



Yosemite National Park

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Best Hikes

- » Vernal & Nevada Falls (p84)
- » Tuolumne & Wapama Falls (p98)
- » May Lake & Mt Hoffmann (p91)
- » Old Big Oak Flat Road to Yosemite Falls (p103)
- » Lyell Canyon (p106)

Best Places to Stay

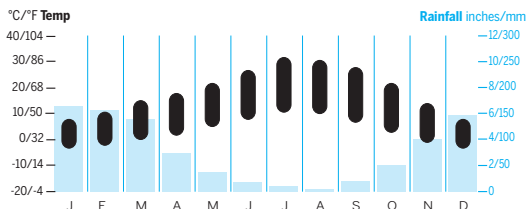
- » High Sierra Camps (p128)
- » Ahwahnee Hotel (p123)
- » Evergreen Lodge (p127)
- » Yosemite Creek (p126)
- » Wawona Hotel (p125)

Why Go?

The jaw-dropping head-turner of USA national parks, Yosemite (*yo-sem-it-tee*) garners the devotion of all who enter. From the waterfall-striped granite walls buttressing emerald green Yosemite Valley to the skyscraping giant sequoias catapulting into the air at Mariposa Grove, you feel a sense of awe and reverence that so much natural beauty exists in one place. It is a Unesco World Heritage Site that makes even Switzerland look like God's practice run. As far as we can tell, America's third-oldest national park has only one downside: the impact of the four million visitors annually who wend their way here. But lift your eyes ever so slightly above the crowds, seek out the park's serene corners or explore its miles of roadless wilderness and you'll feel your heart instantly moved by unrivaled splendors.

When to Go

Yosemite Village



May & Jun

Spring runoff pumps up the show at the spectacular Yosemite waterfalls.

Jul & Aug

Head for the high country for wilderness adventures and glorious sunshine.

Dec-Mar

Take a wintertime romp through snowy forests on skis, boards or snowshoes.

Entrances

The park has four main gates: Big Oak Flat Entrance (Hwy 120 West) and Arch Rock Entrance (Hwy 140) from the west, South Entrance (Hwy 41) near Wawona and Tioga Pass Entrance (Hwy 120 East) from the east.

Tioga Pass (9945ft) is the highest roadway across the Sierra, and Tioga Road/Hwy 120 East is usually open only between early June and mid-November, though the dates vary every year. In high snow years, the road may not open until July, so definitely don't expect to drive across the park in springtime without checking on the status of the road.

DON'T MISS

For two of the best views over Yosemite Valley, you don't even need to stroll far from your car. The best all-around photo op of the Valley can be had from Tunnel View (Map p58), a large, busy parking lot and viewpoint at the east end of Wawona Tunnel, on Hwy 41. It's just a short drive from the Valley floor. The vista encompasses most of the Valley's greatest hits: El Capitan on the left, Bridalveil Fall on the right, the green Valley floor below, and glorious Half Dome front and center. This viewpoint is often mistakenly called Inspiration Point. That point was on an old park road and is now reachable via a steep hike from the Tunnel View parking lot.

The second view, known as Valley View (Map p58), is a good one to hit on your way out. It offers a bottom-up (rather than top-down) view of the Valley and is a lovely spot to dip your toes in the Merced River and bid farewell to sights like Bridalveil Fall, Cathedral Rocks and El Capitan. Look carefully to spot the tip-top of Half Dome in the distance. As you head west out of the Valley on Northside Dr, look for the Valley View turnout (roadside marker V11), just over a mile past El Capitan Meadow.

When You Arrive

- » The \$20 vehicle entrance fee is valid for one week; keep your receipt if you plan to exit and enter the park during your stay.
- » You'll receive a park map and the seasonal *Yosemite Guide* newspaper with information on activities, campgrounds, lodgings, shuttles, visitor services and more.
- » The park is open 24 hours daily. If you arrive at night and the gate is unattended, pay the entrance fee when you leave.

PLANNING TIPS

For 24-hour recorded information, including winter road conditions and summer road-construction updates, call ☎209-372-0200.

The park website (www.nps.gov/yose) offers free downloads of the park newspaper and helpful trip-planning tips.

Fast Facts

- » Total area: 1169 sq miles
- » Designated wilderness area: 1101 sq miles
- » Yosemite Valley elevation: 3955ft

Reservations

NPS & USFS Campgrounds (☎518-885-3639, 877-444-6777; www.recreation.gov) For all campgrounds within Yosemite and those in the surrounding national forests.

Delaware North Companies (DNC; ☎801-559-4884; www.yosemitepark.com) For all Yosemite National Park lodgings.

Resources

Yosemite Conservancy (☎209-379-2317; www.yosemiteconservancy.org) A nonprofit educational organization with the specific purpose of supporting the park. It organizes educational and recreational programs and activities and operates the wilderness permit reservation system.