



**SAMPLE ONLY**  
**SIGNIFICANTLY ABBREVIATED**

# **YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK GUIDEBOOK**

**MAY - OCTOBER  
2025**



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Scenic Drive



Hiking



Recreation Activity



Scenic View



Food/Drink



Iconic Natural Feature



Discover



Wildlife

SAMPLE

## RESERVATIONS TO ENTER

### Don't make the number one mistake.

In an effort to address ongoing congestion inside the park, Yosemite is requiring a reservation to visit in 2025. It's required for anyone entering the park between 6am-2pm.

- **June 15 - August 15:** reservations needed daily
- **August 30 - September 1** (*Labor Day Weekend*): reservations needed daily

This is generally viewed as a good thing and will provide a more quality visitor experience, but it's something you must plan for in advance. Reservations can be made now by visiting the following link: <https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/reservations.htm>

## WEATHER

### Bring layers and be prepared for all four seasons.

Because of the dramatic changes in elevation across this park—from valleys to peaks—temperatures and precipitation vary widely. If you're a motivated visitor you could easily experience all four seasons in a single day. Wear layers that can be added or subtracted easily and don't be afraid to hike in the rain, unless there's thunder!

## WILDFIRE RISK

### Fire—either natural or human-caused—is part of life here.

The single biggest downside to the stunning scenery of Yosemite is its location in the heart of California wildfire country. Usually by July, vegetation is dry enough to begin acting as tinder for a spark or lightning strike, exacerbated by wind and less frequent rain.

## WATER TO DRINK

### Understand the pros and cons of where you're staying.

Yosemite is a beautiful park with many scenic views and activities. However, the weather can be unpredictable, and the terrain can be challenging. It's important to be prepared for all four seasons and to have a good understanding of the park's layout and the location of your accommodation.

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### Be respectful of staff and other visitors.

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## THE WEATHER

### Paper maps are your friend!

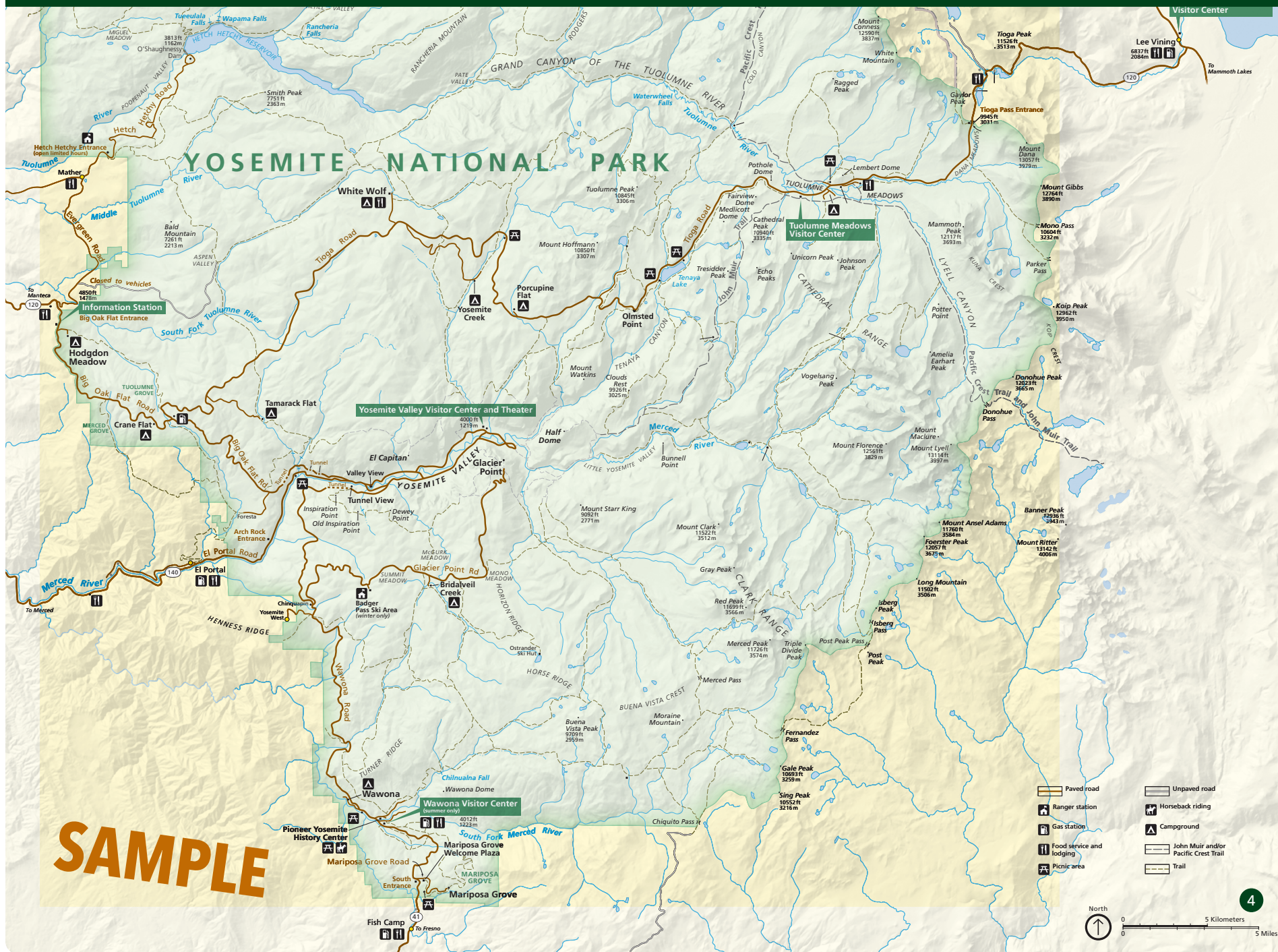
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DRIVE TIME (in minutes)	Crane Flat	El Portal	Glacier Point	Hetch Hetchy	Main/Valley VC	Mariposa Grove	Oakhurst	Tunnel View	Tuolumne VC	Wawona	Yosemite West
Crane Flat	-	30	75	55	40	75	105	30	60	65	45
El Portal	30	-	75	80	30	65	75	25	90	60	40
Glacier Point	75	75	-	135	65	60	90	45	135	50	35
Hetch Hetchy	55	80	135	-	95	130	150	80	115	120	100
Main/Valley VC	40	30	65	95	-	65	100	25	90	60	40
Mariposa Grove	75	65	60	130	65	-	30	45	140	10	35
Oakhurst	105	75	90	150	100	30	-	80	170	40	60
Tunnel View	30	25	45	80	25	45	80	-	90	40	20
Tuolumne VC	60	90	135	115	90	140	170	90	-	130	110
Wawona	65	60	50	120	60	10	40	40	130	-	25
Yosemite West	45	40	35	100	40	35	60	20	110	25	-

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## MAIN PARK MAP





Upper Yosemite Falls viewed from the Upper Falls Trail

## PARK OVERVIEW

### AN AMERICAN ICON

#### **A crown jewel of the American landscape.**

Nestled in the heart of California's Sierra Nevada mountains, Yosemite was established in 1890 making it one of the world's oldest national parks. It encompasses nearly 1,200 square miles of diverse landscapes, from towering granite cliffs and cascading waterfalls to lush meadows and ancient giant sequoia groves. The calm Merced River attracts wildlife to its shores as it meanders through idyllic Yosemite Valley. This 7-mile long by 1-mile wide gorge is where the majority of visitors spend their time, but there is so much more to this park.

### WORLD-FAMOUS LANDMARKS

#### **Waterfalls and glacially carved rock.**

Yosemite's iconic landmarks, like the granite monolith Half Dome and the towering El Capitan, have captured the imagination of visitors for generations. Waterfalls are a defining feature of Yosemite, especially in the spring when surging snowmelt brings them to life. Yosemite Falls, the tallest waterfall in North America, plunges 2,425 feet in three cascades, while Vernal and Nevada Falls tumble over granite cliffs in a dazzling display.

### GIANT SEQUOIAS

#### **Walk among ancient giants.**

The park is also home to some of the world's largest and oldest living organisms: the giant sequoia trees. These majestic titans, some of which have been standing for over 3,000 years, can reach heights of over 300 feet and have trunks wider than 30 feet. Mariposa Grove, located in the southern part of the park, is the best place to see these awe-inspiring trees but Tuolumne Grove shouldn't be missed either.

### OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

#### **Truly something for everyone.**

Beyond the iconic sights, Yosemite offers a wealth of outdoor activities for visitors of all ages and abilities. Hiking trails range from leisurely strolls to strenuous ascents, while rock climbers from around the world come to test their skills on the sheer granite faces of El Capitan and Half Dome. The Merced and Tuolumne Rivers offer terrific playgrounds for kayakers and rafters, while walking and biking paths weave their way along the valley floor for a calmer experience.

**SAMPLE**



## DRIVING & PARKING

### Be aware of one-way traffic.

It's important to understand how traffic flows through the valley since it normally takes longer than expected to reach a point of interest. All roads enter and exit the valley from the west and there is no vehicle fuel available in the valley. Only hiking trails can take you up and out the east end.

The entire Valley Loop Road is divided into east-bound traffic on Northside Drive and west-bound traffic on Southside Drive. The loop road allows you to exit the loop at half of Canyon Drive in the middle of the valley and Sentinel Drive at the east end.

Expect parking lots to be full by mid-morning. To be in the middle of the park by then or you can find a parking spot somewhere outside the Yosemite Valley Lodge or Halfway Lodge. Don't leave your car there if you can help it since the roads are half the width of the valley. Utilize the free shuttle system instead.



## FOOD OPTIONS

As mentioned, packing lunches is the easiest way to stay fed and allows you to eat on your own time. Otherwise you need to rely on the park-operated selections below:

- **Elmer's Dining Room** 10:00am - 4:00pm  
This is the only place in the valley that serves breakfast.
- **Marble Room** 10:00 - 4:00pm  
This is the only place in the valley that serves breakfast.
- **Yosemite Village** 10:00am - 4:00pm  
This is the only place in the valley that serves breakfast.
- **Yosemite Lodge** 10:00am - 4:00pm  
This is the only place in the valley that serves breakfast.
- **Yosemite Dining Room** 10:00 - 11:00am / 11:00am - 2:00pm / 2:00pm - 4:00pm  
This is the only place in the valley that serves breakfast.
- **Yosemite Bar** 10:00 - 11:00am / 11:00am - 4:00pm  
This is the only place in the valley that serves breakfast.
- **Yosemite Grill** 10:00 - 4:00pm  
This is the only place in the valley that serves breakfast.
- **Yosemite Lodge** 10:00 - 11:00am / 11:00am - 4:00pm  
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**SAMPLE**





Cook's Meadow with Half Dome in the distance (Photo: AllTrails)



Mirror Lake Trail along Tenaya Creek

## HIKING TRAILS (EASY TO MODERATE)

- Sentinel Meadow & Cook's Meadow Loop Trail (Easy)**  
 This is a very relaxed stroll through the central open meadows of the valley, giving views of Yosemite Falls, Half Dome and Sentinel Dome. In late spring the meadows can become marshy but boardwalked sections of trail allow visitors to enjoy this temporary wetland.  
 2.0 miles round trip  
 ~1 hour
- Mirror Lake Trail (Easy)**  
 This lovely little trail follows Tenaya Creek into the easternmost edge of Yosemite Valley, past Mirror Lake which forms seasonally when enough snow melts (it's usually dry by July). It's generally very level.  
 2.3 miles round trip  
 ~1.5 hours
- Lower Yosemite Falls (Easy)**  
 A nice, easy saunter through a conifer forest, over Yosemite Creek, and finally to the base of the Lower Falls. It's mostly level with only a few dips. The volume of water decreases significantly by late July.  
 1.2 miles round trip  
 ~0.5 hours
- Vernal Fall Footbridge (Moderate)**  
 Take the trailhead for the *Mist Trail/John Muir Trail* near Happy Isles Nature Center. You gain about 375 feet of elevation on this moderate hike, where you'll capture a glimpse of Vernal Falls from the footbridge. The further you go past the footbridge, the better the hike gets—but it also gets more strenuous (see the *Mist Trail* on next page).  
 1.4 miles round trip  
 ~1.25 hours
- Inspiration Point Trail (Moderate)**  
 Once you see Tunnel View, imagine the same view twice as high up and without 95% of the people. That's what a hike to Inspiration Point will earn you. It's a gradual ascent that does have a few steep segments.  
 2.3 miles round trip  
 ~2 hours

Always pack  
extra water, food,  
and a first aid kit for  
every hike.

**...there's so  
much more!**

