

A Journey in Yosemite

Crisp, chilled air, surging, fluid water, verdant life, and vast granitic rocks: Welcome to Yosemite



Whether you enter through Arch Rock, Hetch Hetchy, Big Oak Flat, Tioga Pass, or the Southern Entrance, the 1,169 square mile park will leave you in awe. Entering California's national park through Arch Rock, my personal favorite, will have you maneuvering your car through some of the most fascinating naturally sculpted rocks surrounded by Yosemite's forest until you reach the valley floor. Here, you'll be able to see for yourself how massive El Capitan and Half Dome truly are.

Must Do Trails:

Nevada Fall (Strenuous but Rewarding):

Beginning at Mist Trail, you summit up along the Merced River, and eventually connect to multiple hikes such as Glacier Point, and the famous Half Dome (Peak closed off in winter due to ice/snow). If you wish to gain elevation and explore Glacier Point, make sure to get ice clamps for your shoes. Trust me, these came in clutch, one of our friends didn't have them, and he couldn't make it up to the top because it was too slippery. Another trail that meets at Nevada Fall is the John Muir Trail: A well known 211 mile trail that extends all the way to Mount Whitney, CA. Vernal Fall and Nevada fall will soak you in the spring and still manage to entice you in any other season. Getting up to the top of these waterfalls involves climbing along nature's colossal "staircase". While this might sound intimidating, it's completely rewarding with incredible views and scenery.

Top of Nevada Fall:



Mirror Lake (Not much Inclination):

Mirror Lake has the most water in the spring. If you wish to visit the lake in November, there won't be any water, but it's still fascinating to be able to walk on the bed of the lake and get close to the base of Half Dome. You can set up a picnic or just chill in the river basin. It's crazy to ponder how parched a flowing body of water can become. There are more trails into the forest from Mirror Lake, so there's tons of exploring that can be done.

As I walked along this trail I kept wishing I brought my mountain bike. It's more common to hike, walk, and take nature trips to Mirror Lake, but if you enjoy mountain biking, definitely give it a shot. Lastly, make sure to check different trails to Mirror lake since the lengths of the trails vary.

Mirror Lake (Dry Season):



In my experience, I stayed at an AirBNB in Mariposa with seven other friends. We drove 50 minutes each morning to get to the park. It's a scenic ride through the forest, so we just bumped some music and enjoyed the ride. I will for sure visit again and go camping up there, but the AirBNB is nice to have. Upon arrival, there are a few easy waterfalls to access, and you can embrace your inner mountain goat and climb up rocks. There's something about climbing up to the top of a giant rock. I'm not sure if it activates our primitive side or not, but it gives a sense of satisfaction like, "Damn, I really just did that." But anyway, we drove past Yosemite Valley to access Mist trail and went from 1,200 ft elevation to 6,200ft. We started this hike at 10am and got to the top around 1pm. It took about three hours. Depending on how your endurance is, it can be a fast hike or it might take a little longer, but waiting around isn't a bad thing at all when you're in Yosemite! We enjoyed chilling at the top, where we were surrounded by a body of water, snow, and Yosemite's beautiful forest. Since it was November, we only had about four hours of light left, so we had to get going. This is where things went wrong. Even though six of us agreed we should head back down, two of my friends were adamant on trying to get as close as possible to the peak of Half Dome. I would've been all for it if the sun didn't set in three hours, but it was time to go back. After warning them that they're going to be headed back in the dark, they were positive that they'd make it down just after sundown. We went our separate ways. The six of us took our time and enjoyed the walk back down. At Nevada Fall we crossed the bridge and took the John Muir trail down because it's a change of scenery and less steep (which means it takes a little longer). We were finally back to the valley floor as the sun was setting. After waiting for over an hour and a half, we received our first call from the other two saying, "Yo, we're at Vernal Fall." All of us immediately looked at each other with that "Dude,

seriously” face. Keep in mind it’s a new moon, so it’s pitch black. I’m not sure what they thought would happen when the sun went down, but when you’re surrounded by tall trees in a forest, it’s going to be very dark. They went down the same way we came up since it was too dark to navigate the John Muir trail. So they’re, first of all, trying to see what’s in front of them, and then trying to descend a steep trail. They went off trail at a certain point and got lucky when they saw a flashlight further in the forest. Following these other guys down to the bottom, the two made it back approximately 3 hours after the sunset. Meanwhile the rest of us waited for them. At least we got to stargaze, but talk about an “I told you so” scenario. Moral of the story, keep track of how long it takes to get up to whatever point you ascend, and add at least that much time to your journey down. Going up is often quicker than coming down. We did a total of 8 miles that day.

The next morning we decided to explore Mirror Lake. Compared to the Nevada Fall hike we did the day before, the trail to get to Mirror Lake was a breeze. For the most part it’s a flat trail that takes you alongside the running water from Mirror Lake (depending on the season). In this instance, we arrived at the “lake”, and it was all dried up. We weren’t surprised by this considering it was November, but we all can for sure agree that standing on the lake bed was one of the most marvelous experiences. I walked under this 15-20ft rock and told my friend, “We’re coming back here in five months, and we’re going to remember standing under this rock which will, by that time, mostly be submerged underwater.” Not only was it cool to be able to freely walk on the bottom of a lake without getting wet, but the view as the trail opens up to the lake is insane. Surrounded by granite walls (one side being Half Dome) that reach over two times the height of the Empire State Building, makes you feel so insignificant to the mass of our planet, let alone our entire existence within the universe. The following days we hiked Glacier Point, and visited the Grizzly Giant, a 3,000 year old sequoia tree. It’s such a freeing feeling to be out there

surrounded by the natural beauty of our planet. It forces an appreciation for life, and allows us to truly feel at peace and become one with nature. Personally, I enjoy meditating, and whenever I meditate out in nature, it's a profound experience that allows me to focus on what's important in life, and enjoy every moment as a human. That means enjoying all of the emotions that come with being a human. My experience in Yosemite was extremely therapeutic and mentally freeing. 10 out of 10 recommend visiting Yosemite National Park if you want to escape and connect with the natural world.

Sequoias:



If you're going to be climbing up to Glacier Point in the icy season, you'll need **ice clamps**.

These are the ice clamps my friends and I used:

Limm Crampons: <https://amzn.to/39gZs3R>

Carryown Ice Snow Grips: <https://amzn.to/36bDQUC>

Cutiful Traction Cleats: <https://amzn.to/2YaLv0Q>

Any of these ice clamps will get the job done, allowing you to access the iciest peaks in the mountains.