



Half Dome

Most hikers take **10 to 12 hours** to hike to Half Dome and back. Some take longer.

If you plan on hiking during the day, it's smart to **leave around sunrise** or earlier, and **have a non-negotiable turn-around time**.



For instance, if you haven't reached the top of Half Dome by 3:30 PM, you will turn around. Check for sunrise and sunset times before you hike. Regardless, each person should carry a flashlight or head lamp with good batteries. Although the trail is well marked, you should be prepared with a good topographic map and know how to use it.

If a storm appears nearby, do not continue to the summit.



The summit of Half Dome is extremely dangerous in the case of lightning. Check forecast before your hike and summit early in the day to avoid afternoon thunderstorms. If a storm appears nearby, descend immediately with caution and patience on the cables and steps. Be prepared for cool temperatures and rain showers.



You should at least **bring one gallon of water** (4 liters) if hiking to the top of Half Dome.

The only treated water on the trail is available (summer only) at a drinking fountain at the Vernal Fall Footbridge (less than a mile from the trailhead). You should treat river water by boiling, using iodine, or using a giardia-rated water filter. Drinking untreated river water may cause significant illness.

Most **deaths on Half Dome** have occurred when people try to **descend in wet weather.**

Two metal cables allow hikers to climb the last 400 feet to the summit of Half Dome without rock climbing equipment. While using the cables, take your time and be patient with slower hikers. Allow faster hikers to pass you (when possible). Wet rock on Half Dome can be as slippery as a sheet of ice.



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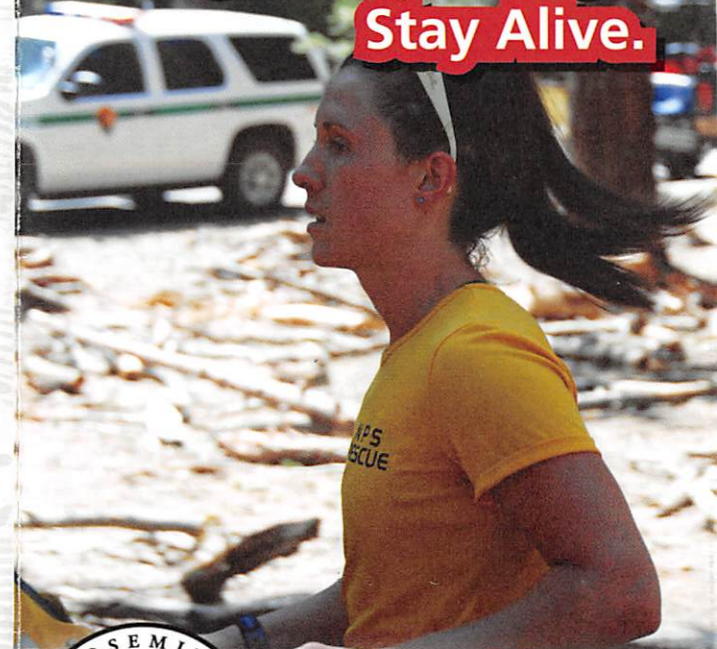
Scan this QR code to find out more about Yosemite Search and Rescue and read about more ways that you can be safe while you're enjoying Yosemite National Park.

Yosemite National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Hiking or Swimming?
Stay Alive.



If you see a rescuer in a yellow shirt running to save you, it's too late. Here are some things we'd love for you to know before you start your trip.





Playing in the Water

Water related accidents the **most common cause** of traumatic **death** in Yosemite.

Stay on the trail.

Nearly all fatal water-related accidents occur because visitors leave a trail or pathway. People scramble on rocks that line the riversides, pose for photos, dip their hands and feet into the water, and attempt to cross rivers by hopping from boulder to boulder. Being too close to a river or raging creek is as risky as peering over the edge of Half Dome. You may think you're safe next to the water, but you are only one slip away from a fatal accident.



Hazards are not obvious.

People who fall into the water can be rapidly swept downstream and often become pinned in natural entrapments. In turbulent rivers, the foam generated by the churning of the water makes it impossible for even the strongest of swimmers to breathe or gain control.

Almost anything can **trap you underwater.**

Even strong swimmers may become too weak to swim.

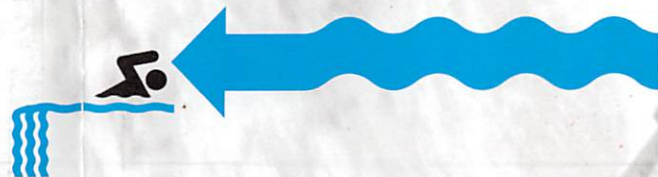


You should also know that mountain water is very cold—no matter what time of year it is. Yosemite's rivers are fed by melted snow from high in the Sierra Nevada, and even expert swimmers can quickly lose their strength in the icy water.

Even a slow current or a calm pool can be dangerous.

You will not be able to swim to shore or away from a hazard faster than the current.

Anytime you're near a flowing waterway, always pay attention to downstream conditions—what may look like a calm swimming hole could have dangerous whitewater just down stream.

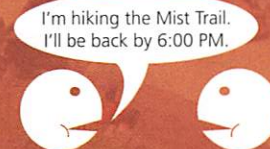


Getting Lost can happen to you.



Trails can be hard to follow in rocky or sandy areas. It is easy to follow a drainage ditch and mistake it for a trail. Detouring around downed trees or other obstacles can cause you to lose your way. Going off trail for a photograph can lead to getting lost.

Tell someone your plan and when you hope to return.



Know the weather and prepare for changes.

Paying attention to shifting conditions is critical. Low, dark, and fast-moving clouds; an increase in wind speed; a drop in temperature; and the sound of thunder are all signs of changing weather. Be prepared to turn around at any time and immediately retreat from exposed mountaintops, high ridges, and open granite slabs at the first sound of thunder. Being above tree line in a lightning storm is a bad idea. Lightning often precedes actual precipitation, so waiting to turn around until it rains is a mistake.

Bring a flashlight to be prepared in case something unexpected happens.



You never know if you may need to stay on the trail longer than you have anticipated. You may end up needing to rest more frequently than you had planned. You may get injured or sick. Even with a light, off-trail travel at night can be risky.

Bring plenty of food and water.

Carry (and drink) plenty of water: a leading cause of rescues on the trail is dehydration. You should carry at least 3 liters of water per day per person.



Learn how to use a map.

