



YOSEMITE TRIP PLANNER

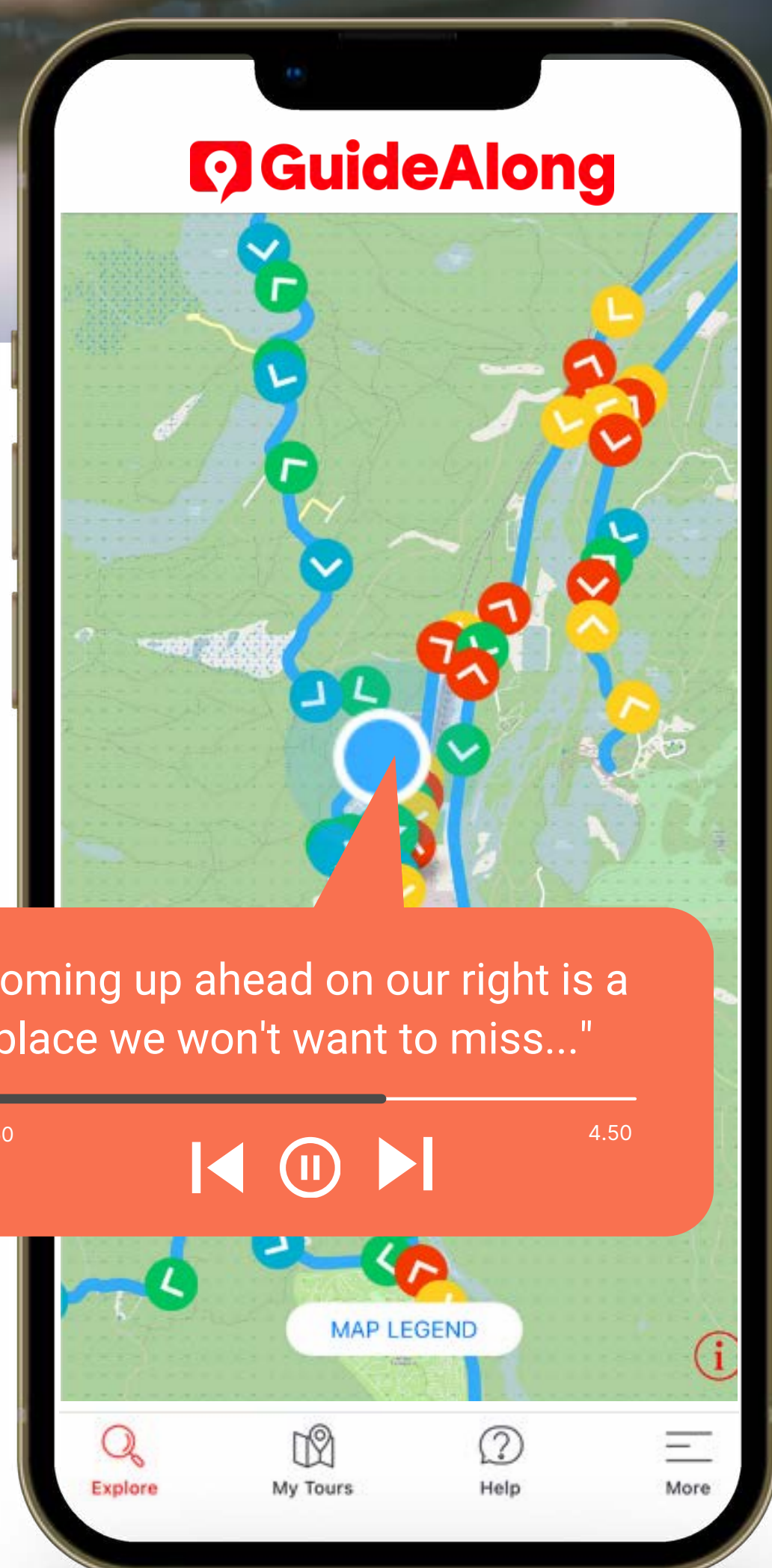
It's like a tour guide along for the drive

LOCATION-BASED AUDIO TOURS

Don't miss a thing as stories, local tips & directions guide you to the best things to see and do.

Commentary autoplays as you drive, based on your location.

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PLANNING

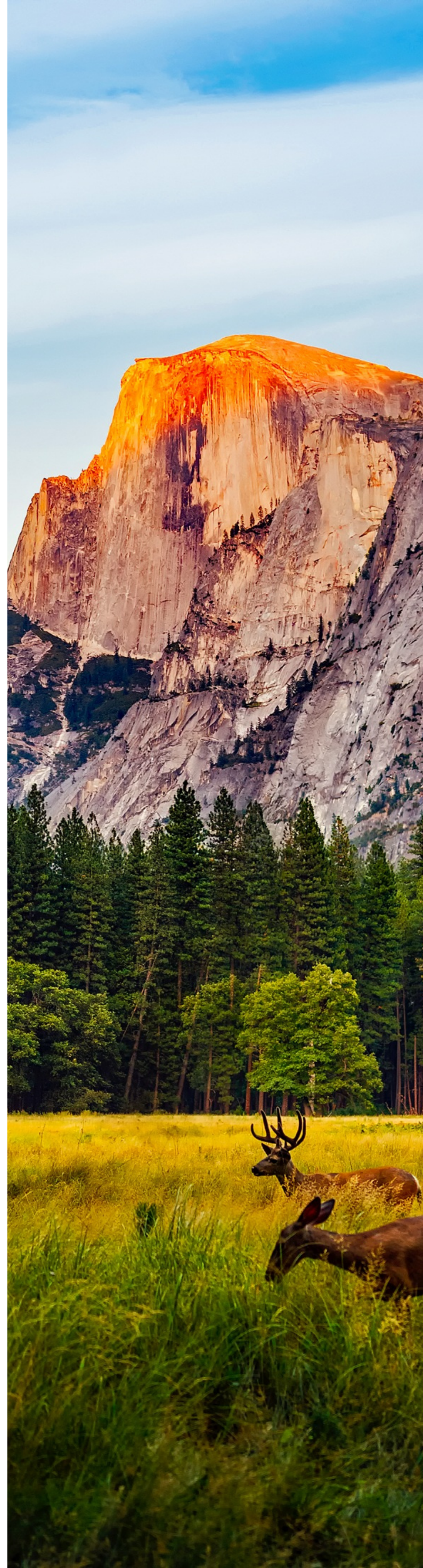
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YOSEMITE TRIP PLANNER

Known for its majestic waterfalls, massive granite cliffs, and gorgeous high alpine lakes, Yosemite National Park is one of America's favorite national parks. The park is absolutely packed with famous landmarks, fantastic hikes and impressive viewpoints, and although you can see many of the park's most famous sights in one day, you'll want to linger around a little longer to do a few hikes and soak in this incredible scenery.

Most visitors rarely venture beyond Yosemite Valley, but the valley only makes up a small portion of the park. Visitors who dare to travel beyond the famed views of El Capitan, Half Dome and Yosemite Falls will discover an entire wonderland of wildflower-filled meadows, picturesque streams, and magnificent mountains just begging to be explored.

HOW TO GET HERE



Yosemite National Park is located in the Sierra Nevada, a mountain range running along the eastern edge of California. There are five main entrances to the park: Hetch Hetchy, Big Oak Flat, Arch Rock, South Entrance, and Tioga Pass. Each entrance offers unique things to see along the way and which entrance you choose depends on where you're coming from and where you're headed next.

BY PLANE

FRESNO

The Fresno Yosemite International Airport (FAT) is the closest major airport to the park. It's 65 miles (105 kilometers) from the south entrance to the park. Most major airlines fly into Fresno but direct flights are only offered from a handful of U.S. cities.



HOW TO GET HERE

BY PLANE

SAN FRANCISCO

Many Yosemite National Park visitors opt to fly into the San Francisco Bay area given the wide variety of direct flights offered. The San Francisco International Airport (SFO), Oakland International Airport (OAK), and San Jose International Airport (SJC) are all within driving distance to the park. All San Francisco area airports are about a three-hour drive from the park's Big Oak Flat entrance.



OTHER AIRPORTS

There are many other airport options around Yosemite National Park making it one of the most convenient to access national parks in the country. Visitors can also choose to fly into the Merced, Mammoth, or Sacramento, California airports. Some visitors may also choose to fly into Los Angeles, Las Vegas, or Reno if they're also planning to visit other national parks such as Death Valley or Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks.



BY CAR

Most visitors arrive at Yosemite National Park by car. Alternatively, bus service is available to Yosemite Valley from cities throughout California. Amtrak provides a combination of rail and bus service to Yosemite Valley (and Tuolumne Meadows in July and August).



GETTING AROUND

SHUTTLES

YOSEMITE VALLEY SHUTTLE

The Yosemite Valley shuttle system offers free and convenient access to popular trailheads and attractions around Yosemite Valley. The Yosemite Valley shuttle operates year-round from 7 am to 10 pm. The El Capitan shuttles operate from mid-June through early October and provide access to El Capitan, the Four Mile trailhead, and the Valley Visitor Center.

TUOLUMNE MEADOWS SHUTTLE

The free Tuolumne Meadows shuttle bus provides access between Olmsted Point and Tioga Pass during the summer months.

MARIPOSA GROVE SHUTTLE

The free Mariposa Grove Shuttle provides free service between the Mariposa Grove Welcome Plaza and Mariposa Grove. The shuttle typically operates between mid-March and late November.

ENTRANCE FEES

All visitors are required to purchase an entrance pass to Yosemite National Park upon arrival. Passes are good for seven consecutive days and are available for purchase at all entrance gates and visitor centers. Discounted passes are available for current U.S. Military members, veterans, seniors, and families of 4th-grade students.



Depending on how many national parks you plan to visit in a year, purchasing the America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass may be more beneficial. The pass includes entrance fees to Yosemite National Park as well as all other U.S. national parks, national monuments, wildlife refuges, historic sites, and other federally managed lands.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

Yosemite National Park implemented entrance reservations for select dates in February during Firefall, when Horsetail Fall can glow orange when backlit by the sunset, as well as peak days in summer. For details visit [nps.gov](https://www.nps.gov).





YOSEMITE ROAD TRIP

 *interactive map*





WHERE TO STAY

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK CAMPING

Yosemite National Park has thirteen campgrounds, of which seven can be reserved in advance. All four campgrounds in Yosemite Valley require advanced reservations including the popular climber's campground, Camp 4. Campgrounds outside Yosemite Valley including Bridalveil Creek, Tamarack Flat, White Wolf, Yosemite Creek, Porcupine Flat, and Tuolumne Meadows all have first-come, first-served sites available. Hookups are not available in any of the Yosemite campgrounds and many campsites have limits on RV length.

Camping is so popular at Yosemite National Park that campgrounds often fill within moments of becoming available. Reservations become available in month blocks, up to five months in advance. The reservation system opens on the 15th of the month at 7 am Pacific Standard Time for arrival dates four to five months in the future. Bookings for the summer months and most weekends year-round typically fill within minutes of the reservation system opening.

If you're unable to secure a campground reservation in advance, check the reservation system often for cancellations, arrive early in the morning to try and nab one of the first-come, first-served spots, or make camping reservations at one of the campgrounds outside the park.

WHERE TO STAY

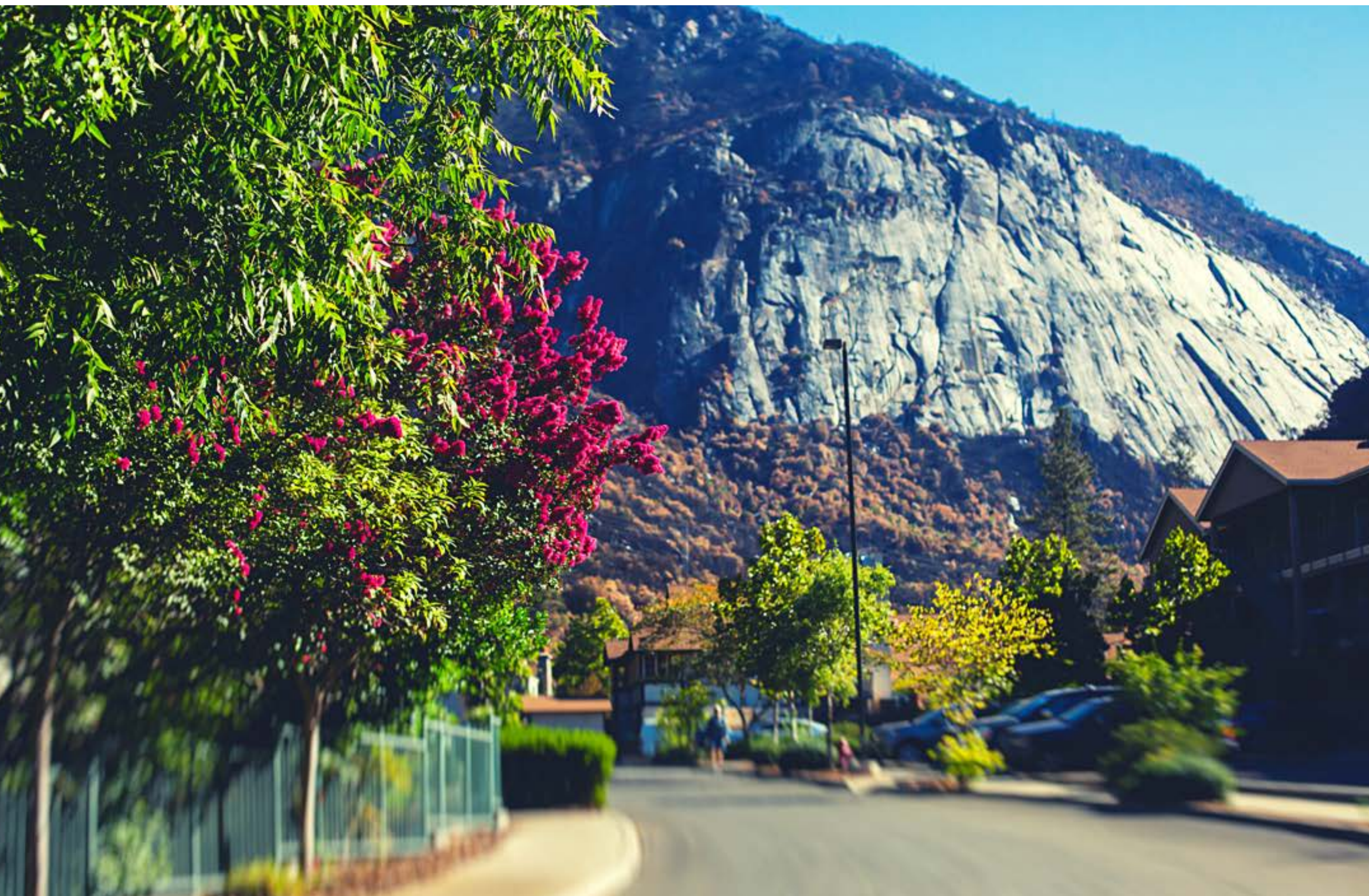
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK LODGING

A wide variety of lodging options exist right inside Yosemite National Park. There's the upscale Ahwahnee Hotel right in the center of Yosemite Valley and the Yosemite Valley Lodge, more traditional-style lodging at the base of Yosemite Falls. Curry Village and Housekeeping Camp, also in Yosemite Valley, offers canvas tent cabins with views of Half Dome.

The Wawona Hotel offers standard hotel rooms with private or shared baths near Mariposa Grove. Located off the Tioga Pass Road, The Tuolumne Meadows Lodge and White Wolf Lodge offer canvas tents and traditional cabin rentals.

All Yosemite National Park lodging reservations are available in advance. Reservations are strongly recommended, especially on holiday weekends and during the peak summer season.





WHERE TO STAY

OUTSIDE THE PARK

If you can't find lodging in the park or don't want to deal with scrambling for one of the park's first-come, first-served campsites, you'll find plenty of lodging options right outside the park, such as Rush Creek and Evergreen Lodge. The gateway communities of Groveland, Merced, El Portal, and Lee Vining offer a huge variety of lodging options for all budgets.

If you're traveling by RV, you'll also find plenty of RV parks with full hook-ups and other amenities such as Wi-Fi, swimming pools, and more. Campers on a budget can find free, dispersed camping options in the nearby Inyo, Sierra, and Stanislaus national forests.



WHEN TO VISIT

Peak season at Yosemite National Park runs from early June through August. Spring, during peak runoff season, is the best time to see the park's waterfalls. If you want to hike or backpack in Tuolumne Meadows, July and August are the best times to visit. Fall is also great but expect cool nighttime temperatures and snow as early as October.

It's important to note that many of Yosemite's roads and trails are closed for much of the year due to snow. Depending on snowfall, seasonally closed trails and roads, such as Tioga Pass, may not open until June.

HOW TO AVOID THE CROWDS

Visiting outside the peak summer season is the best way to avoid the crowds in Yosemite National Park. Visit in May or September and avoid weekends if you can, many San Francisco Bay Area locals head to Yosemite for the weekend year-round.

If summer is the only time you have to visit, head to the park before sunrise to avoid lines at the entrance gate and download hiking maps ahead of time so you can skip the busy visitor centers altogether. Yosemite Valley is by far the busiest section of the park, so consider spending time exploring lesser-visited areas such as Mariposa Grove, Hetch Hetchy, and Tioga Pass.



HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU NEED?

A minimum of two days is ideal for trips to Yosemite National Park. This gives you an entire day to see the sights in Yosemite Valley and another to explore another region of the park such as Hetch Hetchy or Tuolumne Meadows. If you can, plan your trip so you enter and exit the park through different entrances so you can maximize the things you get to see. If you plan on doing any of the longer hikes like the Half Dome hike or the entire Mist Trail, you'll want to spend more time here.

If you only have one day, head straight to Yosemite Valley well before sunrise to avoid any delays at the entrance gate. Drive the loop early if traffic allows and then park your car and hop on the shuttle to revisit and explore. Don't miss the short hike to Lower Yosemite Fall and head out on the Mist Trail to at least the viewpoint for Vernal Fall.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN YOSEMITE

YOSEMITE VALLEY

Yosemite Valley is the crown jewel of Yosemite National Park. It's where you'll find all the iconic sights including El Capitan, Half Dome, and Bridalveil Fall, and where you'll find the popular trails to Half Dome, Yosemite Falls, and the Mist Trail to Nevada and Vernal Falls. In Yosemite Valley, you'll also find several campgrounds, lodges, a grocery store, and the Ansel Adams Gallery.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

MARIPOSA GROVE

Located near the southern entrance of Yosemite National Park, the Mariposa Grove is home to the largest grove of giant sequoias in the park. Several hiking trails wind through these massive, ancient trees. The Grizzly Giant is one of the largest trees in Mariposa Grove and it's estimated to be over 2,700 years old, making it one of the largest and oldest trees in the world.

HETCH HETCHY VALLEY

Once known as Yosemite Valley's gorgeous twin valley, Hetch Hetchy Valley was flooded in 1923 after the construction of the O'Shaughnessy Dam to provide drinking water to the San Francisco Bay Area. Despite being flooded, this quiet corner of the park is still worth a visit. You can check out the dam and learn about the controversy that surrounds its construction, hike to several waterfalls, and fish for trout in the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir (swimming and boating are not permitted).

TUOLUMNE MEADOWS

Tuolumne Meadows is Yosemite National Park's high country. It's one of the largest alpine meadows in the Sierra Nevada and it's surrounded by picturesque granite domes and striking peaks. It's much cooler up here compared to Yosemite Valley and several hiking trails lead to gorgeous alpine lakes. There's plenty to see from the car, such as the views from Olmsted Point, Tioga Pass, and Tenaya Lake, but to really experience the beauty of the area you'll want to get out and hike.



BEST PHOTO SPOTS

GLACIER POINT

Glacier Point offers one of the best panoramic views across Yosemite Valley and it's especially wonderful at sunrise. The view of Half Dome and the entire valley is incredible from here and it's just a short walk from the parking area to the main viewpoints.



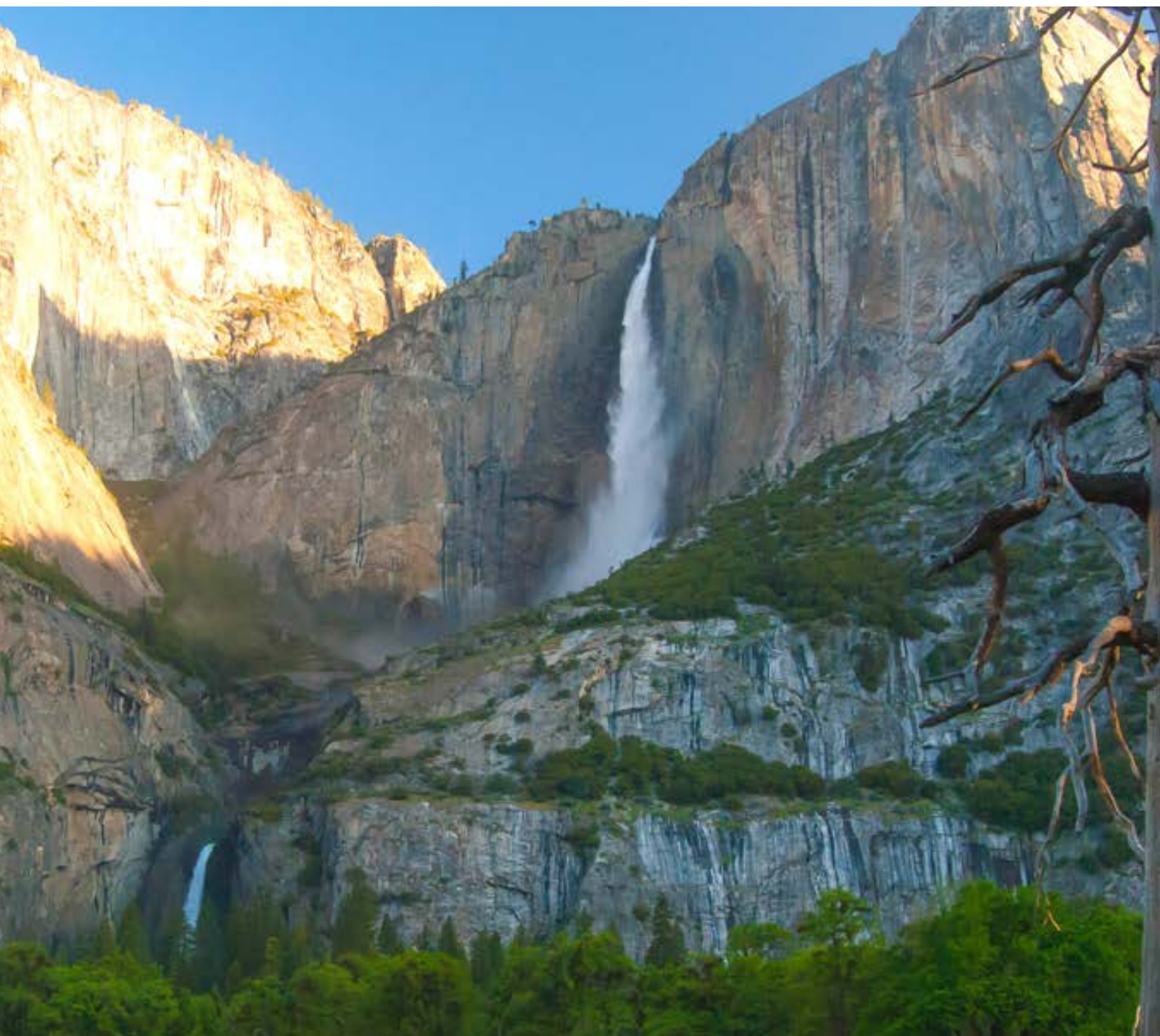
BEST PHOTO SPOTS

TUNNEL VIEW

If you're entering Yosemite National Park at the South Entrance, Tunnel View offers your first peek into Yosemite Valley. By far the most visited scenic overlook in the park, Tunnel View is the site of Ansel Adams' famous shot of Yosemite Valley and it's a definite must-see for first-time park visitors. Several trails begin from the Tunnel View Parking area and Inspiration Point, a 2.6-mile (4.2-kilometer) round-trip hike, is a great spot to photograph Tunnel View without the crowds.



BEST PHOTO SPOTS



YOSEMITE FALLS

Yosemite Falls is one of the most iconic natural wonders in Yosemite National Park but it can be hard to photograph given how massive it is. The parking lot adjacent to the Swinging Bridge is one of the best spots to photograph Yosemite Falls. You can grab photos from the Swinging Bridge itself or wander along the Sentinel and Cook's Meadow Loop Trail. The Four Mile Trail also provides wonderful views of Yosemite Falls.



OLMSTEAD POINT

Located off the Tioga Pass Road in the eastern section of the park, Olmstead Point offers an interesting view of the northern side of Half Dome. It's a must-see spot if you're traveling over Tioga Pass and it's great at sunrise or sunset. You can see amazing views right from the parking area or you can venture to the actual Olmstead Point, about a 10-minute walk from the parking area.

BEST HIKES

GLACIER POINT (FOUR MILE TRAIL)

Glacier Point is an incredible viewpoint overlooking Yosemite Valley. Glacier Point is just a short walk from the parking area and many hikers purchase a one-way ticket for the Glacier Point Tour from Yosemite Valley and hike back to the valley via the Four Mile Trail from Glacier Point.

It's 4.7 miles (7.5 kilometers) from Glacier Point to the valley floor and descends 3,200 feet (975 meters). This hike offers memorable views of nearly all Yosemite Valley's most famous landmarks and is one of the best ways to experience the valley.

BEST HIKES

BRIDALVEIL FALL TRAIL

Bridalveil Fall is one of Yosemite's most famous waterfalls. Plunging 630 feet (189 meters) off a granite cliff across the valley from El Capitan, hiking to the base of Bridalveil Fall is not to be missed. A paved trail leads to the base of the falls from the parking area and it's only 0.5 miles (0.8 kilometers) round trip.

LOWER YOSEMITE FALL TRAIL

It's just a quick jaunt via a paved hiking trail to the base of Lower Yosemite Fall, part of North America's highest waterfall. This short hike provides amazing views of both Upper and Lower Yosemite Falls. Best seen during spring and early summer, Yosemite Falls often slows to a small trickle by August.

MIST TRAIL TO VERNAL AND NEVADA FALLS

Hiking the Mist Trail to Vernal and Nevada Falls is one of the most impressive day hikes in Yosemite Valley. As you climb the trail to the top of Vernal Fall in spring or early summer, you'll quickly discover how the trail got its name. The trail hugs the cliff near the falls and drenches hikers with mist coming off the falls.

Wearing good hiking shoes and rain gear is helpful when hiking the Mist Trail during peak runoff. Expect to get very wet. It's about 1.5 miles (2.6 kilometers) round-trip to a good viewpoint of Vernal Fall from the trailhead. It's a 3-mile (4.8 kilometers) round-trip hike to reach Vernal Fall and a 7-mile (11-kilometer) round-trip hike to Nevada Fall.



BEST HIKES

HALF DOME TRAIL

The hike to the top of Half Dome is on the bucket list for many national park hikers and it's so popular that the National Park Service has had to instill a permit system to limit the number of people on the trail. Only 300 hikers are allowed on the trail a day and permits are issued via a lottery system in March with a handful of permits available two days in advance.

This 17-mile round-trip hike is a serious endeavor and not for the heights-averse. The trail climbs a total of 4,800 feet (1,463 meters) to the top of Half Dome and the final climb involves navigating a series of cables to reach the summit. The panoramic views of Yosemite Valley from the top of Half Dome are certainly worth the effort.

WAPAMA FALLS

The hike to Wapama Falls is a nice alternative to the packed waterfall hikes in Yosemite Falls. It's one of the least crowded waterfall hikes in Yosemite and it's not because it lacks scenic views. Wapama Falls is incredibly powerful and flows almost year-round.

Located in the lesser-visited Hetch Hetchy region of the park, the 5-mile (8-kilometer) round-trip hike to Wapama Falls hugs the shore of Hetch Hetchy Reservoir and also passes by Tueeulala Falls along the way. Water is known to overpower the viewing area near Wapama Falls during peak run-off season so don't attempt to cross the bridge when water is flowing over the bridge.



REVIEWS



Excellent and informative

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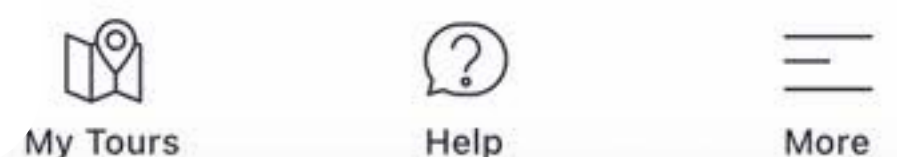
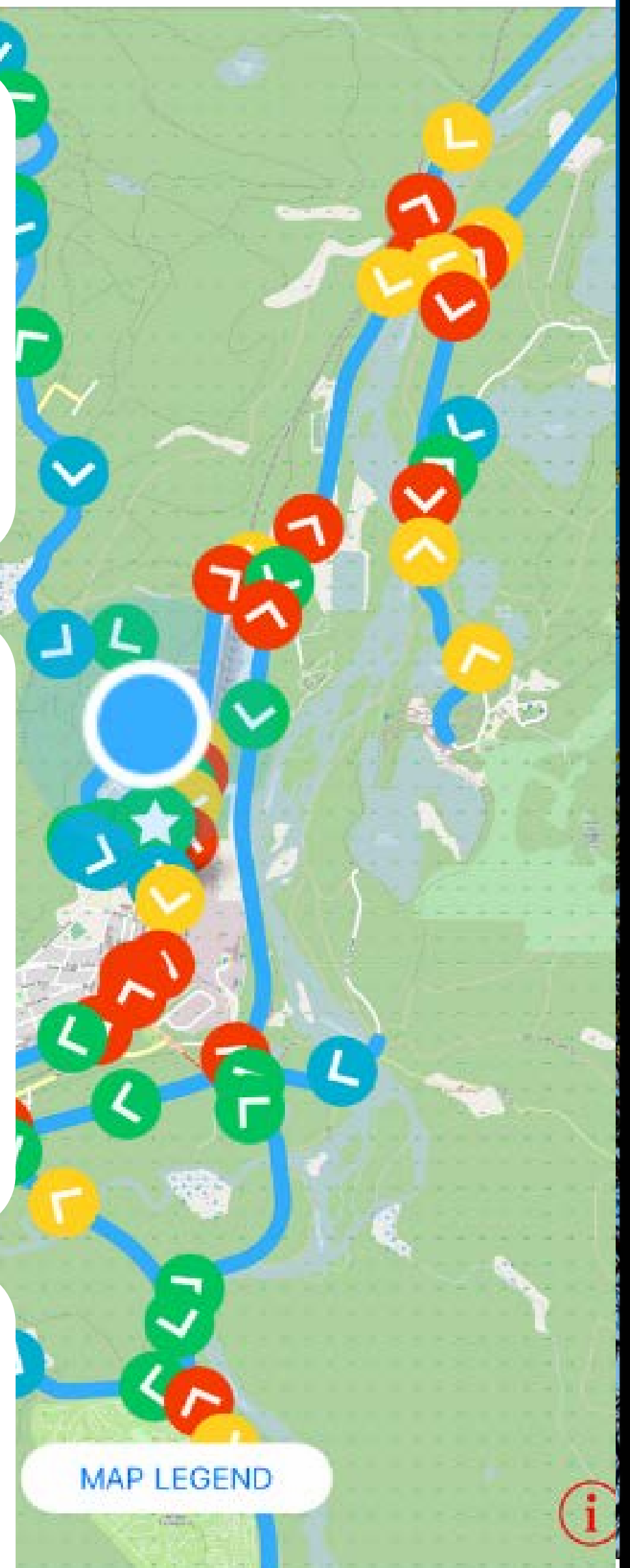


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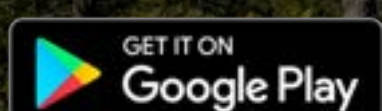
We would not have known where to go (and when to beat crowds) without this audio...Ridiculously great value

GuideAlong



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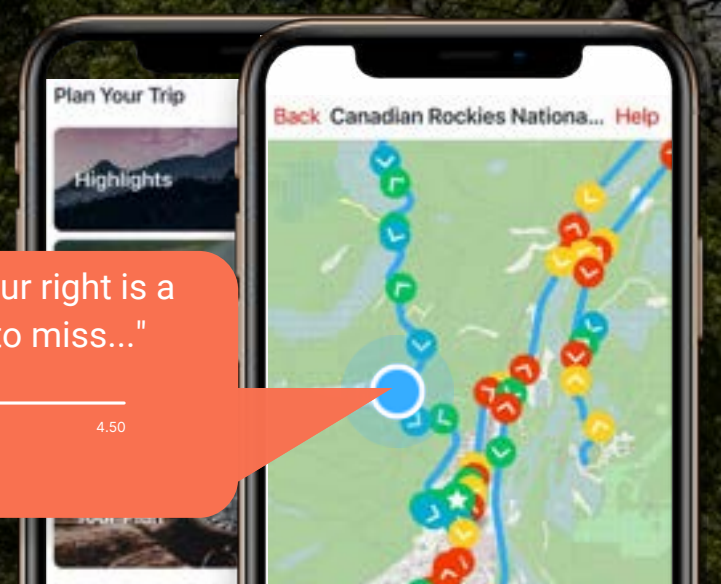


"Coming up ahead on our right is a place we won't want to miss..."

2.50



4.50





AWESOME EXPERIENCES

RAFT ALONG THE MERCED RIVER

Rafting along the Merced Rivers is a great way to experience Yosemite Valley. You can bring your own or rent a raft at Curry Village. The rafting is quite smooth through Yosemite Valley; those looking for a wilder ride can find Class 2 to 4 rapids (depending on water levels) along the Merced River just outside the park. Several local outfitters provide guided river rafting trips along this section of the river.

GO FLY FISHING IN THE TUOLUMNE RIVER

The Tuolumne River is just brimming with brook, rainbow, and brown trout. The Lyell and Dana Fork of the Tuolumne River are great places to fish in Tuolumne Meadows and the river below the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir is another great spot. Just be sure to check the park website for current fishing license requirements and bag limits.

AWESOME EXPERIENCES



BIKE ALONG THE PAVED PATH IN YOSEMITE VALLEY

There are 12 miles (19 kilometers) of paved bike paths through Yosemite Valley and bike rentals are available at Curry Village, Yosemite Village, and Yosemite Valley Lodge. There's also a Yosemite Bike Share program that allows for free use of shared bikes for up to two hours in Yosemite Valley.

SPOT CLIMBERS ON EL CAPITAN DAY OR NIGHT

Bring your binoculars for the best chance of viewing climbers ascending El Capitan during the day or camping on the face of the cliff at night. El Capitan's striking granite face dominates the west side of Yosemite Valley. The wall rises over 3,000 feet (900+ meters) from the valley floor and rock climbers from around the world flock here to climb up its sheer granite face.

Climbers typically take from 3-4 days to climb El Capitan so they need to sleep on ledge systems suspended from the wall. El Capitan Meadow is a great place to watch climbers ascending the massive face.



AWESOME EXPERIENCES

TAKE A ROCK CLIMBING CLASS

Rather than just gazing up at the climbers hanging from the cliffs above Yosemite Valley, why not take a rock climbing course from the Yosemite Mountaineering School and learn a few new skills? The school has been teaching climbing classes in Yosemite since the 1960s and offers a huge range of courses for beginners through advanced climbers. They also offered guided rock climbing trips in the park.



SEE THE NATURAL FIREFALL IN YOSEMITE VALLEY

Most years around mid to late February, a small waterfall in Yosemite Valley, called Horsetail Fall, glows a vibrant red-orange at sunset. Thanks to the angle of the sun during this time of year, the setting sun reflects off the water of the falls and turns it into a “firefall.” Conditions have to be just perfect in order for this natural phenomenon to happen though, minor haze or cloudy skies can hamper the effect.

For current dates and information on how to view the phenomenon, see the Yosemite National Park website.



PACKING LIST

Sturdy Hiking Shoes: Hiking shoes with good traction are important if you plan on doing any of the Yosemite waterfall hikes. Trails can be slippery and a pair of good hiking shoes will provide added stability on wet trails. If you only plan to venture down paved trails and to viewpoints, a light hiking shoe will do.

Warm and Cold Clothing Layers: Be sure to pack light layers for daytime temperatures in Yosemite Valley and warmer layers for the higher elevation areas of the park. Temperatures can vary widely between the valley floor and higher elevations.

Rain Gear: Afternoon rainstorms are common in Yosemite and temperatures can fluctuate dramatically. A good rain jacket will keep you dry and warm and can also come in handy on the Mist Trail and on other waterfall hikes.

Binoculars: Bring along a good pair of binoculars to watch climbers make their way up Half Dome or El Capitan or to view one of Yosemite's bears from a safe distance.

Refillable Water Bottles or Hydration System: Water stations are available at most visitor centers, campgrounds, and several other locations in the park.

Hiking Daypack: Whether you're taking the short stroll to the base of Lower Yosemite Falls or the epic journey to the top of Half Dome, a daypack is useful for keeping things like extra layers, snacks, water bottles, binoculars, and maps close by.

Plastic Bag: We carry a plastic bag when we hike, so we can do our part and help keep the trails and waterways clean. If you see some trash along the way, pick it up and drop it into the bag, no fuss and it'll make you feel good.

TOP TIPS

Entrance Reservations: Yosemite National Park implemented entrance reservations for select dates in February during Firefall, when Horsetail Fall can glow orange when backlit by the sunset, as well as peak days in summer. For details visit [nps.gov](https://www.nps.gov).

Plan Ahead: To make the most of your visit to Yosemite National Park, do some research before you arrive. This is especially important if you have little time to explore and want to see all the park's major landmarks. Take a look at the park map and plan out your itinerary in advance keeping in mind that that park can be very busy and traffic jams occur often.

Book Lodging Reservations as Soon as You Know Your Travel Dates:

Campground and lodging reservations often fill as soon as they become available. Book your reservations as soon as you know your trip dates and be willing to change your travel dates to secure reservations.

Arrive at Yosemite Valley Early in the Day: It's not uncommon to experience delays of over an hour or more entering Yosemite Valley during the peak summer season. Arrive well before 9 am to avoid delays or better yet, arrive after 5 pm and stay in the valley to avoid morning traffic.

Double Check Which Roads are Open: Check current road conditions on the Yosemite National Park website before you travel. The Tioga Road opens for the season sometime in May or June and typically closes in late November. Other Yosemite roads may close periodically due to snow and in summer, roads may close for road construction.

Utilize the Yosemite Valley Free Shuttle: Parking can be a challenge in Yosemite Valley so leave your car and hop on the free shuttle. The Yosemite Valley Shuttle System stops at most campgrounds and near the most popular trailheads in Yosemite Valley.

Protect Yosemite Bears: Follow all food storage guidelines and bear safety advice to keep Yosemite Bears safe. If bears get too accustomed to human food they can become aggressive and need to be removed from the park or euthanized.

Leave the Bear Spray at Home: If you see a bear, keep your distance and make a lot of noise to scare it away. Bear spray or pepper spray is not allowed in Yosemite National Park.

Don't Count on Cell Service: Cell service is typically available near Yosemite Village but don't expect much service elsewhere in Yosemite National Park. Download maps to your phone ahead of time, and switch your phone to airplane mode to save your battery.

4 EASY STEPS TO GETTING AN AUDIO TOUR FOR THE DRIVE



1.

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2.

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Sign in with your existing Apple or Google Play account ID.

3.

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4.

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Just one tap will get you touring, or if you're a planner, check out our trip guides and travel tips.

