

The San Francisco Standard

5 killer Sierra road trips to do this summer, including Yosemite, Mammoth and...Arnold?

With the Sierra Nevada's alpine lakes, granite-lined swimming holes and impossibly blue skies, do Californians really need another reason to visit the state's most majestic mountain range this summer?

We've gathered even more motivation to inspire a trip, from luxe lodging to all-new diversions, plus some lesser-known destinations that may not be on many people's radar. Here's what's shaking in the Sierra this summer.

1. A new and improved Yosemite, in and out of the park

With Monday's reopening of Tioga Pass, [Yosemite National Park](#) kicked off the (un)official start of its summer season. While its crush of forthcoming visitors may call to mind Yogi Berra's famous quip—"No one goes there anymore, it's too crowded"—the park just unveiled over \$32 million in improvements.

At Bridalveil Fall, a redesigned path leads to hugely expanded viewing areas for the 620-foot cascade, while in Yosemite Village, a new, 3000-square-foot Welcome Center is a one-stop-shop to book tours, chat with rangers, and rent bikes to cruise the sight-filled [Valley Loop Trail](#). Plus, after a nearly year-long closure, The Ahwahnee's iconic dining room is open once again.



Just outside of Yosemite National Park, Firefall Ranch is among the fancier resorts in the area. | Alpenglo Productions

Those looking to escape Valley crowds will welcome the reopening of three of the five High Sierra Camps that had been shuttered since Covid. Set six to 10 miles apart along a loop trail, each provides dorm-style canvas tents, hot meals, and an entry-level backpacking experience minus the bulky gear (this year's guided tours are sold out, but [self-guided reservations](#) are still available). Outside the park, the new [Firefall Ranch](#) is a luxurious alternative to refreshing the [Yosemite lodging site](#) in hope of a last-minute opening.

Note that entry into Yosemite requires [a reservation on specified days](#) through Oct. 27. If your dates aren't available, check again one week before, when additional slots are released. If you're still out of luck, consider the [YARTS](#) shuttle, which picks visitors up from dedicated areas outside the park.