

How to Plan the Perfect Trip to Yosemite National Park, According to Naturalists and Park Experts

Here's everything you need to know before planning a trip to Yosemite National Park.



Known around the globe for its majestic granite monoliths and overwhelming beauty, Yosemite National Park earned its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site back in 1984. Yosemite boasts five of the planet's tallest waterfalls, pristine streams, three sequoia groves, picturesque meadows, and rich biological diversity. As one of the first national parks, Yosemite helped pave the way for the National Park System, and over its sprawling 1,200 square miles — equivalent to the size of Rhode Island — the park offers abundant activities and experiences.

“There are over 1,500 different species of plants in Yosemite. That's something many people don't think about when they come to Yosemite because the geography gets all the glory. The towering cliffs and Half Dome and El Capitan, and these giant waterfalls that tumble off them,” Cory Goehring, lead naturalist at the Yosemite Conservancy, said in an interview with *Travel + Leisure*. “But what excites me as a naturalist, and I think what other people should pay more attention to in the park, is the diversity of life.”

To enjoy all Yosemite has to offer, here are important things you should know, including logistics, trails, and places to stay, informed by three experts who intimately understand Yosemite in different ways — and love it all the same.

Places to Stay



Firefall Ranch

A new rustic-chic retreat called [Firefall Ranch](#) near Yosemite's northwest entrance offers 55 cottages and villas on a spacious 300-acre property. Each accommodation features luxurious amenities like indoor/outdoor fireplaces and covered decks.