

## Tips For First-Time Yosemite Campers

Here are some tips that might be helpful to 1st-time Yosemite campers. These are some tips we have found to be useful - you will probably get many others if you ask other experienced campers.

- The *Yosemite Guide* booklet and *Yosemite Today* newspaper are great resources - keep them handy. You get them at the park entrance, and there are extra copies in the Visitor Center. The paper contains information about ranger-led activities, children's programs, evening shows, facilities & services in the valley, hiking, shuttle bus, and much more.
- One of the best things about camping with a group is you aren't stuck if you forget something. If you forget your air bed pump, cheese grater, or tools to repair a bike tire, ask around! Chances are good that someone in the group has exactly what you need.
- Pack as much as possible into your car the day before you leave. This will help you get an early start in the morning. It's good to leave early so you can get to Yosemite around noon, before it gets too hot and your car is more likely to overheat. Plus, you want to get there early to set up camp before it gets dark (around 7 PM), and start having fun!
- Bring a lunch to eat in the car, or stop and eat along the way, so you can start setting up camp as soon as you arrive. Check-in time is 10 AM on the day you arrive; checkout time is 10 AM on the day you leave (so no sleeping in on your last day!).
- There are two main routes from San Jose to Yosemite. One way is 680 to 580 to 120, through Dublin and Manteca. The other is 101 to 152 to 59 to 140, through Merced and Mariposa. Plan on 4 to 6 hours for each route, depending on how fast you drive and how many stops you make. It's wise to fill your gas tank before you enter the park, in Mariposa or El Portal along the Hwy 140 route, or Crane Flat along the Hwy 120 route. There is no gas station in Yosemite Valley - the closest ones are Crane Flat (about 30 minutes from the campground), or Wawona (about 60 minutes, and a nice day trip to see the big trees).
- Remove all food from your car when you arrive, including any food wrappers from lunch on the way up. The bears have keen sense of smell and are more likely to break into your car if they can smell something.
- Plan dinners that can be prepared easily. Cook most of your food days or weeks ahead of time, put it in double freezer bags, and store it in your freezer until you are ready to pack your ice chest. Some simple dinners we bring are chili, spaghetti meat sauce, and taco/burrito meat, sloppy joes, etc. Freezing your meals ahead of time is also helpful because you don't have to be concerned about carrying a lot of raw meat and keeping it fresh.
- Carry your trash bag to the dumpster (at the end of every row) after each meal so the animals don't get into it.
- Bring a dining canopy. You won't know if your campsite is in the shade or direct sun until you get there.
- There are three grocery stores in Yosemite valley. Check the *Yosemite Guide* newspaper for open hours. The store in **Curry Village** is closest to the campground - you can easily walk or ride your bike there. This is the closest place to get ice. The largest grocery store is at the **Village Store**; it's

in the same building as the main gift shop. **Housekeeping Camp** has a small, 7-Eleven type store. There are two post offices in the valley, one in Curry Village and a very historic one near the Visitor Center.

- Bring your bicycles - you will use them a lot to get around. Gel seats or gel seat covers make the ride a lot more comfortable. Baskets are handy for carrying groceries and especially bags of ice. Bike shops have steel collapsible saddlebag-type baskets which work well.
- **Showers** - there are 4 places to shower. The cost for showers is about \$5 for adults and about \$3 for kids; this fee includes a towel. The fee for the showers at the two pools includes pool admission during pool hours (10 AM to 5 PM daily).
  - ✓ **Housekeeping camp** - has nice showers and an attached laundromat.
  - ✓ **Yosemite Lodge Pool** - has only a few showers in the change room for the pool, but it's the nicest pool. This pool has lounge chairs and a snack bar.
  - ✓ **Curry Village Pool** - has no lounge chairs, but has many showers. Lines are usually long here during pool hours. Closest showers to the campground.
  - ✓ **Shower house at Curry Village** - is located on the access road between the Curry Village store and Upper Pines campground. These showers may be free, I'm not sure.
- Air beds or cots are a must if you want to sleep comfortably for a week. Bring a broom to sweep out your tent, and a straw door mat to help keep the dirt out. Battery-operated touch lights or battery-operated lanterns are handy for the tent at night.
- Pack a backpack before you leave home for each family member that contains toiletries, swimsuit, beach towel, and wash rag in a ziplok bag. This lets you get ready to go to the pool or shower in just a few minutes by adding a set of clean clothes to each backpack. Keep the backpacks in your car and not in your tent - animals can be attracted to the scents in the toiletries.
- The free shuttle is a convenient way to get around the valley. It runs every few minutes, stops at Upper Pines campground, and goes to most of the popular destinations in the valley. If you have never been to Yosemite, you might want to take the narrated 2-hour Valley Floor tour (about \$18) to see the main sights.
- Rafting on the Merced river is a fun activity. The river is very gentle and slow - the entire family can go. The river is 1-3 feet deep in most places, and about 6 feet at the deepest. You can bring your own raft or rent one at Curry Village. If you bring your own rafts, make sure to bring a couple of oars and life jackets for each person. You start at Stoneman Bridge near Curry Village. You can get out at several places - the 3 best are Sentinel Bridge, Swinging Bridge Picnic Area, and Sentinel Beach. It's best to go with another family. That way, you can carpool to the place you get out of the river and leave some cars to drive back to the campground. If you rent a raft, you can pay extra for a ride back from Sentinel Beach. The rafting trip takes from 30 minutes to 2 hours, depending on where you get out of the river