

Viva Las Vegas

A person wearing a green and yellow t-shirt and dark pants stands on a sandy ridge in the foreground. The background features a vast desert landscape with unique, layered rock formations in shades of tan, brown, and grey. In the distance, blue mountains are visible under a clear sky.

Zabriskie Point in
Death Valley National Park
(Ryan Preacher)

Follow this route from the lights of Las Vegas to the Eastern Sierra plus three national parks, finding “-ests” along the way. These lowest, hottest, oldest and tallest places are waiting to be discovered.



We so often find beauty in soft things: a pink sunset, a bouquet of flowers, a sparkling beach. Many of us write off the extremes of the spectrum as harsh places not worth considering, but this road trip leans into them.

Start amongst the loud and glittering scene of the Las Vegas Strip, the brightest spot on the planet, before pointing your wheels westward. You'll find Death Valley National Park, which is a land known for its extremes. Its elevation ranges from 282 feet below sea level (the lowest point in North America) to 11,049-foot Telescope Peak and recorded the world's hottest temperature of 134-degrees Fahrenheit in 1913.

From Death Valley, head towards the towering Sierra Nevada mountains. There grows the oldest living thing on Earth, the Methuselah Tree near Bishop, along with fascinating history to explore before crossing over Tioga Pass into Yosemite. You'll encounter looming rock formations and pounding waterfalls. Stop in Fresno on your way to Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks, where you'll find some of the world's tallest trees. Just walking underneath them will make you feel small.

As you finish the route, passing through the towns surrounding the parks like Visalia, Exeter and, farther south, Bakersfield, you'll realize that extremes can be beautiful too. Read on to discover our favorite route through this landscape.



PHOTOS: Canoeing in Sequoia National Park (Sungjin Ahn), Cathedral Peak and Lake in Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite National Park (Getty Images)

Death Valley's SCENIC STOPS

Just two hours from Las Vegas, here are our favorite things to see in this mesmerizing park.

By Tori Peglar

After you enter Death Valley, Zabriskie Point is your first major scenic stop. A fantastic sunrise or sunset location for photographers, it's one of the park's most iconic features. You'll have to walk a very short, but fairly steep, paved hill up to see the view. When you reach the overlook, you'll see striking badlands with bands of purples, reds, oranges and tan. For a short, moderate hike, do the 2.7-mile roundtrip Badlands Loop that leaves from the parking lot.

It becomes very apparent why the area along Artist's Drive is called Artist's Palette because it looks as though an artist swept her brush across the hillsides. Take in the views from the parking lot or walk as far as you want to up the dirt trail to see even better views.

Continue south on Badwater Road to see the curious sight called Devils Golf Course. The ground is covered with thousands of jagged spires made from rock salt eroded from

the valley's wind and infrequent rainfall. The park service recommends taking in the scene from the parking lot to avoid damaging the fragile landscape. What makes it really unusual is the Rice Krispies-like sounds you'll hear if you listen carefully or put your ear to the ground. It's the sound of tiny salt crystals popping as they shrink and expand with fluctuating temperatures.

Up next? Farther south, you'll find yourself 282 feet below sea level, the lowest point in North America: Badwater Basin. While you won't be submerged, you'll be surrounded by polygon-shaped salt flats. Take in the mesmerizing views from your car in the parking lot or, if it's cool out, walk a quarter-mile past the wooden boardwalk to the packed white salt flats.

Head back to 190 North to reach awe-inspiring and super-accessible Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes located right by Stovepipe

Wells. From Hwy. 190, you literally pull up in front of the dunes, the highest of which is 100 feet tall. The best photos of these dunes are at sunrise and sunset. Get out of the car and explore them with covered shoes because the sand heats up as the sun rises higher in the sky.

Located on the far western edge of the park, Rainbow Canyon offers more than just views of the Panamint Mountains and a deep canyon. The majority of people flock here with the hope that they'll spot a fighter jet zooming through the canyon, which stretches for more than five miles with walls that rise some 1,000 feet upwards to the sky. It's one of the few places where photographers can take photos of fighter jets from above. Since World War II, the U.S. military has used this restricted military airspace for fighter jet training.

PHOTO: Badwater Basin sunrise (Amy Novotny)

TIP

Death Valley has recorded the highest temperatures on Earth, and in the summer it often exceeds 120-degrees Fahrenheit. The park is best visited in the cooler months. Check the weather ahead of time and avoid venturing out on hot days. Most of the park has no cell service, so be prepared at all times with lots of water, even if you don't plan to leave your vehicle.



"Methuselah" tree in the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest. (ChaoYen)

Picture Perfect

Spend a few days exploring amazing sights along the Eastern Sierra's Hwy. 395 from Bishop to Lone Pine.

By Mikaela Ruland

Yosemite and Death Valley national parks might be the reason you head to Eastern California, but if you didn't plan to spend a few days on the stunning stretch of Hwy. 395 between the two, you'd be seriously missing out. United offers seasonal flights to Bishop from San Francisco and Denver, making it the perfect place to start your California adventure.

Begin at South Lake, 25 minutes outside of Bishop, where you can rent a kayak at Parchers Resort or hike the 5.4-mile one-way Treasure Lakes Trail for unparalleled Sierra Nevada beauty.

For a taste of the area's history, don't miss Owens Valley Paiute-Shoshone Cultural

Center in Bishop, which provides a detailed look at the local Paiute and Shoshone tribes from beautiful baskets to intricate beads and tools.

Go even further back in time at the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, an hour's drive east of Bishop to see some of the oldest living things on Earth. One bristlecone pine tree, known as the "Methuselah" tree, is still alive after 4,850 years. There's nothing quite like a walk among it and other ancient bristlecone pines, many more than 2,000 years old.

Six miles south of Independence, you'll find Manzanar National Historic Site where an estimated 10,000 Japanese and Japanese

Americans were incarcerated during World War II. While most of the internment camp was dismantled after the war, a replica barrack and mess hall offer insights into camp life, and the restored camp auditorium serves as a visitor center.

Near Shoshone, stop by the China Ranch Date Farm where you'll find a lush oasis filled with date palms. Go on a guided nature walk to learn more about the area before stopping by the gift shop to purchase different varieties of dates and products made with the fruit.

Learn more about what to do in Inyo County and Bishop at InyoCountyVisitor.com and BishopVisitor.com.

Ride the Bus

By Mikaela Ruland



With 3.3 million visitors last year Yosemite, known for its stunning scenery, can be a difficult place to park your car. Avoid wasting time finding a parking spot when you climb aboard the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System, best known simply as YARTS.

If you're traveling by car, the buses make stops along four routes into the park: Hwy. 120/395 starting in Mammoth Lakes; Hwy. 120 starting in Sonora; Hwy. 41 starting in Oakhurst and Hwy. 140 from Merced and Mariposa.

YARTS provides easy connection services to people traveling by train and bus. If you're traveling on Amtrak or Greyhound to Merced, your YARTS fare is included in your ticket price. Once you're in Yosemite Valley, take the free park shuttle, serving the valley, El Capitan, Tuolumne Meadows (in summer) and Badger Pass Ski Area (in winter).

Learn more and buy your tickets at YARTS.com.

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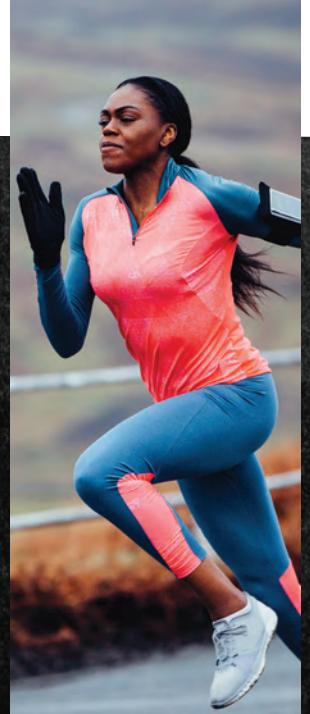
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Pick Your Perfect Yosemite Activity

By Mikaela Ruland



These two-to-four-day trips will get you deep into Yosemite's backcountry. Or, [learn how to rock climb](#) with the same school. The Yosemite Mountaineering School offers excursions ranging from beginner to advanced. You can even book an El Capitan climb. Each group is limited to six students ages 10 and up and one instructor. The beginner rock climbing class, "Welcome to the Rock," is based at a beginner's climbing area where you'll learn all about rock climbing gear and how to climb Yosemite's famous granite.

■ Winter Warrior

Crowds disappear in the winter months in Yosemite, making it a perfect time to explore. Go [cross-country skiing](#) on 90 miles of trails, 25 of which are groomed. For an epic adventure, ski 21 miles to Glacier Point and stay in a hut. Rentals are available at Badger Pass Ski Area—one of the only ski areas in a national park—where you can also [downhill ski or snowboard](#). Set the little ones up with ski or snowboard lessons while the adults enjoy runs ranging from beginner to advanced. If you haven't gotten enough of the cold yet, head to the outdoor rink at Curry Village where you can [ice skate under Half Dome](#). Take in the wintry views and do a few laps around the rink before warming up next to the fire pit.

■ Sightseer

If leisurely taking in the sights is more your style, turn to pages 12-13 where you can learn about [dining at the historic Ahwahnee Hotel](#) or [taking a photography workshop with the Ansel Adams Gallery](#). A [guided bus or tram tour](#) is also a great way to see the park's best views.

All these activities, lodging and more can be booked at [TravelYosemite.com](#).

PHOTOS: Biking Yosemite Valley, Tent Cabin at Curry Village, Crosscountry skiing on Glacier Point Road (Courtesy Yosemite Hospitality)

With so many activity options in Yosemite, ranging from family-friendly to skilled adventures, it can be difficult to decide what to do. Do you lazily float down a river or make the strenuous climb up a granite dome? Use our guide to pick the best activity from park concessionaire, Aramark, based on your vacation style.

■ Family Fun Seeker

If your adventures include kids, [bike Yosemite Valley](#). Head to Curry Village, Yosemite Village or Yosemite Valley Lodge to rent bikes and explore the bike paths along the valley floor. Hop on the free park shuttle when the kids get tired. If it's a hot day, another great option is to [float down the Merced River](#) where you'll catch a striking view of Half Dome along a gentle float. Rent a four-person

raft at the Curry Village kiosk, but aim to get there early before the 100 rafts are rented out for the day. The 3-mile float through the valley ends at Sentinel Beach where a shuttle will bring you back to the village. For an easy hike with the little ones, [walk around Mirror Lake](#). This gentle, 2-mile roundtrip trail in Yosemite Valley goes to the picturesque lake and back, or extend it to 5 miles by walking all the way around the lake. At the end of the day, [camp in a tent cabin at Curry Village](#), a glamping experience the kids will love.

■ Adventure Chaser

Adrenaline seekers and those just looking to get some miles under their feet have plenty of options. [Go on a guided backpacking trip](#) to Clouds Rest or the Cathedral Range with Yosemite Mountaineering School.

Mountain Escape

Just two miles from Yosemite's South Entrance, this gorgeous spot offers a relaxing, resort-style vacation.

By Tori Peglar

It's just a couple of miles from Yosemite's famous Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias full of the planet's largest single trees. But you'll feel worlds away from everything at Tenaya at Yosemite.

Swimming pools, restaurants and a spa await you. Tenaya offers activities like archery classes and a rock-climbing wall, making it perfect for families. For adults, the world-class Ascent Spa is the only full-service spa at the park's South Entrance and uses organic and thoughtfully sourced products.

With on-site restaurants, you don't need to spend time driving to eat. The renovated Jackalopes Bar & Grill features gluten-free and vegan options, along with made-to-order burgers. It serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Timberloft Pizzeria serves wood-fired pizzas to fuel up after a day outside.

Then rest your head in the lodge, a cottage room or a suite. You can also get cozy in a two-bedroom Explorer Cabin. The cabins are under a 10-minute walk from

the lodge, but you can ride a Tenaya shuttle, available 24/7, to and from the cabins.

The best way to avoid navigating Yosemite and its parking issues? Board Tenaya's Yosemite 360 Tour Buses for stunning panoramic views. Choose between a half-day or full-day tour, or a Junior Ranger tour for kids. It's that VIP experience where you don't have to worry about parking or logistics.

Learn more at [VisitTenaya.com](https://www.visittenaya.com).

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A FORGOTTEN HISTORY

A scenic view of a winding road overlooking a lake and mountains. The road is paved and has yellow and white markings. The landscape is rugged with rocky mountains and dense evergreen forests. A large blue lake is visible in the distance. The sky is clear and blue.

In the late 1800s, Chinese immigrants faced bitter winters, grueling working conditions and intense racism to help build Yosemite and the West.

By Mikaela Ruland

Tioga Road overlooking Tenaya Lake (Gettyimages)

When most of us think of Yosemite's history, there's a few figures that come to mind: John Muir, Ansel Adams, Royal Robbins. While these white men were foundational to building the park and its culture we see today, there's an often forgotten piece of park history that has its own set of important historical figures.

In 1915 a group of important politicians and businessmen embarked on a two-week trek through Sequoia National Park. Led by Stephen Mather, this expedition had one goal: convince these influential men of the merits of national parks and how they needed a dedicated agency to oversee them.

The party camped under giant sequoias, climbed Moro Rock, rode through canyons and even summited Mt. Whitney. While the area's incredible natural beauty charmed the group, the expedition was made even more magical by a Chinese American named Tie Sing.

Sing had made a name for himself as the head chef of the U.S. Geological Survey. So much so that in 1899, a peak on the border of Yosemite had been named after him.

He was the chef on Mather's "Mountain Party" and Mather's assistant, Horace Albright, documented Sing's incredible cooking from plum pudding to fried chicken to venison. Sing was an ingenious backcountry cook and used techniques like letting bread rise during the day close to the bodies of pack mules to keep it warm and wrapping meat in wet newspaper to keep it cool. Sing kept the members of the party well-fed and contributed to the experience that convinced these influential men to eventually create the National Park Service.

Sing was just one of scores of Chinese Americans and Chinese immigrants who helped to build Yosemite and the rest of the West.

How Chinese Immigrants Helped Build Yosemite

In the 1840s, countless Chinese left their home country thanks to environmental disaster and social upheaval. Many headed to California to seek a better life with other hopeful miners in the Gold Rush until California's 1850 Foreign Miners' Tax made gold mining expensive. This led lots of immigrants to search for other work. For Chinese immigrants this included cooking, like Sing, laundry and manual labor.

Today Yosemite's Tioga Road, which goes up and over 9,943-foot Tioga Pass, closes to vehicle traffic each winter as road conditions turn harrowing when the snow flies. The mountainous road that leads up and over the Sierra Nevada is impressive whether you know its history or not. When you learn that its predecessor was built in 18 weeks with just hand tools, it becomes even more impressive. Add in the fact that this feat was done in winter and it becomes truly stunning.

The Great Sierra Wagon Road, which became Tioga Road, was built in the 1880s by 250 Chinese immigrants and 90 European-American laborers in 130 days. They blasted their way through rock, built retaining walls and used shovels and handpicks. Chinese workers also built the old Washburn Road, which is now the Washburn Trail between Wawona and Mariposa Grove.

The Transcontinental Railroad Race

North of Yosemite, Chinese immigrants were also vital in connecting the country by building the first trans-continental railroad, stretching from San Francisco to Council Bluffs, Iowa along the Missouri River. Beginning in 1863, two companies began racing to build this marvel. The Central Pacific Railroad started from Sacramento, moving east and the Union Pacific Railroad started from Council Bluffs, moving west. The Central Pacific arguably had the more difficult task, needing to tunnel through the Sierra Nevada mountains in order to head east.

Starting in 1865, the Central Pacific Railroad used a contracting firm to bring over somewhere between 10-15,000 Chinese immigrants from the Guangzhou province to act as cheap

labor to build the railroads when they struggled to find white laborers willing to take the job. The work was horribly grueling. Workers blasted and dug 15 tunnels through solid granite, through winter snow and summer sun. They endured blasting accidents, avalanches and 12-hour work days, six days a week. Deaths and injuries were rarely documented so it's unclear just how many Chinese workers died to build the railroads but some estimates put the number at more than 1,000. Despite risking their lives, Chinese immigrants were still paid significantly less, and received fewer benefits, than their white counterparts, according to Stanford's Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project.



Tie Sing, a 21-year veteran cook of the U.S. Geological Survey, in the field. 1909 - Yosemite National Park. (Courtesy USGS)

The Central Pacific line eventually was completed up and over the Sierra Nevada mountains at the infamous 7,000-foot Donner Pass and in May 1869 the two railroads met at Promontory Summit in Utah, 66 miles northwest of Salt Lake City. This new railroad linked up with established routes east of the Missouri River, completing the first railroad that ran from coast to coast, revolutionizing America. The new railroad made transport of goods, as well as settlement in the West, much easier.

Despite the country's first trans-continental railroad being literally built on the backs of Chinese laborers, Chinese immigrants felt the effects of intense racism. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was signed by President Arthur, prohibiting the immigration of all Chinese laborers for 10 years. This

was the first U.S. law ever implemented specifically banning immigration from one ethnic group or nation.

The impact Chinese immigrants had on building important parts of the West is one that's often lost in time. Much of the Yosemite history would have stayed lost had it not been for one park ranger, Yen-Yen Chan. She did much of the research to uncover the vital role Chinese immigrants played in building Yosemite. Her work resulted in the Chinese laundry building near Wawona being restored and new educational exhibits telling the history of these immigrants in building the park we see today.

As you visit Yosemite Valley and Tioga Pass, take a moment to appreciate the deep history that remains quietly hidden in the park.

Fresno FINDS

Spend a few days exploring one of the closest cities to Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks before hitting the trails.

By Mikaela Ruland

In the middle of the summer there's no better place to cool down than at Forestiere Underground Gardens. This underground wonderland was created over the course of 40 years starting in 1906 when Baldassare Forestiere built a subterranean home filled with underground rooms, passageways and courtyards full of plants that thrive underground. Today, this amazing architectural feat is open to the public. Reservations for the hour-long guided tour are required.

There's a huge mural at 736 Fulton Street in downtown Fresno declaring this area of town as the "Brewery District". Not only is it home to a burgeoning craft brewery scene, but it's also full of murals, making a self-guided brewery and art tour a perfect way to spend an evening. Start at Tioga-Sequoia Brewing Company with beers named after landmarks like Half Dome and General Sherman Tree. Next, head to Full Circle Brewing Co., where you'll find IPAs alongside all sorts of entertainment from live music to roller derby to cornhole competitions. End the night at The Modernist, an upscale craft cocktail bar with a menu that's sure to impress.

Fresno's neighboring town, Clovis, is home to a charming historic downtown district that dates back to 1912. All the businesses from the boutiques to the restaurants to



Sea Lion Cove at Fresno Chaffee Zoo
(Courtesy Fresno/Clovis Convention & Visitors Bureau)

the coffee shops are independently owned. Stop by On the Edge Coffee House, which features local artists and has a piano out front. Spend the morning wandering through the unique shops and boutiques and grab a leisurely lunch at The Craft House. The restaurant features a truly eclectic menu with something for everyone from poke nachos to chicken and waffles.

Dedicate a whole day to journeying around the world at the Fresno Chaffee Zoo. It's home to more than 200 species and has interactive and award-winning habitats that will make you feel like you've been transported.

Start at Sea Lion Cove where you can see California sea lions and harbor seals in a habitat that mimics the coast. You can watch these animated creatures play from a cliff overlook or head to the underwater viewing area where you can watch them swim.

At African Adventure you can look out across 13 acres and imagine you're on the

savannah as you take in the views of lions, cheetahs, elephants and more. Don't miss feeding the giraffes at Twigia Terrace. You'll climb to a tall platform where you'll be at eye level with these incredible giants. All interactive experiences at the zoo are to the animals' preference so if the giraffes don't feel like interacting, they aren't forced to come over. This experience costs extra but if you purchase the Total Zoo Experience with your tickets, it's included. So is Stingray Bay, where you can feed stingrays in a shallow pool.

Scan the QR code at the zoo entrance when you arrive to get the day's schedule of events along with a map. Keeper Chats happen at various times throughout the day and they're well worth scheduling your visit around. The zookeepers are a wealth of knowledge, and you'll get to see animals participating in enrichment experiences.

Learn more about Fresno and Clovis at VisitFresnoCounty.org, and more about the Fresno Chaffee Zoo at FresnoChaffeeZoo.org.



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Three-Park Adventure

Take the Majestic Mountain Loop, a three-day itinerary, to explore Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks. Below are our top highlights for Sequoia and Kings Canyon. Find Yosemite's best experiences on pages 12-13.

By Mikaela Ruland

1 Climb Moro Rock in Sequoia

Moro Rock's quarter-mile, 350-plus step climb offers equally spectacular views as its more intense sister, Half Dome, located in Yosemite National Park. Park at the Giant Forest Museum and take the seasonal free shuttle to the trailhead to avoid circling for parking in the small lot at the rock's base. On summer weekends, the shuttle is the only way to get to the trailhead.

2 Drive through Sequoia's Tunnel Log

No trip to this park is complete without driving under the iconic Tunnel Log. In 1937, the 2,000-year-old tree fell across the road and is now a tunnel.

TIP: Tunnel Log is only eight feet high, so taller vehicles must drive around.

3 See the World's Largest Tree in Sequoia

General Sherman reigns king over the giant sequoias at 275 feet tall. See this noble tree via the half-mile Main Trail. To see more breathtaking giants, continue past General Sherman on the 2-mile paved Congress Trail.



General Sherman Tree at Sequoia National Park (Depositphotos)

4 Go Underground at Boyden Cavern near Kings Canyon

Join a walking tour into the cavern that departs on the hour to see awe-inspiring marble formations. The cavern is open late May through early November and tickets can be purchased at the cavern's entrance. The cavern remains a steady 55-degrees year-round, so bring a jacket.

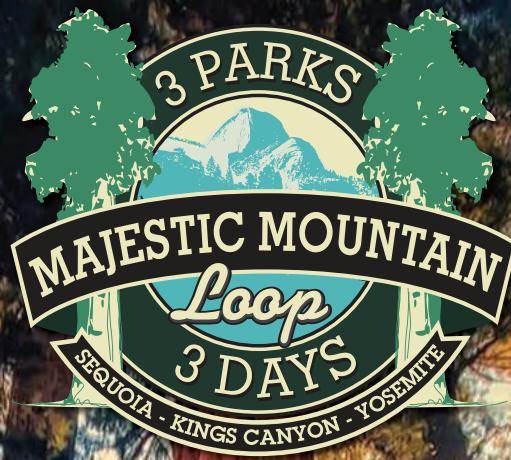
5 See the Nation's Christmas Tree at Kings Canyon

Given its nickname by President Coolidge, the General Grant Tree is the second largest in the world. On the second Sunday of December, join the annual "Trek to the Tree" at 2:30 p.m. to celebrate the holidays, an event that's been taking place for almost 100 years.

6 Hike Kings Canyon's Zumwalt Meadow

You'll see the best of Kings Canyon from granite walls to verdant green meadows on this 1.5-mile trail in the park's Cedar Grove area. Heavy spring rains can flood this meadow, so always check trail conditions at the visitor center before heading out on the trail. The road to this trailhead, Hwy. 180, is closed in winter, mid-November through the fourth Saturday in April.

All three parks on this loop have experienced wildfire in the past few years. Be sure to check for closures and conditions before visiting. Wildfire is a natural part of the ecosystem. You may be surprised how changing landscapes can reveal new and beautiful vistas. Please help protect these beautiful places by recreating responsibly. Learn more at MajesticMountainLoop.com.



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1
DAY

Sequoia National Park

STOP 1 - GIANT FOREST MUSEUM
STOP 2 - DRIVE THROUGH TUNNEL LOG
STOP 3 - MORO ROCK
STOP 4 - GENERAL SHERMAN TREE
STOP 5 - CRYSTAL CAVE



2
DAY

Kings Canyon National Park

STOP 1 - GENERAL GRANT TREE
STOP 2 - PANORAMIC POINT
STOP 3 - BIG STUMP TRAIL
STOP 4 - ROARING RIVER FALLS
STOP 5 - THE ROAD'S END



3
DAY

Yosemite National Park

STOP 1 - MARIPOSA GROVE - GIANT SEQUOIAS
STOP 2 - WAWONA PIONEER HISTORY CENTER
STOP 3 - GLACIER POINT (Closed 2022)
STOP 4 - TUNNEL VIEW
STOP 5 - YOSEMITE VALLEY



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More Info



www.MajesticMountainLoop.com





Naturally Outdoors

Explore the towns that sit at the foot of Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks.

By Tori Peglar

Get outdoors and experience agri-tourism at its best in towns like Visalia, Porterville, Dinuba and Exeter where farms that roll up to the towering Sierra Nevada mountains to the east are filled with the intoxicating scent of peaches, table grapes and oranges.

“Many families are looking to enhance their national park trip by exploring the gateway communities just outside the parks,” says Suzanne Bianco, tourism marketing director of Visit Visalia, noting the area is nestled against Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks. “Not only can visitors learn where their food comes from, they can taste fresh-from-the-farm meals cooked by local chefs who partner with the farmers for the freshest ingredients.”

Start off at Bravo Farms’ cheese factory off Hwy. 99 in Traver to sample cheese and California wine, watch staff make artisanal cheese, visit the petting farm and dine at Wild Jacks restaurant on-site. Head to

Rosa Brothers Creamery in Tulare for free ice cream samples and to watch it being crafted. Then book a farm tour at Farmer Bob’s World in Ivanhoe to take a wagon through orange groves, pick citrus and shop the farm store.

Stop at the Bari Olive Oil gift shop and tasting room in Dinuba to discover infused and organic olive oil. Owners Ryan and Kyle Sawatzky are the fifth generation to farm the property founded in 1936. And don’t miss Stafford Chocolates in Porterville.

In Earlimart, you’ll find Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park where Allensworth, a former slave, and a handful of families established a town in 1908 governed by Black people. While its prominence faded after Allensworth’s death in 1914, you can tour his house, a historic schoolhouse, a Baptist church and library.

Beyond, you’ll find outdoor shopping at the Tulare Outlets and beautiful flowers and

produce at Woodlake Botanical Gardens, California’s first agricultural botanical garden. In Exeter, 31 vibrant murals tell the story of the quaint town where restaurant names like Monet’s Wine Bistro are a tribute to the arts and agriculture. The “When Emperors Ruled” mural captures an era before the county’s popular Emperor grapes were upstaged by seedless varieties.

In Visalia, bring the kids to Sequoia Springs at Visalia Adventure Park that has water slides and a water-based play structure for younger kids. Or head to Kaweah Oaks Preserve and hike through one of the last remaining oak riparian forests in the valley.

“Vacation is meant to be a time to explore and experience,” Bianco says. “Slow down and enjoy the journey.”

Learn more at DiscoverTheSequoias.com.

PHOTO: Hiking through wildflowers at Sequoia National Park (Russell Smith)

Discover the Sequoias

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A SHORT DRIVE
FROM YOSEMITE

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Roadside Stops

By Tori Peglar

As you head south, you'll enter Bakersfield, the ninth largest city in California. It's a hub for oil production, agriculture and birthplace of the Bakersfield Sound, a twangy genre of country music that was influenced by rock and electrical instruments.

On the streets of Bakersfield, there's so much to be discovered. Check out the brewery trail, seven restaurants included on Guy Fieri's *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives* show, an Indian food truck, Punjabi Dhaba, that was featured in *The New York Times* and *Nuestro México*, hailed by *Thrillist.com* as having the best tacos in California. There are also more Basque

restaurants here than any other place in the country.

Bike or walk along more than 30 miles of the Kern River Parkway Trail. Several hiking options are ready for you, like the Panorama Bluffs Walking Trail that overlooks the Kern River, or 370-acre Hart Park where you might even see roadrunners and wandering peacocks.

For a lively family-oriented show and meal, head to Buck Owens' Crystal Palace. Country singer Owens helped popularize the Bakersfield Sound with his 21 No. 1 hits on the Billboard country music charts during the 1960s. Peruse the museum on-

site that showcases Owens' memorabilia. It's a good idea to make reservations.

Then stop by the California Living Museum to see more than 250 native California animals, including mountain lions as well as endangered desert bighorn sheep and California condors, that can no longer live in the wild because they were orphaned or have physical disabilities. At Kern County Museum, explore Pioneer Village composed of 60-plus original historic buildings, plus country singer Merle Haggard's childhood home.

Learn more at the visitor center, 515 Truxtun Ave., or at VisitBakersfield.com.

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