

# Welcome to Yosemite, Sequoia & Kings Canyon

*With wild rock formations, astonishing waterfalls, unimaginably vast swaths of granite, humbling peaks and a four-season dance card, the Sierra Nevada is no less than perfect.*

## Backcountry Bonanza

Spanning 400 miles across Central California, the Sierra Nevada encompasses dazzling mountain canyons and some of the highest peaks in the country. Trails lure you to verdant valleys of wildflowers and desolate lightning-prone pinnacles. Bears tear open logs, marmots whistle in warning, and crickets and frogs harmonize to a nightly fever pitch. Something about spending time in the wilderness resets your brain. You step back, assess the situation with fresh eyes and put things into perspective. Maybe it has something to do with the timelessness of the landscape – the ancient glaciers or the glow of the lakes at dusk and dawn.

## Peak Season

Punctuated with fairy-tale spires, knobby domes and talus-encrusted mountaintops, admiring all the Sierra Nevada scenery might just put a crick in your neck. A jaunt through Yosemite Valley is a ticker tape parade of granite skyscrapers, with Half Dome taking a deep bow. Tempestuous Mt Whitney lords over the south, and the formations visible from Tuolumne Meadows – the jagged apex of Cathedral Peak, the pale wedge of Lembert Dome and the spiky crest of Unicorn Peak, to name but a few – are certain to fuel your dreams.

## Time Warps

This region has a past both wide and deep. Glaciers, although receding, gnaw at granite shoulders as they have for millennia. Prehistoric forests loom and the volcanic forces that moved these mountains to life still rumble underfoot and in simmering hot springs. Trails show the routes taken by indigenous Californians – the Sierra Miwok, the Paiute and the Shoshone – who traded between the western foothills and the Eastern Sierra; grinding stones and ancient petroglyphs have endured. Pioneers discarded mining camps to the elements, creating desolate ghost towns and the remains of forgotten railway lines.

## Winter Wonderland

For solitude and serenity, winter rules. Summer may be high season, but you might well question why. The peaks are some of the highest in the US, regularly rising above 11,000ft, occasionally reaching 14,000ft, and blanketed by snow for much of the year. Snow paints the trees and splatters the mountains. There's full-moon snowshoeing and cross-country adventures, plus the chance to camp under a giant sequoia. Go swooshing across the hushed backcountry, barreling down some powdery slopes, or just stay inside and warm your toes by a roaring wood fire.



## Why I Love Yosemite, Sequoia & Kings Canyon

By Beth Kohn, Writer

Anytime I have a few spare days, I pull out my road atlas and hiking maps and start scheming up a new Sierra Nevada adventure. Snow camping under the giant sequoias? Hiking a creek canyon blazing with fall aspens? Searching for (and swimming in) *the* bluest lake in the High Sierra? I could spend a lifetime exploring this area and I'd never tire of its hidden waterfalls, starry nights, bear cubs, natural hot springs, coyote cries, ski slopes and 10,000ft mountain passes, and the amazing people I always meet along the way.

**For more about our writers, see page 256**