

welcome to Yosemite, Sequoia & Kings Canyon



Backcountry Bonanza

All the usual trappings of civilization can be found within the Sierra Nevada, a mountain range spanning 400 miles roughly north to south across Central California. But take a turn and you'll find yourself in one of its dazzling mountain canyons, face-to-face with some of the highest peaks in the country. Trails branch out and 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. Civilization can wait. The wilderness? Maybe not.

Time Warps

You might come for the beauty of the mountains, but this region has a past both wide and deep. Glaciers, although receding, gnaw at granite shoulders as they have for millennia. Prehistoric forests loom within the parks and at inhospitable heights beyond them. The volcanic forces that moved these mountains to life still rumble underfoot, and simmering hot springs serve as a reminder that the earth's core continues to



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Yosemite and neighboring Sequoia & Kings Canyon occupy the most spectacular region of one of the most spectacular mountain ranges on the planet.

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stir. Humans have left their mark as well. 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. Of course, history is as much in the making as it is in the past, and visitors need to be mindful of their own impact on the parks' preservation.

Winter Wonderland

For solitude and serenity, winter rules. Summer may be high season in the parks,

but after seeing snow in the Sierras you might well question why. The peaks are some of the highest in the US, regularly rising above 11,000ft, occasionally bursting to 14,000ft, and blanketed by snow for much of the year. Snow paints the trees and splatters the mountains, and your breath turns into moist puffy clouds. In the parks, 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. Whatever your energy level, there's something fun to fill your days.