

# AFAR

## There's a New Luxury Lodge Near Yosemite National Park—Here's What It's Like

*Just outside the northwest gate to Yosemite National Park, a stylish new lodge invites guests to admire the serene beauty of California's mountain meadows in every season.*



A cottage at Firefall Ranch near Yosemite National Park in California Courtesy of Firefall Ranch

### The Afar take

Opened in May 2024, **Firefall Ranch** is a new luxury lodging option for conscientious and discerning travelers visiting Yosemite National Park. Though the lodge is a new build, it sits on land with historic Yosemite roots: It was a stop on the original stagecoach route to the park in the 19th century.

### Who's it for?

Patagonia-clad road-trippers looking for peace and quiet away from the more crowded Yosemite Valley. Summertime hikers looking to explore high country during the day and return to a beautifully designed cabin come dusk. Firefall Ranch is great for solo travelers, families, couples, and friends traveling together. Pets are welcome.



A lounge area with rocking chairs at Firefall Ranch Courtesy of Firefall Ranch

### The location

Firefall Ranch sits on 300 acres just outside the Gold Rush town of Groveland, California, on Highway 120, a 15-mile drive from the northwest entrance to Yosemite National Park. There's plenty to do on property: tooling around the natural pond on beach cruisers (there are kid- and adult-size bikes for guests to ride), swimming in the shallow pool, wandering the trails, playing ping-pong in the game room, or reading in one of many hammocks spread across the meadow.

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## The rooms

I stayed in a two-bedroom cottage with my seven-year-old and nine-year-old daughters shortly after the lodge opened (and a few weeks before peak summer season). Guests have their pick of 55 standalone one- and two-bedroom cottages and three-bedroom homes with double-sided indoor-outdoor gas fireplaces, private decks, and heated bathroom floors. All the lodging options feel modern, airy, spacious, and well-sited for privacy and quietude. California was in the midst of a severe heat wave when we visited, and the cottage was a cool refuge from temperatures of 100+ degrees.



Cabin interior at Firefall Ranch Photo by Tracy Barbutes

## The food and drink

The lodge's head chef, Angelique Cecilie Pereat, intends to open a restaurant celebrating Patagonia in fall 2024 as a nod to her Argentinean heritage. While the restaurant wasn't yet open for business during our stay, we dined at the Tavern. Dinner service was a bit slow and it was clear the newly hired staff was still working out some opening kinks. The Tavern features sandwiches, salads, burgers, and local beers on tap, as well as solid options for vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free guests. A well-stocked general store on property sells gelato, light breakfast fare, coffee, and more. Don't miss the nightly fireside s'mores adjacent to the pool and game room.

## Staff and service

Staff we encountered were warm and friendly, and they routinely arrange guided excursions into the park, including hiking and white-water rafting itineraries.



The outdoor pool at Firefall Ranch Courtesy of Firefall Ranch

## Accessibility

The public areas of Firefall Ranch were built with accessibility in mind. Common areas have at least 32 inches of clear passageways to accommodate those with mobility challenges, and the swimming pool and hot tub have lifts. **Certain rooms** are designated as accessible, and they're listed on the website.

## Travel as a force for good

Part of the Yosemite Hotel Collection owned and operated by First Light Resorts, Firefall Ranch is a sister property to the nearby Evergreen Lodge and Rush Creek Lodge & Spa, both Certified B Corporations that emphasize environmental stewardship and social responsibility in their business practices.