until September.

YARTS Highway 41 Bus

A paid service between Fresno and Yosemite Valley. It stops in Wawona and operates daily during summer.

Best Season to Visit for Vibrant Colors

Yosemite is vivid with color, whose contrast changes with each season. Spring is the best time to spot roaring waterfalls, summer brings out the brightness of everything and fall vivid colors.

Best places to visit in Fall

- Valley
- Glacier Point
- Wawona
- Tulumne

Seclusion

The Hetch Hetchy Valley is one of the areas that does not have a lot of tourists. It is located in North West Yosemite and includes Hetch Hetchy Backpacker's Campground.

Best times to Hike

During the summer when it's hot, hike the trails that go through lush pine forests to escape the summer sun. Many of these types of trails are the Big Sequoia Tree Hikes around Wawona. During winter, hike the trails that are more exposed to the sun to stay warm. Winds peak in late June, so avoid open areas with lots of granite slopes to avoid getting windblasted with stone fragments. Areas that have lots of people, if you want seclusion and privacy, it is best to hike these areas on Wednesdays in the early mornings, especially when the weather has just become overcast with clouds. Late spring (end of April through May) sees moderate crowds and blooming wildflowers. If you want to see raging

waterfalls, the best season is late spring into early summer just as the snow is melting, and can be especially rewarding after a particularly heavy snowfall season.

Family Friendly Hikes

Spring and fall are the best times to go hiking with kids in Yosemite, as this avoids the heat of hiking in summer and the snow and chill of winter. There are also easy hikes with stroller access. The page numbers of family friendly hikes can be found on the opening pages of this guide.

Cabins

There is a community of secluded cabins available for renting located in West Yosemite east of Wawona Rd at 37.65099, -119.719660.

Yosemite's Mysterious Moonbows

Moonbow sightings at Yosemite National Park provide a unique opportunity for observers in the spring and early summer months. They occur as an illumination of the moon illuminating the night sky when there is a fine mist. Known as "lunar rainbows" or "moonbows," these ephemeral events

can be seen at iconic locations such as Yosemite Falls, Bridalveil Falls, and Glacier Point when the moonlight intersects with the fine mist produced by the waterfalls at just the right angle. Witnessing a moonbow is a rare treat that visitors will long remember. Those seeking to improve their chances of viewing this spectacular lunar phenomenon should consult with the recreation staff at any of the Yosemite Lodge properties.

Time Zone and Area Codes

Yosemite operates on Pacific Daylight Time with the area code of 209.

Money

ATM's are located at Yosemite Village in the Village Store. Another ATM is located south of the store near the Art Activity Center, at the Yosemite Valley Lodge

U.S Dollar Exchange Rates		
AU Dollar 0.66	Euro 1.07	British Pound 1.29
Indian Rupee 0.01	Canadian Dollar 0.72	Singapore Dollar 0.75
Swiss Franc 1.15	Malaysian Ringgit 0.23	Japanese Yen 0.0065
Chinese Yuan 0.14	Russian Ruble 0.010	Swedish Krona 0.09

Electricity

The United States uses 110-120V A.C.

Visas

Foreign citizens typically need a visa to travel to the United States. Visa types are as follows -

- B-1 visa: For business travel
- B-2 visa: For tourism and medical treatment
- B-1/B-2 visa: For a combination of business and tourism purposes
- Immigrant visas: For permanent residence

Waiver Program (VWP): Citizens of some countries may be eligible to enter the United States without needing a visa if staying less than 90 days. These applicants should apply for an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). The fee is \$21. The U.S. Department of State has a Visa Wizard to assist with this.

Drinking Age and Car Rental

The drinking age in the United States is 21. With the exception of Michigan and New York, the age to rent a car is 21. It is important to note that there is often an additional daily surcharge imposed on

renters between the ages of 21 to 24 years old by major car rental companies. This surcharge is commonly waived for younger renters who are traveling for business purposes under a corporate rental contract. The age requirements placed by rental companies stem from factors related to insurance and liability. Typically, insurance premiums are higher for drivers under the age of 25 due to industry risk assessments. It is worth noting that smaller independent rental agencies or franchise locations tend to have stricter stipulations regarding minimum rental ages. In contrast, international brands are more likely to rent vehicles to drivers on the younger side. Some large rental companies may excuse age restrictions for young renters who book through an employer's travel program. If a person is a U.S. Government Employee, the minimum age to rent a vehicle is 18 years if traveling on official business with a government travel order, or 21 years without such authorization.



Yosemite Chivalry & Fantasy Festival

May 31st ~ June 1st, 2025

Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. / Sunday: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Mariposa County Fairgrounds.

The festival combines fantasy with history and includes archery, axe throwing and knights.

Yosemite Goddess Festival

October 5th & 6th.

Saturday 10 a.m. - 10 p.m. ~ Sunday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Mariposa County Fairgrounds.

A festival with a spiritual theme which includes wellness treatments, a feast and music.

Oakhurst Fall Festival

October 11 - 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

October 12 - 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

October 13 - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Oakhurst Community Park

Family friendly event includes bands, face painting, artistic demonstrations, rides, games, wine and beer tasting.

Cell Phone Reception

Cellular reception varies by location, with some areas having better coverage than others.

Yosemite Valley: The best signals are in Yosemite Village near the Visitor Center.

Crane Flat: Verizon has a reliable signal.

El Portal: Dependable, however there may be limited access for 4G LTE services.

Wawona: Good service by Verizon and AT&T.

Tuolumne Meadows: Not reliable. The nearest cell tower is in Lee Vining.

Foresta: Good 4G LTE service and voice service via Verizon.

Glacier Point: Coverage is sporadic, with certain regions having a decent signal while others none at all.

How to read the Trail Maps



Wherever you see this image, the location is a real treat, one that will create lasting memories.

When you see the bold word **Secluded**, the hike is more private; away from the busy crowds.

The more steep the profile, the harder the hike will be. The profile is measured in feet and the approximate distance in miles.

Note: All GPS coordinates as well as hiking distances shown are approximate and accurate to within 50 meters.





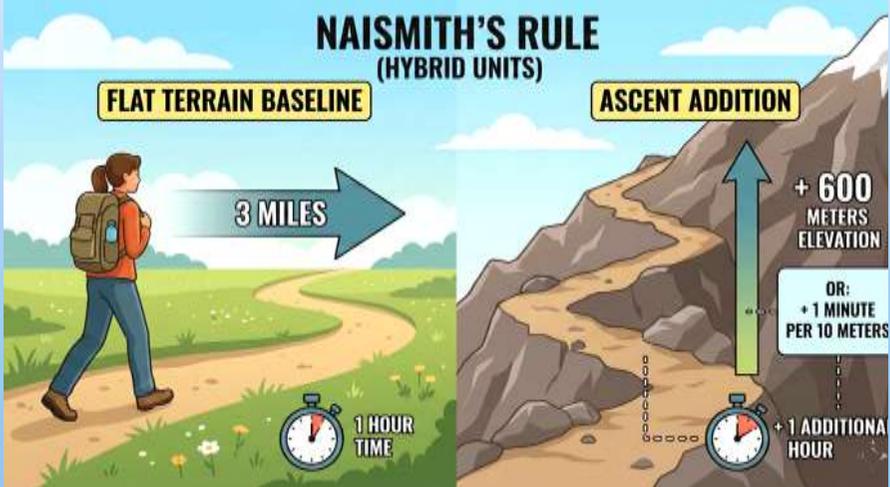
Yosemite Climate

- Summer (June-September) features warm to hot temperatures with minimal rainfall occurring as thunderstorms.
- Fall (October-November) brings variable weather that can be hot, cold, dry, rainy or snowy.
- Winter (December-March) usually sees snow and cold but also sunny and mild days.
- Spring (April-May) shows variable weather with warm sunny periods and occasional winter storms tapering off by mid to late April.

Trail Basics

How long does it take to Hike a trail?

The trail distances shown in this guide are round trip. The trail hiking times are approximate only. Determining trail hike time is a very difficult task because it depends upon 4 factors; weather, condition of trail, fitness condition of the hiker and how long the steep parts of the trail are. These are all variable conditions that determine how long it takes to complete the trail. For example, a fit hiker travelling along a perfectly flat trail on a sunny day with no wind on a bare open path will finish the trail sooner than a hiker hiking through dense rainforest during a tropical downpour in strong winds. Naismith's Rule calculates an average hiker will walk three miles an hour on flat terrain. For every 600 meters of ascent, an additional hour should be factored in (*or 1 extra minute every 10 meters*).



Factors Affecting Your Hiking Time

On gradual or flat terrain, the average hiker can typically cover approximately one mile in 30 minutes. However, there are several variables that influence hiking pace, including elevation change, terrain difficulty, and elevation gain per mile.

Elevation changes significantly impact hiking speed. For every 1,000 feet of elevation gain, hikers should plan to add around 30 extra minutes to their estimated time. Terrain type also affects hiking pace. Easy trails present no technical challenges and require no specialized skills, enabling hikers to typically maintain a pace between 1-1.5 miles per hour. Moderate trails feature some obstacles like steep grades, log crossings, or an uneven surface but allow for an average speed of 1.5-2 miles per hour. Challenging routes impose greater difficulties that further reduce hiking speed.

For shorter hikes between 3-8 miles, elevation gain per mile provides useful insight. Trails gaining 200-400 feet per mile generally classify as easy. Routes with 400-700 feet and 700-1000 feet of elevation gain per mile are considered moderate and difficult, respectively. Beyond 1000 feet of elevation gain per mile, trails pose a considerable challenge for most hikers.

What do the Trail Ratings Mean?

Rating

This is a guide to how much physical exertion is required to hike the trail. The ratings are as follows:

Easy / Very Easy: Trails that are maintained and mostly level. Suitable for hiking in all weather conditions. Some of these sights are only feet from the parking lot.

Medium: Trail may involve switchbacks and some steep parts. Trail maintenance is usually minimal. Use caution during wet conditions.

Hard / Very Hard: Steep descents. Trail may or may not be maintained. For experienced outdoor enthusiasts only. Certain sections may be prone to flash flooding.

GPS: For your convenience, GPS coordinates are shown locating the highlight of interest at the end of the trail. As shown earlier, this is shown by a circle at the end of the trail.



Camping in Yosemite

Yosemite has over a dozen campgrounds. They all require a reservation April through October. During winter, Camp 4, Hodgdon Meadow and Wawona campgrounds are served on a first-come, first-served basis and fill up fast on holidays and weekends.

Year Round Campgrounds

Upper Pines Campground

This campground is one of two campgrounds located in Yosemite Valley proper that is open all year. It sits at 4,000 feet elevation and walking distance to numerous trailheads. Nearby food services are Yosemite Village and Curry Village. This campground has water, food storage lockers, flush toilets, but no showers.

Upper Pines is divided into 3 sections

Upper Pines: 238 sites

Lower Pines: 60 sites

North Pines: 81 sites

Wawona Campground

This campground is located along the South Fork Merced River close to Wawona. It is open year round and is at 4,000 feet at the southern end of Yosemite, about 27 miles from Yosemite Valley. It has good cell phone reception, flush toilets, water, and food storage lockers, but no showers. RV's and trailers are allowed with a total of 97 tent sites.

Reservations are always required and depend upon the campground. Non-lottery reservations begin at 7 am Pacific time and sell out in just minutes. The best way is to log in and stand-by at Recreation.gov before 7 a.m. Pacific time.

Booking Five Months in Advance

This is for reservations at Hodgdon Meadow, North Pines, Wawona, Upper Pines and Lower Pines campgrounds. These reservations begin on the 15th of each month.

Two Weeks in Advance

White Wolf, Bridalveil Creek, Crane Flat and Porcupine Flat, Tamarack Flat and Yosemite Creek, , begin two weeks in advance of arrival date.

One Week in Advance

Camp 4 begins one week in advance of arrival date April 13 through October 27.

Campground Reservation Contact Info

Visit www.recreation.gov

877/444-6777

(or 877/833-6777 for TDD)

(or 518/885-3639 from outside the US & Canada)

Rules state you can only make two reservations at a time per season. If you miss out, you can try first-come, first-served campgrounds which can be found fall through spring. You can also check for cancellations.

Peak-Hour Reservations

Reservations covering the entire season, running from April 13 through October 13, can initially be made starting on January 5 at 8:00 AM Pacific Daylight Time. These reservations are available on Recreation.gov. Additional reservations are then released on a rolling seven day advance basis.

Campground Reservations

The first dates for making reservations five months in advance vary according to arrival date:

- July 15 through August 14: March 15
- August 15 through September 14: April 15
- September 15 through October 14: May 15
- October 15 through November 14: June 15

High Country Safety

Rattlesnakes

The Northern Pacific Rattlesnake is the only venomous snake found in Yosemite National Park, however encounters are rare. Rattlesnakes can only strike within half their body length. To avoid rattlesnakes, watch where you step especially when crossing logs and do not put hands in holes or on ledges. If you see a rattlesnake, remain still then slowly remove yourself from the area. Immediate medical attention should be sought in the event of a bite.

Poison Oak

Poison oak is common in California but absent from higher elevations within Yosemite National Park. It may be present in chaparral, grasslands, and lower woodland areas.

Bears

Bear attacks are uncommon within Yosemite National Park and there have been no known human fatalities or serious injuries attributed to bears. However, bear activity has increased within Yosemite Valley in recent years. On July 20, 2024 an ultra-runner collided with a black bear while finishing a 50 mile run in Yosemite Valley.

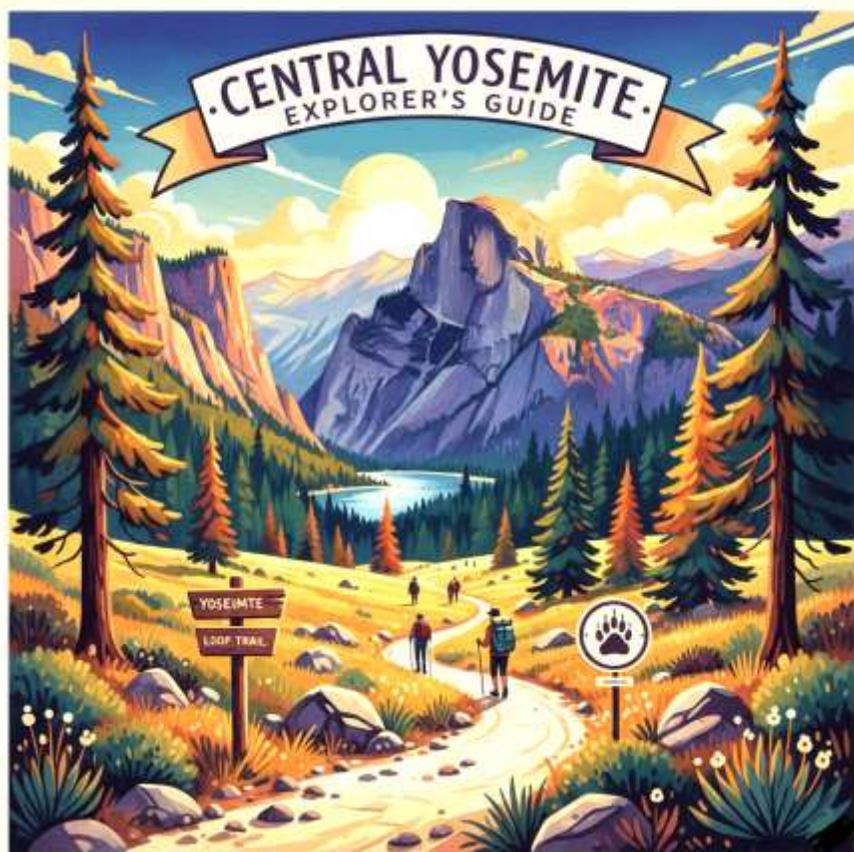
The runner was less than a mile from completing his run when he observed a large dark shape rapidly approaching him. He felt a sharp sensation to his shoulder and was forcibly thrown to the ground. Nearby observers around 100 feet away screamed "*Bear!*" upon witnessing the event.

Mosquitoes

Mosquito activity peaks during the summer months within Yosemite National Park, particularly after periods of warm weather with heavy rainfall.



Hiking Trail Descriptions



Silver Strand Falls

While the crowds are glued to the valley floor, a hidden gem hides in plain sight! Far below the busy Wawona Tunnel, lies the elusive Widow's Tears. This spectacular 574-foot seasonal cascade thunders down the granite cliffs, but catch it quick—it vanishes shortly after the June solstice during the middle of summer!

Directions:

After exiting Wawona Tunnel there is a parking lot (37.71574, -119.67718). Trail begins south of the road.

Avg Time: Immediate. Distance: Immediate

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty: Very Easy

Latitude: 37.70434. Longitude: -119.66943



Bridalveil Falls

Prepare for a breathtaking 617-foot plunge! As the park's iconic "welcome mat," Bridalveil Fall roars with thunderous power in late spring. Families can tackle the 10km West Loop Trail—just pack plenty of sunscreen for those beautiful, unshaded stretches! Insider Tip: To dodge the crowds and snag a peaceful photo, head to the overlook along Big Oak Flat Road for a serene, postcard-perfect view of this year-round marvel.

Avg Time: 20 mins. Distance: 0.8 km

Directions: The trail is easily marked from the main parking lot off of Southside Drive (37.71835, -119.65126). However if full, you can drive a few hundred meters further into the valley and find a trail running parallel to the falls to the road near a pullout..

Crowd Rating: High. Difficulty: Very Easy

Latitude: 37.71701. Longitude: -119.64645



Olmsted Point

Real Gem

Unlock Yosemite's Best-Kept Secret! This breezy 0.6km adventure is perfect for the family, peaking in just 15 minutes. Tread carefully over iconic granite shelves—they're slick after rain and slippery in hot weather!—and claim your 360-degree view of Tenaya Lake and the High Sierra.

Pro tip: Arrive at "magic hour." Seeing Half Dome bathed in golden alpenglow is pure mountain wizardry. It's a short hike with a massive payoff that'll leave you breathless!

Directions: Start your hike from the Olmsted Point Parking Lot off of Tioga Pass Road (37.81101, -119.48568) and head southeast along Olmsted Point Trail.

Avg Time: 15 mins. Distance: 246 meters

Crowd Rating: Very High. Difficulty: Medium

Latitude: 37.81127. Longitude: -119.48521



Dewey Point

Embark on an epic journey along the Dewey Point Trail, a true Yosemite crown jewel! Wind through lush forests and conquering switchbacks until you hit Inspiration Point, where the majestic El Capitan and shimmering Bridalveil Falls explode into view. Push onward through vibrant meadows and over rushing creeks. The grand finale? A breathtaking, panoramic reveal of the Yosemite Valley and the jagged, snow-capped Sierra Nevada. Adventure is calling—lace up and put this on your bucket list!

Directions: Park at the Wawona Tunnel Parking Lot (37.71562, -119.67727). Using the Silver Strand Falls map on page 59, you can continue on past the falls shown on the map to Dewey Pt.

Avg Time: 2:30. Distance: 8 km.

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty: Medium

Latitude: 37.70553. Longitude: -119.65026



Yosemite Falls

Prepare for an epic ascent! This legendary trail showcases three breathtaking viewpoints: Lower, Middle, and the thunderous Upper Yosemite Falls. Witness nature's raw power as the water roars from November through July. Don't miss the stunning panoramic vista at the 2.0-kilometer mark—it's a total game-changer! Push further to stand beneath the sheer majesty of the Upper Falls.

Directions: From the Lower Yosemite Falls Trailhead north of Northside Drive (37.745606 -119.59584) head north. Trail is well marked.

Avg Time: 4hr. Distance: 4 km

Crowd Rating: High. Difficulty: Medium

Latitude: 37.75910. Longitude: -119.59788



Vernal Falls / Emerald Pool / Mist Trail

Get ready for a drenching of pure adrenaline! Feel the roar of the Merced River as it plummets 300 feet into a shimmering, rainbow-filled basin. To conquer this giant, you'll scale over 600 heart-



pumping granite stairs, but the reward is legendary. Standing at the dizzying brink of Vernal Falls is a total rush! For the ultimate experience, visit in late spring when the water is at its peak. Lace up—the mist is calling! Directions: From the parking lot at Curry Village (37.73841, -119.57071), head south east along Happy Isles Loop Road and turn left at the Trailhead Parking Lot (you can also park here). Follow the trail south east along Happy Isles Boardwalk, across the bridge than turn right onto John Muir Trail. As you head past Sierra Point on your left, Vernal Falls will be 1km further up the trail. Continue another 100 meters east to get to the Emerald Pools.

Avg Time: 2:30. Distance: 6.4 km

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty: Medium Latitude: 37.72759. Longitude: -119.54370





McGurk Meadow & Cabin

Secluded

Wind through fragrant pines into lush meadows carpeted with summer wildflowers and crisp sub-alpine air. This family-friendly descent leads to the historic John McGurk cabin, a rustic relic of the Old West. Craving more? Trek 1.6 km further to the epic Pohono Trail junction.

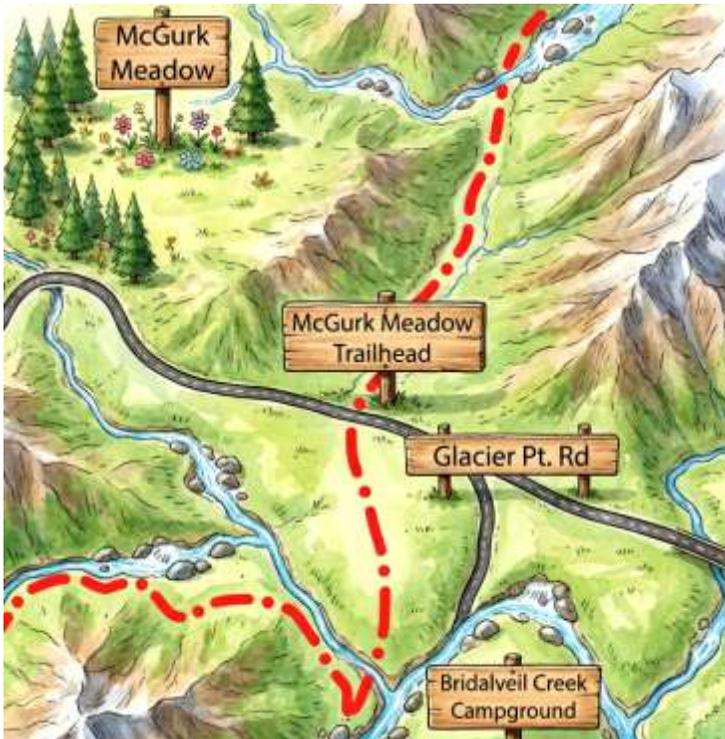


Directions: From Bridalveil Creek Campground at the end of Yosemite Park Rd, (37.66397, -119.62280), take Bridalveil Creek Trailhead north east walking along Old Glacier Point Rd. for approximately 350 meters to a new trail which will appear on your right and heading north. Take this trail. The main meadow will be further up the trail on your left.

Avg Time: 1.5hr. Distance: 5.6 km

Crowd Rating: Light. Difficulty: Very Easy

Latitude: 37.67994. Longitude: -119.63189



Roosevelt Point

Prepare for sensory overload! As you push toward Roosevelt Point, the rim trail explodes into a cinematic panorama, showcasing the thundering majesty of Yosemite Falls and the sheer, granite defiance of El Capitan. Every step offers a new "*pinch-me*" perspective of the valley floor. Just a half-mile of breathtaking trekking later, you'll merge with the legendary Pohono Trail to continue your high-country odyssey. This is Yosemite at its most spectacular!

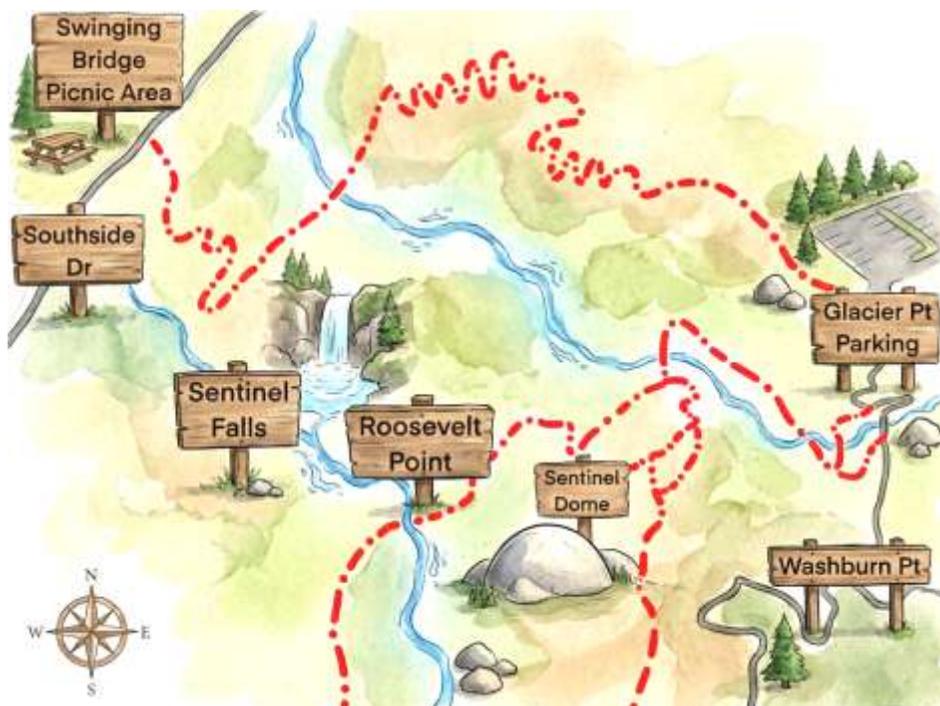


Directions: Access is at the Glacier Point Trailhead Parking Lot (37.72728, -119.57554).

Avg Time: 3hr. Distance: 5.44km

Crowd Rating: Low. Difficulty Rating: Hard

Latitude: 37.72402. Longitude: -119.59390



Foresta Falls

Escape the crowds just five miles from the Valley! This family-friendly gem leads you along the Yosemite Valley rim, where nature puts on a show. Watch in awe as cascading falls plunge 200 feet over rugged granite. This adventure offers a half-mile of pure, tumbling magic and during Spring and Summer vibrant seas of wildflowers.

Directions: The trailhead can be accessed at the corners Dana Way and Crane Flat Rd (37.69811, -119.75738).

Avg Time: 1 hr. Distance: 2.6 km

Crowd Rating: Extreme. Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.69306. Longitude: -119.75993



Nevada Falls

Lace up for a legendary Yosemite soak! Launch from the John Muir Trail into the heart-pounding Mist Trail, passing Vernal Falls and the shimmering Silver Apron. Wind through fragrant pines and granite crags until you're face-to-face with a 594-foot liquid giant. This thunderous cascade flows year-round, but spring offers the ultimate "Nature's Shower" experience. It's steep, it's slick, and it's absolutely spectacular—bring a poncho and expect some serious adventure!

Directions: Access the trail from The Yosemite Valley Trailhead parking Lot (37.73505, -119.56650) or Curry Village on Southside Drive. The trail can also be located using the Vernal Falls Trail on page 64 of this book.

Avg Time: 1 hr. **Distance:** 4 km

Crowd Rating: High. **Difficulty Rating:** Moderate

Latitude: 37.72504. **Longitude:** -119.53327



Taft Point and the Fissures Semi-Secluded

Lace up for a high-altitude rush! Your journey begins in a lush sanctuary of emerald moss and pine-scented air, winding through deep, shaded forests. But don't get too comfortable—the trail soon gives way to heart-pounding granite edges. You'll be rewarded with legendary, panoramic vistas of Yosemite Valley and the jagged Sierra Nevada peaks. Note: This trek is strictly for the bold.

Directions: At the Taft Point Trailhead Parking Lot located on Glacier Point Rd (closed in winter) (37.71229, -119.58713), take the trail west towards Sentinel Dome / Taft Pt. Loop. At approximately 900 meters you will come to the Sentinel Dome / Taft Pt. Loop Junction. Continue east for approx 1km to Taft Point. If feeling extra energetic, you can also hike the loop around Sentinel Dome.

Avg Time: 1.5 hr. Distance: 3.7 km

Crowd Rating: High. Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.71440. Longitude: -119.60469



Valley Floor Loop Trail

Prepare for a 9.3km odyssey through the soul of Yosemite! This premier, family-friendly loop winds alongside North and Southside Drives, serving up legendary vistas at every turn. The absolute showstopper? The thunderous Yosemite Falls cascading down sheer granite walls right before your eyes. To experience this magic in peace, lace up your boots at sunrise—beating the crowds is the ultimate pro move. Since the summer sun is as fierce as the views, don't skimp on the sunscreen. This isn't just a hike; it's your front-row seat to the spectacular!

Directions: Begin your journey from the parking lot at Yosemite Lodge on Northside Drive (37.742918, -119.59923). The trail is easy to find and well marked.

Avg Time: 2:30. Distance: 9.3 km

Crowd Rating: Very High. Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.73727. Longitude: -119.60815



Sentinel Beach

Trek into a Yosemite classic! Step onto the legendary Wooden Bridge, where every step reveals breathtaking vistas of soaring granite peaks. Below, the crystal-clear Merced River beckons—perfect for a refreshing mid-hike plunge to shake off the California sun. Dry off on the scenic banks and feast like explorers while surrounded by the park’s majestic, high-altitude cathedrals. This isn’t just a family stroll; it’s an immersive Yosemite rite of passage. Pack your sense of wonder and dive into the wild heart of the valley!

Directions: From the Yosemite Lodge Parking Lot (37.742918, -119.59923) follow the trail south across a footbridge towards Southside Drive. Turn right on Southside Drive and Right onto Sentinel Beach Rd.

Avg Time: 40 mins. Distance: 2.6km

Crowd Rating: Extremely High. Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.73463. Longitude: -119.60526



Alder Creek Falls

Step back in time on this captivating Yosemite trek! Follow the rhythmic path of a historic railroad grade toward a shimmering, 150-foot waterfall—a hidden Sierra treasure. For those with grit, the adventure doesn't end there. Push north, splash across the creek, and tackle the Forest Service Road. This scenic, five-mile ascent rewards the energetic with a rugged journey ending at Hennes Ridge Drive.

Directions:

Coming northbound along Wawona Road, the Alder Creek Trailhead is on the right. There is some roadside parking available. Parking may also be available along the side of Wawona Road near Mosquito Creek (37.57500, -119.67994). From the trailhead, head east for a short distance then south. At approximately 950 meters there is a junction. Turn left here. The trail then heads for almost 2K. It will then cross Mosquito Creek and head north again for 1.96km with the falls being on your left.

Avg Time: 3 hr. Distance: 11 km

Crowd Rating: Low. Difficulty Rating: Medium

Latitude: 37.59074. Longitude: -119.66043



Grizzly Giant Loop Trail

Prepare to feel small—in the best way possible!

This spectacular 2-mile loop whisks you into a realm of ancient titans. You'll stand in awe of the Grizzly Giant and wander right through the living California Tunnel Tree. From the massive Fallen

Monarch to the elegant Bachelor and Three Graces, every turn on this well-marked path offers a new marvel. This easy-to-follow journey takes roughly 1.5 to 2 hours. Pro tip: The grove's deep shade keeps things brisk, so pack a jacket! Ready to walk among legends?

Directions: From Wawona Road turn onto Mariposa Grove Road (37.50718, -119.63176) and head for the Welcome Center. You can also drive approximately 3km east along Mariposa Grove Road to the second trailhead.

Avg Time: 1 hr. Distance: 3.2 km

Crowd Rating: Extreme. Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.50815. Longitude: -119.60467



Yosemite History Center. Chilnuala Falls and the Secret Pools

Prepare for a Sierra spectacle! This trail winds through shimmering pine forests along the rushing Chilnualna Creek, climaxing at the breathtaking Wawona Valley overlook. After soaking in panoramic views of the Sierra Nevadas and Cascades, step back in time at the nearby Yosemite History Center and the iconic Wawona Covered Bridge. For the ultimate payoff, take a sharp left at the falls' summit to uncover the legendary "secret pools." Whether you're camping at Pioneer or chasing waterfalls, this hike is pure Yosemite magic. Adventure awaits!

Directions: The trail begins at the northern end of Loop Road near lower Chilnuala Falls. The hike to the upper falls heads east along a narrow trail after visiting the lower falls.

Avg Time: 4.5hr. Distance: 12.4 km

Crowd Rating: High. Difficulty Rating: Moderate

Latitude: 37.56503. Longitude: -119.61481



Swinging Bridge Picnic Area

Prepare for a sensory explosion with memories guaranteed to last a lifetime as you cross the rustic wooden bridge, where the roar of the wilderness greets every step. This is the ultimate High Sierra basecamp for an alpine feast; snag a picnic table and soak in the surrounding granite cathedrals. While this legendary hotspot buzzes with vibrant energy during peak season, its charm is absolutely unmatched. To claim this paradise in peace, lace up your boots and hit the trail before the sun crests the peaks.

Directions: From Southside Drive, turn into the Swinging Bridge Picnic Area (37.73664, -119.59897).

The hiking trail is about 65 meters north west of the parking lot. It is also a short hike from the Yosemite Valley Lodge. You can also use the map on page 72 titled: Sentinel Beach for directions.

Avg Time: 5 mins. Distance: 65 meters

Crowd Rating: Very High. Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.73693, Longitude: -119.60009



Wawona Meadow Loop

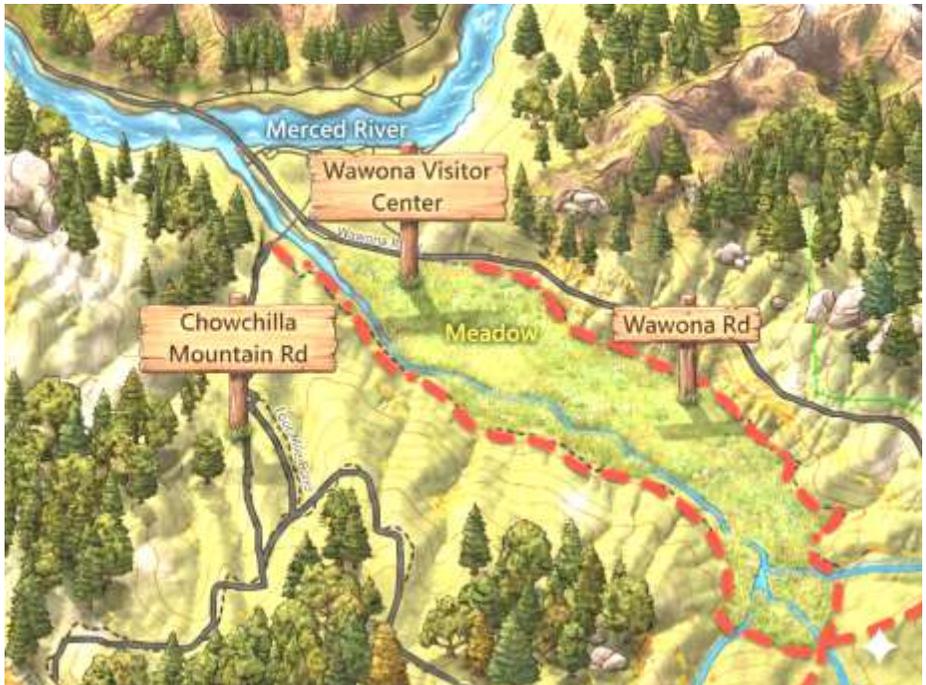
Just south of the Yosemite History Center, an emerald escape awaits! This vibrant loop immerses you in a landscape of lush, sun-kissed meadowlands and enchanting, shaded forests. It's the ultimate family adventure. You can ditch the map and soak in the towering scenery. Whether you're birdwatching or simply breathing in the pine-scented mountain air, Wawona Meadow is breathtaking.

Directions: Park at Wawona Visitor Center (37.53668, -119.65601) than walk south east across Wawona Rd. Head south-west across Wawona Rd, across the creek until you come to Wawona Meadow Loop Trailhead. You will than walk the trail counter-clockwise ending at Wawona Rd.

Avg Time: 1:30. Distance: 5.8 km

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Medium

Latitude: 37.535007. Longitude: -119.65761





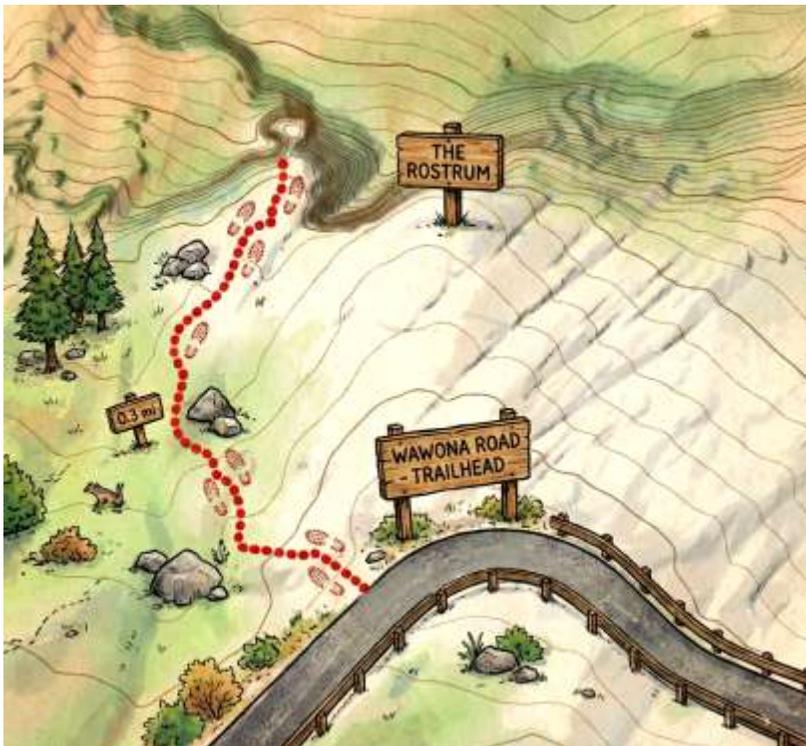
Rostrum Highline

Perched just north of the massive Turtleback Dome, this premier overlook serves up some of the most jaw-dropping vistas in the park. It's a sanctuary for adrenaline seekers; watch as elite climbers scale the vertical granite walls that drop into the abyss below. Safety Note: The "free" in free climbing doesn't mean "easy." Never attempt to descend these sheer walls without proper ropes and safety gear. Directions: Drive along Highway 41 through a tunnel until you see a long stretch of slanted shiny stone wall. Park on the side of the road or at nearby dirt pullouts just after (37.71648, -119.70555). The trail begins at (37.71613, -119.70702) near the stone wall. Trail goes for approx 500 meters. Be careful because the end of the trail has a large sized rounded base.

Avg Time: 5 mins. Distance: 500 meters

Crowd Rating: Low. Difficulty Rating: Medium

Latitude: 37.71894. Longitude: -119.70773



Tuolumne Falls Waterfall

Perched at 7,025 feet along Tioga Pass Road, Tuolumne Falls is a seasonal powerhouse that nearly brushes the bridge with its spray! During the peak spring snowmelt, the Tuolumne River swells into a roaring spectacle, offering a misty, front-row seat to Yosemite's raw energy. As the first major landmark on your journey from Tuolumne Meadows toward the legendary Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne, this waterfall is a picturesque must-see. Feel the roar, grab a photo, and let your high-country adventure begin! If you are feeling adventurous, hike the Tuolumne Trailhead north to Long Gulch to South Tuolumne River (approx 4.5km).



Directions: The South Fork Tuolumne Cascades are at a bridge along Tioga Pass Road (Highway 120) in Yosemite National Park. The bridge is located approximately eight miles east of Tuolumne Grove or 1.24 miles north east of South Fork of the Tuolumne Trailhead which heads south 2.5 miles to Tamarack Flat Campground. There is parking on the side of the road a few hundred feet from the bridge.

Avg Time: Immediate. Distance: Roadside

Crowd Rating: Low. Difficulty Rating: Very Easy

Latitude: 37.79175. Longitude: -119.7211



Wildcat Falls

Ditch the crowds! Tucked away near the Arch Rock entrance, Wildcat Falls is a thunderous hidden gem waiting to be claimed. This isn't just a trickle; during the snow melt season, it's a 700-foot vertical spectacle tumbling through seven stunning tiers of granite. This high-reward detour is perfect for hikers craving a "secret" slice of Yosemite without the grueling mileage. If you feel energetic you can hike the Old Big Oak Flat Road trail to Wildcat Creek which crosses numerous streams. The trail is located a little over 2km south from Wildcat Falls.

Directions: From Yosemite Valley Lodge, drive approximately 5 miles west along Northside Drive and turn onto El Portal Road continuing west. Just before Fireplace Creek, turn into Big Oak Flat Rd. The bridge is almost 2.5 miles later. Heading north, about 150 meters from the bridge, there is scenic roadside parking.

Avg Time: Immediate. Distance: Immediate

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Medium

Latitude: 37.72502. Longitude: -119.71799



The Cascades Roadside Waterfall

Prepare for a sensory surge at The Cascades! Here, Cascade and Tamarack Creeks collide in a high-velocity mountain dance. During the peak snowmelt of April through June, these alpine forces merge on a precipitous slope, thundering down the granite in a spectacular white-water symphony. Scramble below the bridge to enrich your soul in the wild mist and witness the raw scale of this liquid avalanche. It's not just a view; it's a roar that vibrates in your chest. For hikers seeking Yosemite's wild, unbridled energy, this is your roadside front-row seat to nature's power!

Directions: Located 500 meters north of Wildcat Falls. There is a large parking space at the north end of the bridge.

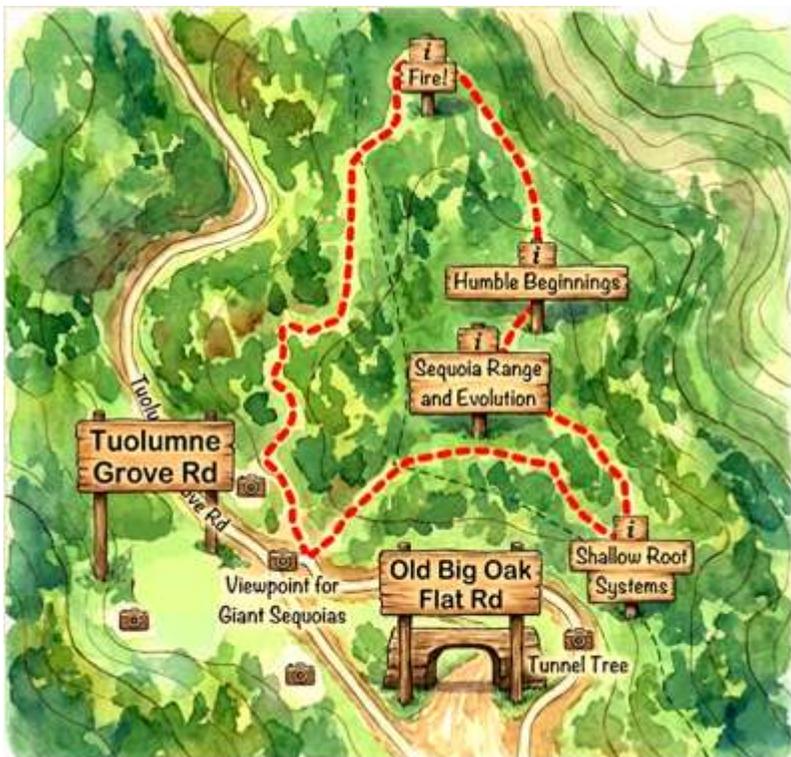
Avg Time: 5 mins. Distance: Roadside

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.72720. Longitude: -119.71337



Tuolumne Grove of Giant Trees Loop Trail
Just one kilometer north of Crane Flat, beam yourself into a family-friendly adventure! This shaded loop trail—curiously shaped like a Star Trek Communicator—weaves through a lush, primeval forest. The undisputed star? The legendary Dead Giant Tunnel Tree, where you can literally walk through history. Unlike the bustling Mariposa Grove, this is a more quiet trail. Pro-Tip: The deep canopy keeps things chilly; pack a jacket during cooler months. Boldly go where fewer tourists tread and experience Yosemite's quiet giants! Directions: From Tuolumne Rd, turn into Old Big Oak Flat Rd and into the parking lot (37.75819, -119.80530). The trailhead is right beside the parking lot. Avg Time: 1 hr. Distance: 4 km Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Medium Latitude: 37.76943. Longitude: -119.80983



Yosemite's Highest Waterfall. Ribbon Falls

Prepare for a sensory masterpiece! Your journey begins under the cool, emerald canopy of a lush pine forest, where the air is thick with the scent of sun-warmed needles. But the real magic lies ahead. Emerging from the shade, you'll face a thunderous 1,612-foot plunge of pure Sierra snowmelt. During the spring peak, the roar is primal and the mist is transformative.



Directions: From the parking lot at Devil's Elbow along the Mercer River (37.727004, -119.630369), take the Valley Loop Trail. This will be a steep trek uphill. There is also a parking lot at (37.724573, -119.640900).

Avg Time: 1.30 hrs. Distance: 921 meters

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Medium

Latitude: 37.73313. Longitude: -119.64745



Merced Grove of Giant Sequoias

Trade the crowds for a breathtaking 3-mile descent into a hidden sanctuary of titans! This trail follows the rhythmic pulse of Moss Creek, winding through a cool, fragrant canopy of pine and fir. Halfway down, hang a sharp left at the fork to plunge toward the grove. Unlike Mariposa, these ancient sequoias are spaced for solitude, standing as massive, 3,000-year-old sentinels in a wilder landscape. It's an exhilarating downhill trek to witness Earth's oldest living legends. Lace up—the prehistoric shadows of Yosemite are calling!

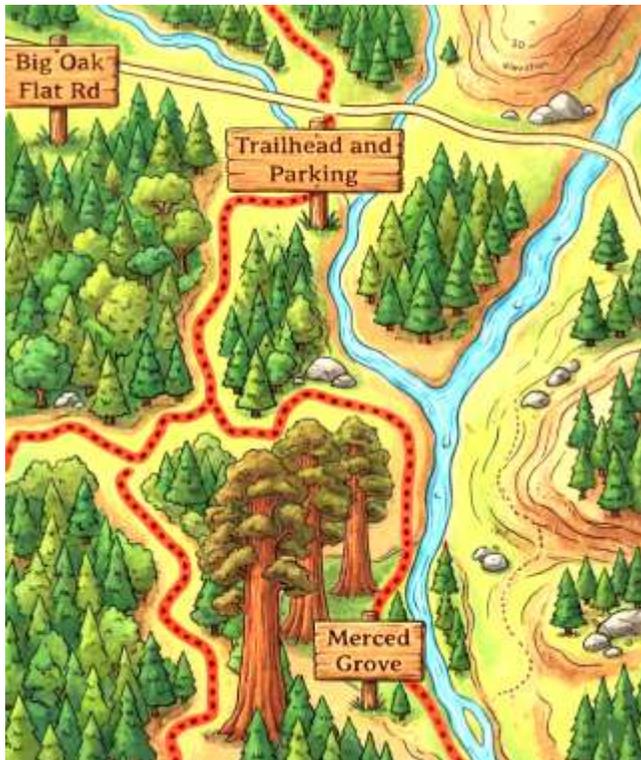


Directions: Turn into the parking lot off of Big Oak Flat Rd at (37.76325, -119.84233).

Avg Time: 2:05. Distance: 6.6km

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Medium

Latitude: 37.74694. Longitude: -119.83923



Kibbie Lake Extremely Secluded

Ditch the valley crowds for this high-country hidden gem! This exhilarating loop offers total seclusion, leading you to a pristine sanctuary where granite islets dot the southern waters.



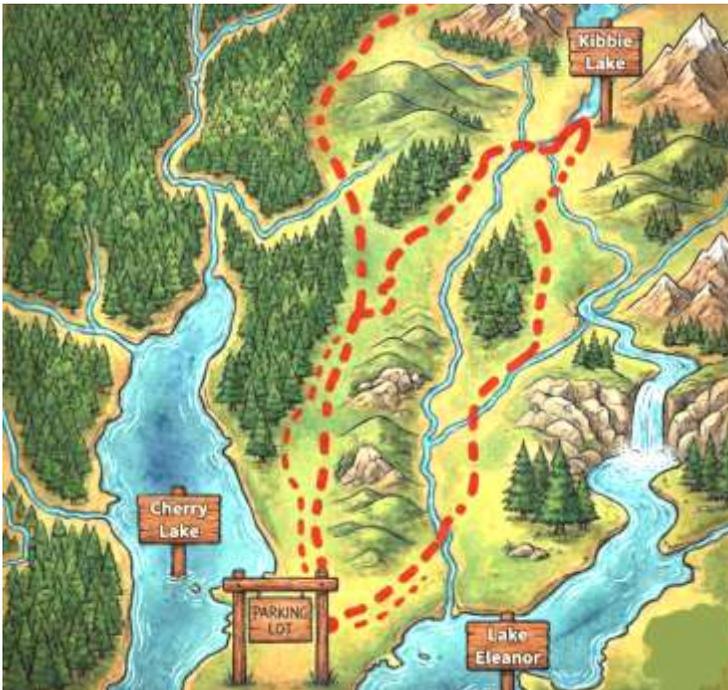
Halfway along, refresh at a crystal-clear natural spring—nature’s own water cooler. While the bracing alpine winds require packing your favorite layers, the reward is an unparalleled celestial theater once the sun dips. With zero foot traffic and absolute silence, it’s the ultimate retreat for stargazers and solitude-seekers alike. The south part of the lake has little islands and there is a spring about halfway along the trail located at 38.012375, -119.884371.

Directions: Park at the parking lot off of Cherry Lake Road (37.98976 -119.88673). The trail begins east then heads north.

Avg Time: 6:30. Distance: 19km

Crowd Rating: Very Low. Difficulty Rating: Hard

Latitude: 38.05397. Longitude: -119.84122



Rancheria and Wapama Falls and Railway Tunnel Experience the raw power of Yosemite's hidden gem! Begin your adventure by crossing the massive O'Shaughnessy Dam and passing through a granite tunnel onto the Wapama Falls Trail. Hugging the reservoir shoreline with the water to your right, you'll encounter the graceful Tueeulala Falls, then—500 meters later—the roaring Wapama Falls. Intrepid hikers can trek 5.7 km further to majestic Rancheria Falls, the gateway to the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne. Open for year-round backpacking with a campground southeast of the dam, Hetch Hetchy is a legendary wilderness escape! Directions: Head to the O'Shaughnessy Dam parking lot (37.94614, -119.78817). Trail signs are clearly marked. Avg Time: 2 hrs. Distance: 8 km Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Hard Latitude: 37.95550. Longitude: -119.71025



Mount Hoffmann

Prepare for an alpine odyssey! Starting from the bustling May Lake trailhead (restrooms available), you'll dive into a granite wonderland. This isn't just a hike; it's a High Sierra masterclass. After passing the shimmering May Lake and its vibrant camp, the real adventure begins. Navigation skills are key here—signage is sparse! Pivot east, then swing southwest before charging northwest toward the jagged summit. Time your trek with the blooming season to witness vistas that redefine "breathtaking." If you are feeling energetic, you can hike along the right side of May Lake, heading north to a smaller lake approx 3km further (37.84994, -119.47661).
Directions: Drive to the end of May Lake Rd. (Old Tioga Rd.) where you will find a parking lot (37.83341, -119.49074).
Avg Time: 4hrs. Distance: 10.4km
Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Hard
Latitude: 37.84697. Longitude: -119.51058





Staircase Falls

Tucked unexpectedly beside the park's most bustling corridors, this spring waterfall offers a masterclass in secluded beauty. While the masses gather nearby, this gem plunges a soaring granite slope. For hikers seeking spectacular seclusion scale without the bustle, these falls provide a breathtaking escape.

Directions: From Curry Village at the Ice Skating Rink head south across the road and past some cabins. This trail can be hard to locate. The trail begins at 37.736970, -119.574589.

There is parking at the Curry Village Parking Lot.

Avg Time: 15 mins. Distance: 500 m

Crowd Rating: Low. Difficulty Rating: Very Easy

Latitude: 37.73516. Longitude: -119.57470



Illilouette Falls and Panorama Overlook

Ditch the crowds for a true Yosemite secret! Tucked 4km east of Taft Point, this hidden masterpiece remains one of the park's most elusive treasures. During the spring thaw, the mountain awakens with a thundering main fall that tumbles into a breathtaking series of tiered cascades. It's a visual feast for the soul—but the granite won't hide you from the heat. With significant sun exposure, pack plenty of sunscreen unless you're aiming to match the rosy glow of a Sierra sunset. Ready for a picturesque trek few can claim to have conquered?

Directions: There are 2 options. You can either hike in from Glacier Point Parking lot (easier hike) or from Nevada Falls (more switchbacks, but better views).

Avg Time: 3 hours Distance: 7.9km

Crowd Rating: High. Difficulty Rating: Hard

Latitude: 37.713967. Longitude: -119.561089



Mt. Washburn Roadside Overlook

Prepare for an alpine odyssey! Rising high above the park, this trek rewards the bold with 360-degree panoramas stretching fifty miles into the horizon. Feel the pulse of the wilderness as bighorn sheep navigate the craggy slopes of Dunraven Pass. named for the pioneers who forged the legendary path from Wawona to Yosemite Valley, this trail is more than a hike—it's a journey through history. Lace up and witness the park's staggering scale from the sky. The summit is calling; will you answer?

Directions: As you drive along Glacier Point Rd, look for the parking lot called Washburn Point (holds about 30 cars) on the right heading north after a series of switchbacks.

Avg Time: Immediate. Distance: Roadside

Crowd Rating: High. Difficulty Rating: Very Easy

Latitude: 37.720847. Longitude: -119.573039





Dorothy Lake

Leave the shuttle buses behind for a raw, cross-country odyssey through Yosemite's untamed backcountry. This isn't just a trail; it's a high-octane plunge into the wild. You'll navigate ancient, shadowy forests before emerging into a topographical wonderland. From the depths of rugged canyons to the shores of crystalline alpine lakes and the splash of icy streams, the terrain shifts with every heartbeat. It's a breathtaking highlight reel of the Sierra's diverse majesty—a rugged, "all-access" adventure for those who crave the path less traveled.

Directions: From the parking lot at Sonora Pass Trailhead Loop, off of Highway 108 (38.32965, -119.63534), head south from the campground onto the Pacific Crest Trail. The trail continues in a valley through numerous flowing streams. Note: This is only an approximate trail and you will need Topographic Maps and GPS equipment to navigate the full journey to Dorothy Lake.

Avg Time: 1 to 5 days Distance: 30 to 40 km (approximate).

Crowd Rating: Extremely Low. Difficulty Rating: Very Hard
Latitude: 38.17588. Longitude: -119.59205



The Crystal Caverns

Approximately 50 miles from the East Entrance of Yellowstone National Park is what used to be called Crystal Caverns or Shoshone Cavern National Monument. It is now called Spirit Mountain Cave. A \$20 refundable deposit is required for a permit & key from the BLM Cody Field Office (1002 Blackburn Street, Cody). Once you get the lock removed, a very heavy metal door (maybe 24 inches square) swings downward, allowing access to the cave. There are some areas of the cave that can be easily accessed by young children and folks that don't enjoy crawling on their knees or bellies, but to get to several of the explored areas, plan on some steep descents / ascents with very low (hands / knees / belly crawl) passages.

Directions: From downtown Cody, head west on Yellowstone Highway (US-14/16/20). Turn left onto Spirit Mountain Road (also known as Cedar Mountain Road) to begin the uphill drive. The unpaved gravel road stretches for approximately 11km and includes 15 sharp switchbacks with grades reaching up to 14%. A high-clearance vehicle is strongly recommended. Follow the road uphill for about 4 km until you reach a small gravel parking area marked by a blue BLM gate and a trailhead sign. The trail from the parking lot is a short but moderately difficult hike that leads directly to the primary cave entrance. The hike from the parking lot is roughly 0.3 to 0.4 miles long. Look for a heavy, 24-inch square metal hatch on the ground. The padlock is located behind the grate, requiring explorers to reach through to unlock the door.

Avg Time: 1hr Distance: 12km (approximate).

Crowd Rating: Extremely Low. Difficulty Rating: Hard

Latitude: 44.50411, Longitude: -109.14395



Beehive Meadow

Tucked within Yosemite's rugged embrace, Beehive Meadows is your emerald sanctuary. This pristine pocket of level, sun-dappled grass—framed by towering timber—is the ultimate High Sierra picnic spot. But don't unlace those boots just yet! Push slightly further to witness a visual crescendo: a jaw-dropping panorama where the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir shimmers like a sapphire against the jagged, granite spine of the Sierra Nevadas. It's more than a view; it's a front-row seat to the wild, vertical soul of the park.

Directions: Trail can be accessed from the parking lot at Evergreen Rd. At approx 1.5km from the parking lot turn left. This leads you to a series of switchbacks heading north. After the switchbacks at approx 4km from the parking lot turn right, which heads directly north.

Avg Time: 6 hours Distance: 7 km

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Medium

Latitude: 37.98251. Longitude: -119.78482



Cathedral Rocks East

Secluded

Prepare to lose your breath—and find your soul—among Yosemite's granite cathedrals. If you've ever dreamed of standing beneath monoliths that scrape the heavens, this trail is your gateway to greatness. You'll navigate a labyrinth of ancient stone where the scale is mythic and the views are cinematic. But fair warning: the Sierras don't do "easy." Lace up your sturdiest ankle-high boots to tackle the rugged, technical terrain ahead. This isn't just a walk in the woods; it's a high-altitude adventure.

Directions: From Southside Drive, there is parking on the side of the road in this region (37.721321, -119.640210). Once you head south you will encounter Valley Loop Trail. Nearby the trail to Lower Cathedral Rock is only a few meters and is a separate trail that heads south. Take this trail south for about 200 meters towards Lower Cathedral Rock.

Avg Time: 45 minutes Distance: 450 meters

Crowd Rating: Low. Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.717585. Longitude: -119.642187



Artist Point

Leave the valley floor behind and step into a living masterpiece at Artist Point. This trail weaves through a whispering, sun-dappled pine forest, building anticipation with every fragrant step. Suddenly, the timber parts to reveal Yosemite's ultimate "mic-drop" moment: a sweeping, unobstructed panorama where the monolithic El Capitan and the legendary Half Dome command the horizon. It's a short trek with a monumental payoff, offering the same soul-stirring perspectives that inspired generations of painters. Ready for your front-row seat to granite glory? The vistas are ready and waiting for your entrance.

Directions: From the Tunnel View Parking Lot located east of the Wawona Road Tunnel (37.71574, -119.67718), take Pohnono Trail westwards for approximately 970 meters then turn left onto Old Wawona Road going south east for approximately 700 meters to Artist Point.

Avg Time: 1hr. Distance: 3.1 km

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Hard

Latitude: 37.712692. Longitude: -119.675253





Spider Cave

Think you've seen all of Yosemite? Look closer! Beyond the crowded vistas lies a world of hidden subterranean wonders tucked right under the noses of unsuspecting tourists.

Spider Cave is the ultimate "hidden in plain sight" gem. Just a stone's throw from the bustling main paths, this granite sanctuary invites the daring to trade the sun for the mysterious cool of the deep. It's tight, it's thrilling, and it's pure adrenaline.

Directions: This cave can be hard to find. There is no marked entrance, so look carefully. From Lower Yosemite Falls View parking lot on Northside Drive, take Lower Yosemite Falls Trail north to Lower Yosemite Falls. The cave is near Lower Yosemite Falls. If you are facing the falls they are to your left. If you are a rock climber, caverns are located nearby at 37.749578, -119.598093.

Avg Time: 20 mins Distance: 450 meters

Crowd Rating: Low

Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.749578. Longitude: -119.598093



Indian and Elf Village Caves

Secluded

There are said to be many hidden caves in the Washington Column region. Be sure to bring a flashlight.



Directions: From the Curry Village Parking lot (37.73841, -119.57071), head north east along Happy Isles Loop Road / Bike Path taking the first left at the Shuttle Stop. Follow the trail north, crossing a bridge and then turn left at the restrooms onto Valley Loop Trail and walk approximately 100 meters. Mirror Lake Trail runs parallel south along Valley Loop Trail. The cave is near a low, deep recess under a large rock near the bottom of Washington Column.

Avg Time: 2hrs Distance: 4km

Crowd Rating: Low. Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.744125. Longitude: -119.559338



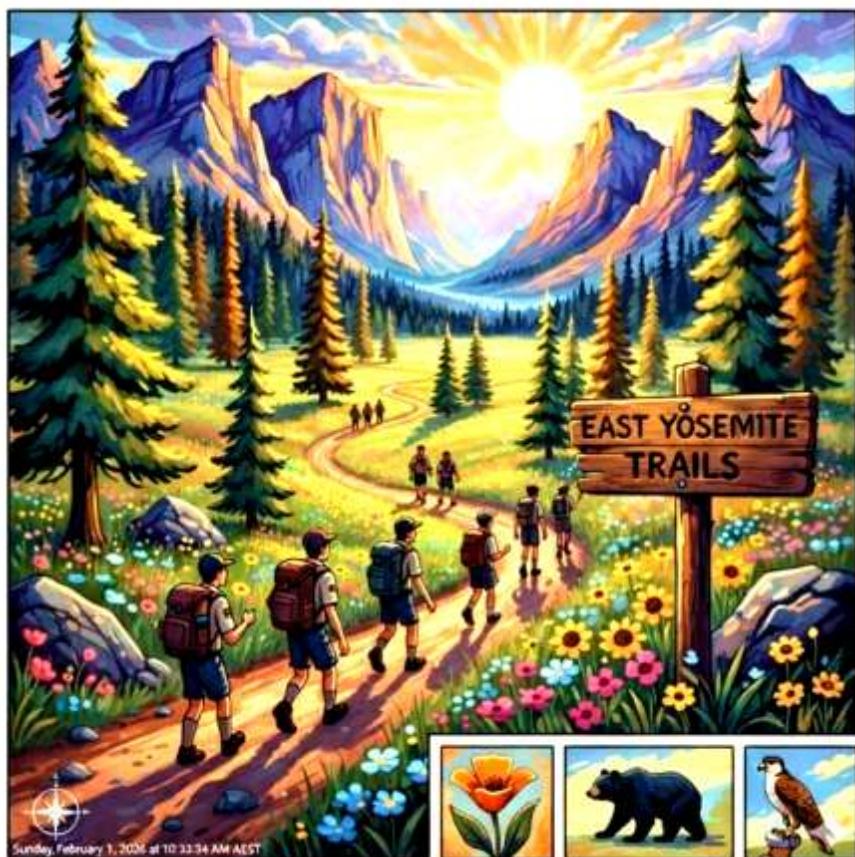
The Firefalls. Horsetail Falls

Prepare for a sensory explosion! As February fades, Horsetail Fall transforms into a vertical river of molten gold. Cascading 2,130 feet down the eastern face of El Capitan, this "Firefall" is nature's most elusive masterpiece. Don't forget your tripod—this is the shot of a lifetime. Pro-Tips: Aim for February 22nd for the peak glow. Be in position between 5:28 and 5:40 p.m. Watch as the setting sun hits the mist, causing the water to "ignite" in a brilliant, fiery orange! Directions: On Northside Drive head to the El Capitan Picnic Area Parking Lot (37.72799, -119.62072). There is also parking at Devil's Elbow 750 meters away and at Yosemite Valley Lodge. A short trail heads west from the parking lot.



Avg Time:	5 mins	Distance:	Minimal
Crowd Rating:	Very High.	Difficulty Rating:	Easy
Latitude:	37.73138.	Longitude:	-119.62729





North Dome

Secluded

Prepare for an unrivaled alpine assault! This exposed trek pushes you toward a sky-high summit, rewarding the bold with breathtaking 360-degree panoramas of the High Sierra. The Elements: Pack a windbreaker and sunscreen; the exposure is as real as the views. Trail Intel: Watch your step! Yosemite's signature granite becomes treacherous when wet or during "marbles-on-glass" dry spells.

Directions: Head to the parking lot off of Tioga Rd, (37.80666, -119.54628) and begin heading south east along North Dome Trail to North Dome.

Avg Time: 4hr. Distance: 8km

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Hard

Latitude: 37.75686, Longitude: -119.56090



Royal Arch Cascades and Secluded Waterfall

Escape the dense forest canopy and emerge into the grand, sun-drenched openness of Royal Arch Cascades! Just a heartbeat off the Valley Loop Trail, this hidden gem displays water dancing down massive granite walls. Witness the delicate silver spray at its peak before the summer heat takes hold.

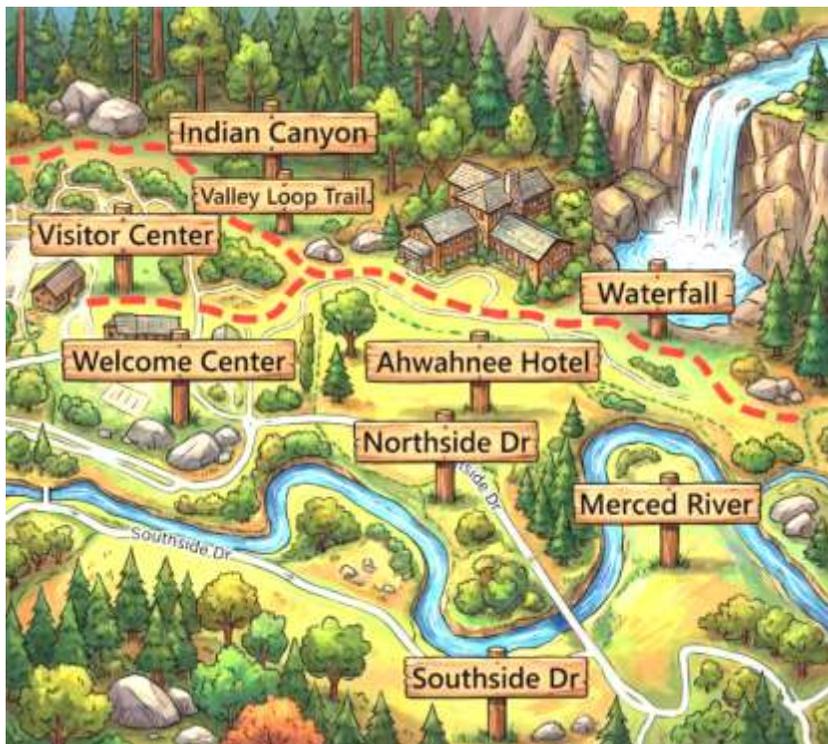
Directions: Park at the Yosemite Visitor Center. Head north across the parking lot turning right onto a trail that goes east beside Northside Drive. After about 150 meters turn left onto the trail heading north for about 150 meters.

Ahwahnee Meadow will be on your right. There is also a small trail 902 meters east that leads to a secluded waterfall flowing in spring at 37.74758, -119.57199.

Avg Time: 20 mins. Distance: 600 meters

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.74760, Longitude: -119.57201



Dog Lake and Lembert Dome

Prepare for an epic High Sierra double-feature! This trail kicks off with a steady climb to the shimmering, crystal-clear waters of Dog Lake—a perfect alpine oasis for a quick breather. But the real adrenaline hits as you scale the massive granite crest of Lembert Dome. At the summit, you're rewarded with an electrifying 360-degree panorama of Tuolumne Meadows and the jagged peaks beyond. Along the way, you'll even tread upon a legendary section of the Pacific Crest Trail. It's a front-row seat to Yosemite's raw, sky-high majesty!

Directions: From the Lembert Dome Picnic area off of Tioga Rd (37.87729 -119.35329) follow the Dog Lake Trail (Tahoe Yosemite Trail) north west for 1.84 km to a lake surrounded by tall pine trees called Dog Lake. If you want to hike to Lembert Dome than at 1.39km turn right.

Avg Time: 1:30. Distance: 946 meters

Crowd Rating: High. Difficulty Rating: Moderate

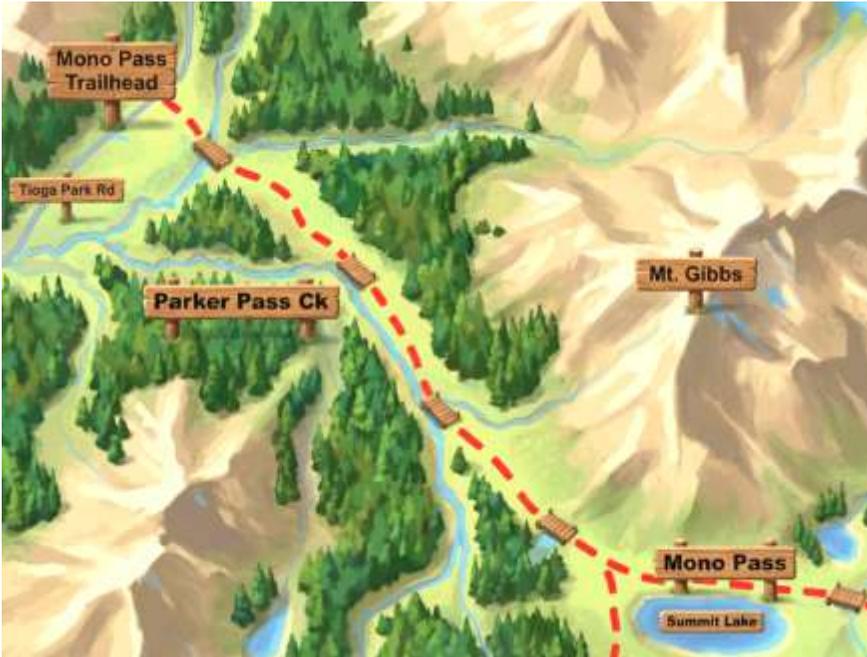
Latitude: 37.88187 Longitude: -119.34697



Mono Pass

Secluded

Prepare for an alpine masterpiece! This trail plunges you into a hidden valley where jagged peaks surround a shimmering lake and emerald meadows. Following the rhythmic flow of Parker Pass Creek, the path transforms into a rugged, sun-drenched scramble over granite and rock. Beneath the shade of resilient pines, you'll navigate exposed ridges that offer unrivaled High Sierra views. It's a raw, exhilarating trek designed for those seeking the perfect mountain sanctuary. Directions: From the Mono Pass Trailhead off of Tioga Park Road (37.89112, -119.26280), head southeast along Mono Pass Trail until you reach the amazingly picturesque lake. Avg Time: 6hrs. Distance: 17.4km After crossing the creek, the trail splits off to the left, keep following this left trail to explore the many lakes. There are several trails that are off to the right, but keeping to the left will reveal the lakes. Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Hard Latitude: 37.85526. Longitude: -119.21505



Upper Cathedral Lake

Secluded

Trade the valley heat for a crisp, 790-foot ascent through a cathedral of ancient pines. This shaded trek begins at 8,500 feet, winding upward until you discover a hidden high-country paradise. Quench your thirst at a crystal-clear freshwater spring—nature's own hydration station—before the forest opens into a lush, emerald meadow. At 9,290 feet, a shimmering alpine lake awaits, perfectly mirroring the jagged granite peaks. It's a subalpine dreamscape designed for those who crave solitude and spectacular scenery.



Directions: From the small dirt parking lot off of Tioga Rd at 37.86093 -119.4349, (also called the Medicott Dome Approach Trail) take the trail heading south east. The trail first comes across Lower Cathedral Lake. After going east, Upper Cathedral Lake is another 2km. This is accessed heading north east and by taking a right turn at John Muir Trail, about 900 meters from Lower Lake.

Avg Time: 3 hours. Distance: 9.2 km

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Hard

Latitude: 37.83959. Longitude: -119.41604



Poly Dome Lakes

Secluded

Ditch the crowds for this exhilarating trek into the High Sierra wilderness! This secluded path weaves through an enchanting forest, dancing alongside the rhythmic flow of Murphy Creek. You'll transition from cool canopy shade to dramatic granite exposure before arriving at a breathtaking finale: crystal-clear waters cradled by towering, sun-drenched domes. It's a sensory masterpiece of alpine creeks and shimmering solitude.



Directions: From the Murphy Creek Trailhead off of Tioga Road (37.83397 -119.46291), take the Murphy Creek Trail North and then turn right onto Poly Dome Lake Trail. The trail ends at Poly Dome Lake.

Avg Time: 3hr. Distance: 9.7km

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Hard

Latitude: 37.85490. Longitude: -119.44949



Soda Springs

Dive into the heart of Tuolumne Meadows on this exhilarating High Sierra trek! Wind through a sun-dappled forest as you ford the enchanting Unicorn Creek and bridge the iconic Tuolumne River. This trail perfectly balances cool, pine-scented shade with wide-open alpine vistas. The ultimate reward? The historic Parsons Memorial Lodge and the "magic" of Soda Springs, where naturally carbonated water bubbles straight from the earth. It's a refreshing blend of rustic history and pristine wilderness that captures the true spirit of Yosemite.

Directions: From Tuolumne Meadows Visitor Center, walk east along Tioga Road for 273 meters until you see the trail marked by upright stones. The trail heads north east 918 meters to Soda Springs. The first left after crossing Tuolumne Meadows Footbridge takes you to a series of cabins including John McCauley's Wood Cabin.

Avg Time: 1:30. Distance: 2.6 km

Crowd Rating: Medium. Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.87883. Longitude: -119.36555



May Lake

Prepare for a breathtaking ascent through aromatic pine forests toward the shimmering heart of Yosemite. May Lake awaits—a pristine glacial wonder cradled by towering, sun-drenched granite bluffs. Whether you're casting for trout, paddling across glassy waters, or taking an exhilarating alpine plunge, this is High Sierra magic at its peak. Don't mind a little spray; fording the inlet adds a dash of rugged thrill to your journey! Grab your pack and find your rhythm—this stunning alpine sanctuary is calling.

Directions: Drive to the parking lot at the end of May Lake Rd. (Old Tioga Rd.) (37.83341, -119.49074). Follow May Lake Trail north to the May Lake Sierra Camp which is by the lake.

Avg Time: 2hr. Distance: 3.7 km

Crowd Rating: High. Difficulty Rating: Easy

Latitude: 37.84770. Longitude: -119.49348



Clouds' Rest

Prepare for the ultimate Yosemite high! The trek to Clouds' Rest delivers a dizzying 360-degree panorama that arguably puts Half Dome to shame. This is high-country hiking at its peak—literally. Since the trail is dramatically sun-drenched and exposed, gear up for the elements. Early-season adventurers should be ready to splash through surging stream crossings fueled by Sierra snowmelt—a small price to pay for the roof-of-the-world views.

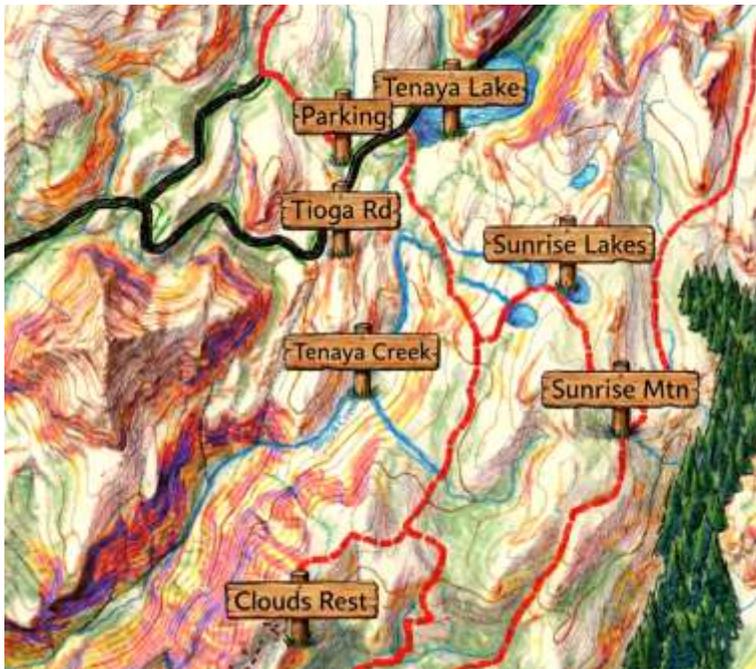


Directions: From the parking lot off of Tioga Rd at Sunrise Lakes Trailhead, beside Tenaya Lake (37.82585, -119.46999), take Cloud's Rest Trail. At approximately 3.50km the trail turns left leading to Sunrise Lakes. If you stay south on the trail you will head to Clouds' Rest. On your way to Clouds' Rest keep to the right.

Avg Time: 8hr. Distance: 20 km

Crowd Rating: Low. Difficulty Rating: Hard

Latitude: 37.76852. Longitude: -119.48955



Sunrise Lakes

Prepare for an alpine spectacle! Tucked deep within the High Sierra, discover a geometric marvel: a perfect trinity of shimmering lakes arranged in a striking 400-meter triangle. Each 300-meter-wide basin offers a pristine backcountry escape, but the true crown jewel is Middle Sunrise Lake. Here, two emerald islets rest in the center of the crystalline water, creating a postcard-perfect view.

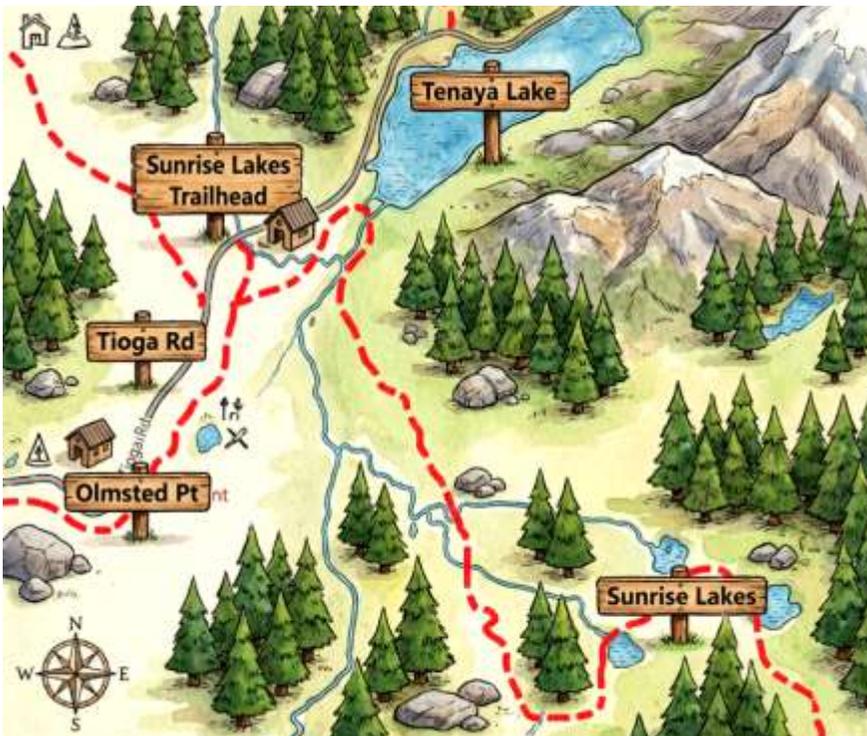


Directions: From the parking lot at Sunrise Lakes Trailhead, southwest of Tenaya Lake (37.82595, -119.46985), take Cloud's Rest Trail south over Tenaya Creek. At approximately 3.50km the trail turns left onto Sunrise Lakes Trail. First you will come across Lower Sunrise Lake, then Upper Sunrise Lake.

Avg Time: 4hr. Distance: 9 km

Crowd Rating: Low. Difficulty Rating: Medium

Latitude: 37.80638. Longitude: -119.44943



Indian Rock

Ditch the crowded valley floor for a true backcountry treasure. Branching off the path to North Dome, the Indian Rock Trail is a short, steep climb to one of nature's extremely rare natural granite arches. Step through this stone gateway to unlock a stunning 360-degree panorama that will leave you breathless. From this secret granite perch, the Sierra high country and a side-profile of Half Dome explode into view. It's a quiet, sweeping masterpiece—an essential summit for those who prefer their vistas with a side of solitude.

Directions: Take the trail from the parking lot at Porcupine Creek Trailhead off of Tioga Road, (37.80669, -119.54539). The top of Indian Rock is approximately 623 meters up the hill, which can be extremely steep towards the end.

Avg Time: 4hr. Distance: 10 km

Crowd Rating: Low. Difficulty Rating: Medium

Latitude: 37.78233. Longitude: -119.55059



Matthes Lake

Prepare for the ultimate High Sierra test! The trek to Matthes Lake is no casual stroll—it's a pulse-pounding ascent designed for those who crave a true wilderness challenge. Tucked beneath the jagged, iconic spine of Matthes Crest, this hidden gem demands grit and rewards you with pristine alpine perfection. Navigate granite slabs and steep terrain to reach the sapphire waters of Yosemite's most secluded high-country treasure. It's grueling, gorgeous, and arguably the most rewarding "off-the-beaten-path" experience

Directions: Access is from the parking lot at Cathedral Lakes Trailhead (37.87329, -119.38238) off of Tioga Rd. Follow the trail southbound until you reach Matthes Lake. There is a hidden lake nearby at 37.807881, -119.415631.

Avg Time: 1-2 days. Distance: 30 km

Crowd Rating: Low. Difficulty Rating: Very Hard

Latitude: 37.81057. Longitude: -119.39867



Sentinel Dome

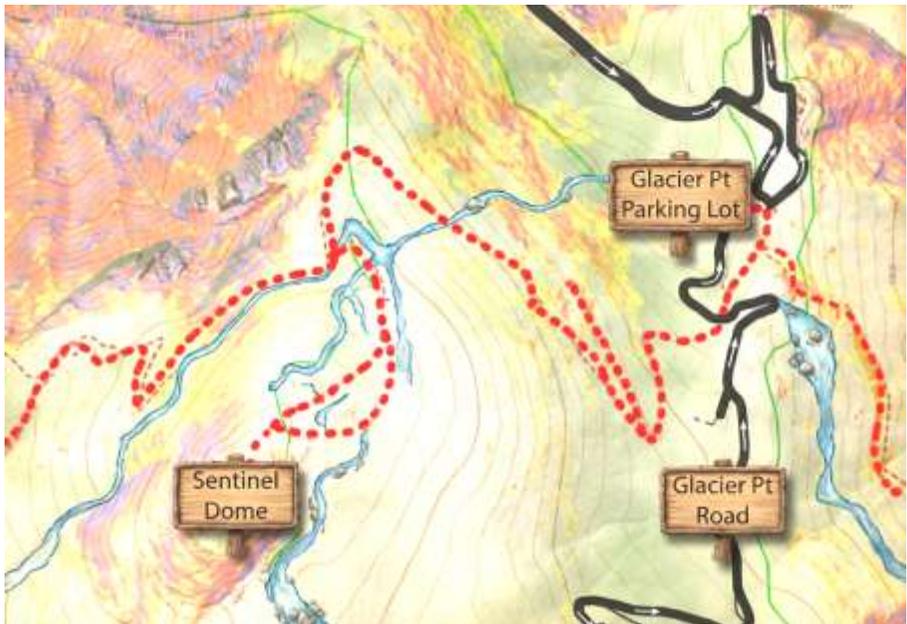
Prepare for a sensory explosion! The hike to Sentinel Dome is Yosemite's premier "high-reward" adventure. Cross a bubbling brook and wind through vibrant meadows of phlox and larkspur before inhaling the sweet, butterscotch scent of towering Jeffrey pines. The summit reveals a staggering panorama: El Capitan's massive face, the roar of Yosemite Falls, and the iconic silhouette of Half Dome. Pay homage to the legendary Jeffrey pine, immortalized by Ansel Adams, and soak in views stretching from the High Sierra to the coastal range. It's an epic, world-class journey!

Directions: At the Glacier Point Trailhead Parking Lot, follow Phono Trail south, eventually leading to a junction where you will turn left onto the trail to Sentinel Dome (37.72660, -119.58240).

Avg Time: 2:30hr. Distance: 5.30 km

Crowd Rating: Extreme. Difficulty Rating: Medium

Latitude: 37.72319. Longitude: -119.58429



About The Author

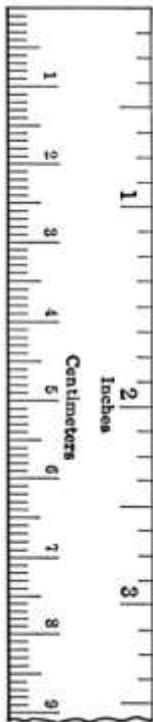
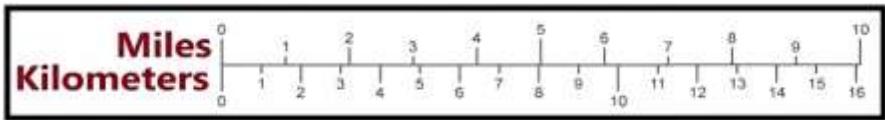
During 1987 Scott set out on an adventure around Australia backpacking through some of the most rugged and beautiful wilderness in the world, including climbing Australia's highest mountain; Mt. Kosciusko. After exploring the Appalachian Trail and the Colorado Rockies, he explored numerous scenic and remote trails throughout the Hawaiian Islands and the Sunshine Coast of Australia.

Your Feedback Welcome

Send us your feedback. Things are always in constant change so if you have any information you would like to see included in the next edition or have comments that would improve the hiking experience of our readers, feel free to email us at bacitrails@basictrails.com.

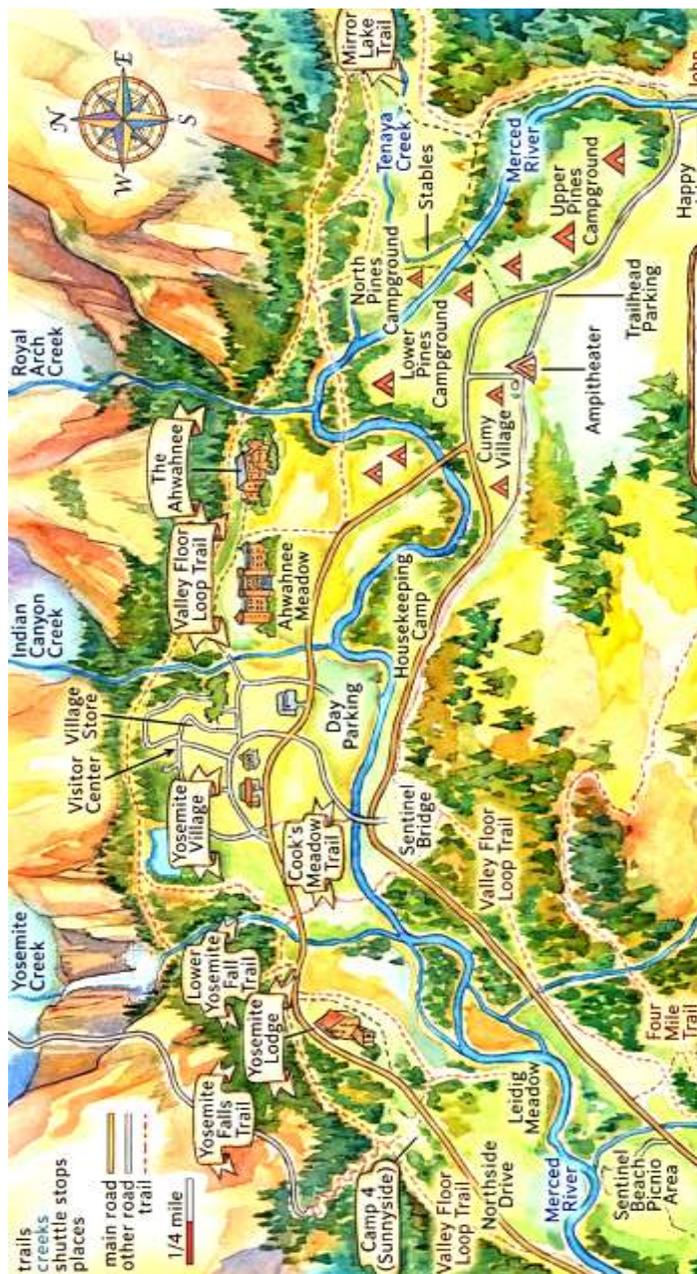
Conversion Charts

Quantity / Weight				
1 teaspoon	1 ounce	1 cup	1 quart	1 pound
5ml	30ml	240ml	946ml	½ kilo
4.2 gm	28 gm	240 gm	946 gm	453 gm

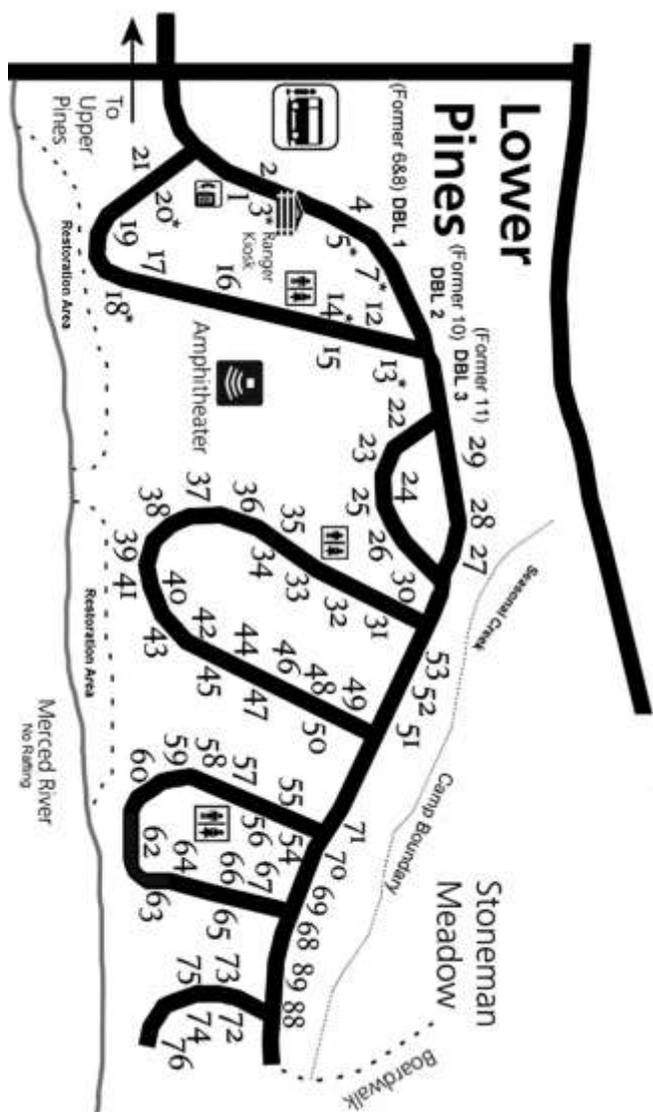


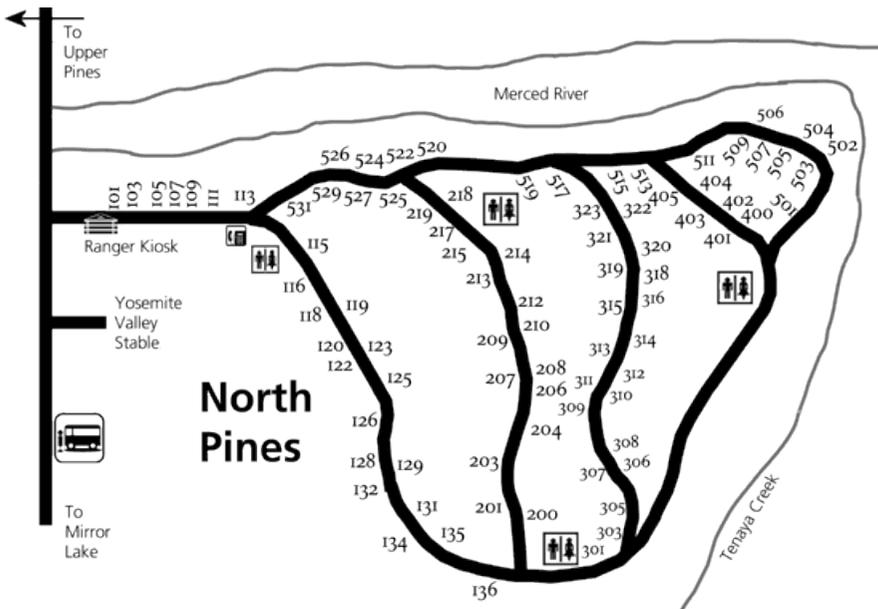


YOSEMITE CAMPING MAPS









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Thank you for reading one of the finest hiking trail books on Yosemite. I sincerely hope your visit to Yosemite is a memorable one.

P.S. If this book has served its purpose be sure to give it a 5 Star Thumbs Up rating.

Scott Rauvers

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Rauvers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop for the letter 'R'.

