

# Yosemite

National Park  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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## Yosemite Valley Day Hikes

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### Trail Regulations and Safety Tips

- Stay on trails. Taking shortcuts is dangerous and causes erosion.
  - Carry plenty of water. Be sure to treat stream, river, or lake water before drinking as it may be unsafe due to *Giardia Lamblia*, a protozoan which causes an intestinal disorder.
  - Keep pets on paved Valley floor trails only and on a leash at all times.
  - Bicycles, motorcycles, and motor vehicles are not allowed on any trails under any circumstance.
  - Smoking on trails while traveling is prohibited. You may smoke while stopped.
  - Horses and mules have the right of way on all trails. Hikers should step to the uphill, inside edge of the trail.
  - A wilderness permit is required for any overnight stay in Yosemite's backcountry.
  - Pack out what you pack in! Help keep your park clean.
  - During the spring, fall, and winter months, trails are not maintained and unknown hazards may exist.
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### Lower Yosemite Fall EASY

start Yosemite Falls parking area (shuttle bus stop #7)  
length .5 mi/.8 km roundtrip - 20 minutes  
description A paved trail leads from the Yosemite Falls parking area to the bridge at the base of the Fall. *Expect a magnificent view of the waterfall and lots of spray in spring and early summer.*

### Bridalveil Fall EASY

start Bridalveil Fall parking area  
length .5 mi/.8 km roundtrip - 20 minutes  
description A paved trail leads from the Bridalveil Fall parking area to the base of the fall. *Look for rainbows in the waterfall in late afternoon. Expect lots of spray in spring and early summer.*

### Mirror Lake/Meadow EASY (dry in late summer and fall)

start shuttle bus stop #17  
length 2 mi/3.2 km roundtrip to lake - 1 hour; 5 mi/8 km loop around lake - 2 hours  
description A paved trail follows the west side of Tenaya Creek to Mirror Lake and the base of Half Dome. The loop trail continues past the lake, crosses the bridge over Tenaya Creek and returns along the east side of Mirror Lake. *The lake offers beautiful reflections of surrounding cliffs as well as opportunities to see wildlife and a lake-to-meadow succession.*

### Valley Floor Loop MODERATE

start Lower Yosemite Fall parking area (shuttle bus stop #7) OR  
50 yards behind the Yosemite Chapel (shuttle bus stop #11)  
length 13 mi/21km for full loop - 5 to 7 hours; 6.5 mi/10.5 km for half loop - 2.5 to 3.5 hours  
description The half loop trail crosses the Valley near the El Capitan Meadow cross-over road. This trail follows many of the first Valley east-west trails and wagon roads. The Valley floor loop is not often traveled and offers solitude with occasional route-finding difficulty. *The trail offers striking views of Sentinel Rock, Cathedral Rocks, Bridalveil Fall, El Capitan, the Three Brothers, Yosemite Falls and the Merced River.*

## Panorama Trail MODERATE (closed in winter)

start Glacier Point  
length 8.5 mi/13.7 km one way to Valley floor - 6 hours; 3200 ft/975 m total descent  
description The trail crosses Illilouette Fall after 2 mi/3.2 km and continues partially uphill along the Panorama Cliffs. At the top of Nevada Fall, the trail joins the Mist and John Muir Trails to Happy Isles. *This trail offers many scenic views.*

## Vernal & Nevada Falls MODERATE to STRENUOUS (winter route marked)

start Happy Isles (shuttle bus stop #16)  
length 1.6 mi/2.6 km roundtrip to Vernal Fall footbridge - 1.5 hours; 400 ft/122 m elevation gain  
3 mi/4.8 km roundtrip to Vernal Fall - 3 hours; 1000 ft/600 m elevation gain  
7 mi/11.2 km roundtrip to Nevada Fall - 5 to 6 hours; 2000 ft/1200 m elevation gain  
description This trail begins the famous 211 mi/338 km John Muir Trail to Mt. Whitney. *Enjoy an excellent view of Vernal Fall from the Vernal Fall footbridge.* Two tenths mile beyond the bridge, the Mist Trail and John Muir Trail diverge. To proceed directly to the top of Vernal Fall, follow the Mist Trail .5 mi/.8 km up a very strenuous granite stairway of over 600 steps. *Prepare for slippery footing and a tremendous amount of waterfall spray in spring and early summer.* The top of Nevada Fall may be reached by continuing 2 mi/3.2 km along the Mist Trail. Nevada Fall may also be reached via the John Muir Trail (bypassing Vernal Fall).

## Four Mile Trail STRENUOUS (closed in winter)

start Four Mile Trail parking area located on Southside Drive  
length 9.6 mi/14 km roundtrip to Glacier Point - 6 to 8 hours; 3200 ft/975 m elevation gain  
description This trail climbs the southern Valley wall beginning near the base of Sentinel Rock. An alternative return to the Valley is to connect with the Panorama Trail at Glacier Point (total trip is 13 mi/20.8 km). *This scenic trail provides views of both the eastern and western portions of the Valley. Glacier Point offers spectacular views of Half Dome, Tenaya Canyon, and the Clark and Cathedral Ranges.*

## Upper Yosemite Fall STRENUOUS

start Sunnyside Campground parking area  
length 7.2 mi/11.6 km roundtrip - 6 to 8 hours; 2700 ft/823 m elevation gain  
description One of Yosemite's oldest trails (built 1873 - 1877), this trail leads to the top of the world's fifth tallest waterfall, 2425 ft/739 m above the Valley floor. Do not stray off the marked trail as steep drops exist adjacent to the trail. *Enjoy spectacular views from Columbia Rock located one mile up the trail.*

## Half Dome VERY STRENUOUS (Half Dome cables up late-May to mid-October)

start Happy Isles (shuttle bus stop #16)  
length 17 mi/27km roundtrip - 10 to 12 hours; 4800 ft/1500 m elevation gain  
description Follow the Mist Trail or John Muir Trail to Nevada Fall. Continue on the trail by following the Merced River to Little Yosemite Valley and Half Dome. The last 900 ft/270 m of trail is a very steep climb up the east side of Half Dome. Cables assist hikers on the final 400 ft/120 m. They consist of two steel ropes about three feet apart and suspended at arm's height from pipes set in the rock. **Do not begin this ascent if 1) the cables are down, 2) there is any chance of rain (moisture makes the granite too slick for safety), or 3) there is any chance of lightning.** Lightning often strikes the Dome's summit and can follow the cables downward. The top of Half Dome is a fairly level, large open surface.