I can't wait for that first snowflake. I've been told I'm odd that way, but that's how it's always been. Every fall season in memory the highlight is that first flake. Sometimes it floats by my window, other times it lands on my cheek or windshield. Wherever and however it comes, it's much more to me than a flake of crystallized water.
The Great Snowflake Debate

WINTER CONNECTIONS

Each time I see it, I’m transported to the backyard ice rink of my youth, lacing up skates with my dad—a passion I continue with my own kids at the Curry Village ice rink. The second flake brings similar memories of family ski outings, and anticipation of this year’s adventures at Badger Pass and in Yosemite’s backcountry.

The first flake describes you? Some follow the birds naturally react in one of three ways—migrate, hibernate, or tolerate. Which one describes you? Some follow the birds south to avoid the cold and “decolute” weather. Others take the black bear approach and stay, but huddle indoors rarely venturing into the world of snow and ice. Yet others follow the example of the river otter and tolerate, even thrive in this world. It is for these hearty souls that Yosemite holds some of its finest treasures.

A fresh blanket of snow provides the opportunity to explore seemingly untrammeled places. Footpaths, signs, and fences disappear leaving you to feel as though you are the first to discover vast expanses of wilderness. Skis and snowshoes can be your conveyance, connecting you to centuries-old methods of snow travel. Today we can utilize these same tools for fun, adventure, and exploration.

From the earliest days of skiing on small Valley slopes and skating on Mirror Lake to today, Yosemite and frozen H2O seem to go together. What about you, will you flee the first flake? Or will you let it transport you to adventures past and present?

Sometime in spring comes the last snowflake. Unlike the first, I don’t go looking for it. The nearly 250 individual improvements envisioned in the Yosemite Valley Plan may take as long as 20 years to come. But today, we’re taking it one job at a time. That means Yosemite Valley—and other areas of the park—will be bustling for several years to come.

The first snowflake at Badger Pass lies long buried beneath these eager young skiers.
When planning a trip to Yosemite, keep in mind the changing seasons. The timing of your visit will determine the amount of clothing to bring, the availability of different campgrounds and parking lots, and the need for tire chains. Call road and weather information (209/372-0200) before you leave home. Here are some general guidelines:

### ROADS
The Tioga Road (Highway 120 East) and Glacier Point Road beyond Badger Pass Ski Area are closed each year from late fall through spring. These roads generally close for the season with the first major snowstorm after November 1 and reopen by late May or early June, conditions permitting. The road to the Mariposa Grove is also closed in winter.

**WILL I NEED TIRE CHAINS?**
It is recommended that you carry tire chains in your vehicle (including rental and others locked in vehicles) between November and April, as a sudden storm could make them mandatory at any time. Under state regulations, any vehicle entering a signed chain control area must carry chains, even if their use is not mandatory at the time. Chains should be obtained in advance; several towns on highways leading into Yosemite rent them. Vehicles over 6,000 lbs. are required to use link-type chains; on sets of dual tires, only one tire needs chains. Once in the park, tire chains are available at retail outlets for purchase, but not for rent.

**TEMPERATURE**
Weather in Yosemite can change rapidly during all seasons of the year. Since areas in the park range from 2,000 to 13,000 feet in elevation, the lower foothills can be experiencing spring while the higher elevations remain in the grip of winter.

**SNOW AND SLIDING**
Sledding is not allowed in the Badger Pass area, however “snow tubing” rental and a maintained trail are now available at the Badger Pass Ski Area.

### BEARS IN WINTER AND SPRING
Bears are attracted to many things you might not think of as food. So, always store any item with a scent, regardless of packaging. This includes canned foods, sealed bottles, drinks, soups, cosmetics, toiletries, perfumes, trash, ice chests (even when empty), and unwashed items used for preparing or eating meals. Each campsite in the park has food lockers measuring approximately 33” x 45” x 18”.

Never leave your food or scented items in your vehicle after dark.

- In campgrounds and tent-cabin areas you must store food and scented items in food lockers, day and night.
- In hotel rooms and hard-sided cabins, store items inside rooms (be sure to keep the windows closed if you leave).
- In picnic areas and on the trail, be sure to stay with food and scented items at all times.
- If you are backpacking, it is strongly recommended that you use a bear canister (they are required in some areas). Inquire about food storage requirements when you get your wilderness permit.

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE A BEAR
Bear activity may be more common when planning a trip to Yosemite, keep in mind the changing seasons. The timing of your visit will determine the amount of clothing to bring, the availability of different campgrounds and parking lots, and the need for tire chains. Call road and weather information (209/372-0200) before you leave home. Here are some general guidelines:

- If you encounter a bear in a developed area or on a hiking trail, act together to present a more intimidating figure.
- If there is more than one person, stand together to present a more intimidating figure.
- If you are alone, play loud music or use a bear spray; if the bear approaches, use scare tactics to drive it away. The bear may be attracted to food or scents.
- If you need to retrieve anything once a bear has it, do not surround the bear (allow the bear a way to run away). If this is unsuccessful, throw small stones or sticks toward the bear from a safe distance, the intent is to scare the bear, not to injure it. Use caution if you see cubs, as a mother bear may aggressively defend them. Never try to retrieve anything once a bear has it. When doing immediately; these actions have been successful in scaring bears away. Report all bear incidents and sightings— as well as trash and food storage problems— to a park ranger. You can also call the Save-a-Bear Hotline at 209/372-0322.

### DRIVE SAFELY
California law requires that all vehicle occupants wear seat belts, and children under six years of age (or under 60 lbs.) be restrained in an approved child safety seat.

In winter and early spring, road conditions can change suddenly. Wet asphalt may be slippery or icy, especially in shady spots or on bridges. Keep speed down and allow extra distance from the vehicle in front of you. Water from melted roadside snow flows over road surfaces, creating treacherous “black ice.” This can occur even when the weather appears dry and sunny.

Anticipate snowplows as they may be working just around the next curve. Wait for a signal from the plow driver before passing.

- Don’t drink and drive. It’s a fatal combination.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT...
- Campsites and campgrounds, see page 3.
- Bicycling rules, see page 5.
- Wilderness regulations, see page 6.
- Fishing regulations, see page 7.
From May through September, campers in heavy demand and prospective campers are encouraged to call National Park Reservation Service as early in the period as possible. Written requests should include desired location, type of equipment in which you will be camping (i.e., tent, RV, etc.), as well as method of payment. Written requests will be accepted 2 weeks prior to—but will not be processed until—the 15th of each month.

**Yosemite Valley**

There is a 30-day camping limit within Yosemite National Park in a calendar year; however, May 1 - September 15, the camping limit is 14 days, and only 7 of those days can be in Yosemite Valley. Campers may request a specific campsite number if it is available at the time the reservation is made.

CAMPING RESERVATIONS

Reservations are required year-round for Yosemite Valley auto campgrounds and summer through fall for Hodgdon Meadow, Crane Flat, Wawona, and half of Tuolumne Meadows. All campgrounds except group and stock campgrounds are first-come, first-served.

Camping reservations are available up to five months in advance, beginning on the 15th of each month.

**CAMPING IN AREAS SURROUNDING YOSEMITE**

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) operates a variety of campgrounds on a seasonal basis near Yosemite. For additional information, contact the local USFS district offices: Highway 120 West, Groveland Ranger Station (Stanislaus NF) 209/962-7825; Highway 140, Mariposa Ranger Station (Sierra NF) 209/966-3636; Highway 120 East, Mono Lake Ranger Station (Inyo NF) 760/647-3044; Highway 4, Oakhurst Ranger Station (Sierra NF) 559/568-4636. For private campgrounds outside Yosemite, call the respective chamber of commerce or visitor bureau listed on page 4.

GROUP CAMPGROUNDS

There are group campgrounds at Tuolumne Meadows, Hodgdon Meadow, Wawona, and Bridalveil Creek Campgrounds. Reservations can be made through mail or phone with Mastercard or Visa, or in person at a time by mail or phone with Mastercard, Visa, discover, personal check, or money order. For more information, call the park campground offices at 209/372-8502, or visit online www.nps.gov/yose/trip/camping.htm.

**CAMPFIRES**

Generators may be used sparingly between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Where permitted, generators must be on a lease and may not be left unattended.

**REGULATIONS**

- Proper food storage is required 24 hours a day.
- A maximum of six people (including children) and two vehicles are allowed per campsite.
- Quiet hours are from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.
- Please start campfires with newspaper. Do not burn pine needles or cones, as they create unnecessary smoke.

**SERVICES**

- All sites include picnic tables, fire rings or grills, tent space, parking, and a food locker (33"d x 45"w x 18"h). See page 2 for food storage regulations.
- Toilet facilities are available in campgrounds. However, Tamarack Flat, Yosemite Creek, and Porcupine Flat contain non-flushing vault toilets only.

**RESERVATIONS**

You may reserve only one campsite at a time.

**INTERNATIONAL CALLERS:**
301/722-1252
TTY (Toll-Free):
888/887-7030

**MAIL-IN RESERVATIONS:**
National Park Reservation Service
P.O. Box 1600
Cumberland, MD 21502
Up to two campgrounds may be reserved at a time by mail or phone with Mastercard, Visa, Discover, personal check, or money order. For more information, call the park campground offices at 209/372-8502, or visit online www.nps.gov/yose/trip/camping.htm.

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TRANSPORTATION

To and From Yosemite

**The Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS)** offers park visitors an alternative to driving their car into Yosemite by providing transit service throughout the region. This new voluntary bus service provides scheduled round-trip transportation to Yosemite from the outlying communities. Expanded summer service is offered mid-May to mid-September. Daily service from Mammoth Lakes runs in July and August. For schedule and more information visit the YARTS website at www.yarts.com or call toll free 877/996-YARTS (877/996-9275) or 209/388-9589.

**Yosemite Valley**

Yosemite Valley is world famous for its impressive waterfalls, cliffs, and unusual rock formations. It is open year-round and may be reached via Highway 41 from Fresno, Highway 140 from Merced, Highway 120 from Manteca, and in late spring through late fall via the Tung Pa Pass (Highway 120) East from Lee Vining. Many activities and services are available in Yosemite Valley. Detailed information is available at the Valley Visitor Center in Yosemite Village. See the shuttle bus map and scheduled Valley activities in Yosemite Today.

**Mariposa Grove and Wawona**

The Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias is located 36 miles (1½ hours) south of Yosemite Valley via the Wawona Road (Highway 41), 2 miles from the park’s South Entrance Station. The road to the Mariposa Grove is closed in winter. Activities include hiking, ranger-led walks, and tram tours of the Grove (weather permitting) late spring through fall. Trail brochures printed in English, French, Japanese, and Spanish are available at the Grove trailhead. To reduce traffic congestion and avoid parking delays, ride the free shuttle bus (operating through fall) from Wawona to the Grove. Trainers are not allowed on the Mariposa Grove Road. When shuttle bus is in operation, vehicles 23 feet and longer are restricted from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., daily.

The Pioneer Yosemite History Center in Wawona is a collection of historic buildings associated with people and events that shaped the national park idea in Yosemite. Interpretive signs and a brochure provide a self-guiding tour of the Center year-round. See Yosemite Today for activities and additional information about Wawona and the Mariposa Grove.

**Glacier Point**

Glacier Point, an overlook with a commanding view of Yosemite Valley, Half Dome, and the Sierra Nevada, is located 30 miles (a 1½-hour drive) from Yosemite Valley. The view from Glacier Point provides an impregnable view of Yosemite Valley, Half Dome, and the Sierra Nevada. It is open year-round and may be reached via skis or snowshoes only. See the shuttle bus map and scheduled activities for schedule of activities.

**Other Areas**

1. Yosemite Valley
2. Mariposa Grove and Wawona
3. Glacier Point

Yosemite is Open Year-Round

Entrance Rates

**Yosemite Lodge**

- Yosemite Lodge
- The Ahwahnee
- Curry Village (cabin & tent cabins)
- Housekeeping Camp
- White Wolf Lodge

Yosemite Valley

- Winter
- Spring
- Summer
- Fall

**Wawona Hotel**

- April 1 to Valley

- January

**Yosemite Today**

For more detailed information about Yosemite Valley, Mariposa Grove, and Wawona, please visit www.yosemite-gateway.org.
Skiing and Snowboarding In winter, Yosemite offers downhill skiing and snowboarding at Badger Pass, located off of the Glacier Point Road. A free shuttle bus to the ski area departs daily from Yosemite Valley, see Yosemite Today for schedule. For ski school information and snow conditions, call 209/372-1000.

Cross-Country Skiing and Snowshoeing There are three main areas for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing: Badger Pass, Crane Flat, and the Mariposa Grove. These areas all have marked winter trails. Badger Pass offers approximately 10 miles (16 km) of groomed track at no charge. Maps of marked ski and snowshoe trails are available at park visitor centers or through the Yosemite Association (209/379-2648) or email info@yosemite.org. For Ostrander Ski Hut reservations call 209/379-2648. Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Snow Tubing The Badger Pass Tubing Area is designed for kids of all ages. $9 per person for each session, 3 sessions per day. For more information, call 209/372-8444.

Ice Skating The Curry Village Ice Skating Rink is open from mid-November through early March, conditions permitting. Rental skates are available. For more information, call 209/372-8341.

Bicycling More than 12 miles of paved bikeways wind through the eastern end of Yosemite Valley. Weather permitting, bikes, baby jogging strollers, and bicycle child trailers are available at Yosemite Lodge (spring through late fall) and Curry Village (summer through late fall). Check with rental agent for restrictions on rental bike use.

Bike Rules — For your safety and to protect Yosemite National Park, please follow these rules:
- California law mandates bicyclists under 18 years of age wear helmets.
- Bikes are allowed only on paved bikeways and park roads (unless the road is closed to bicycle use).
- Bikes are not allowed off-road or on pedestrian and hiking trails.
- Bicyclists must obey all posted traffic signs and travel with the flow of traffic when on roads used by automobiles.

Trail Rides Weather and trail conditions permitting, 2-hour, half-day, and full-day rides depart from stops in Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows, and Wawona, spring through fall. Call 209/372-8348 for information.

Hiking & Backpacking Yosemite offers over 800 miles of hiking trails pathway. For updated trail information, visit the Wilderness Center in Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows (spring through fall); in winter, check at the Valley Visitor Center, or call 209/372-0200. Wilderness permits are required for overnight wilderness users. For wilderness permit information and reservations, call 209/372-0740 or go to www.nps.gov/yose/vil/planyourvisit/forexchange. For some ideas on Valley day hiking, as well as information about wilderness travel, see page 6.

Rock Climbing Classes The Yosemite Mountaineering School and Guide Service offers beginner through advanced classes in Yosemite Valley spring through fall, and in the Tuolumne Meadows in late spring through summer. Call 209/372-8344 for information.
A trip to Yosemite’s wilderness during the winter or spring can be extremely rewarding. But there are challenges and risks to experiencing these areas of the park when the forces of nature are at their most extreme. Sudden changes in weather, low temperatures, high winds, and dangerous travel conditions can occur without warning. With proper planning and good judgment, the risks can be minimized, allowing you to see remote portions of the park in ways that few people do.

**PLANNING AND SAFETY**

If you plan to visit the Yosemite Wilderness, you should be competent in winter wilderness travel including use of skis or snowshoes, route finding, map and compass, and winter survival skills. Also, follow these general precautions:

- Be honest about your abilities. Make plans that accommodate the weakest member of your group. Be flexible; change your plans as conditions warrant. Avoid traveling alone.
- Check the weather before you come and then be prepared for sudden and unexpected changes.
- Leave a detailed itinerary with a trusted friend or family member. Include your planned start and end dates and locations as well as any known hazards. Be clear as to what point a search should be initiated.
- Carry emergency equipment: First aid kit, fire starter, water, extra food, a signal mirror and whistle, emergency shelter, and warm clothing.
- Traveling in low temperatures and at higher altitudes can drain energy quickly. Being cold, wet, and tired can result in hypothermia, a potentially fatal condition.
- Be cautious traveling along or crossing streams and rivers. Be aware of fluctuating water levels resulting in collapsing snow bridges and weak ice.

**Wilderness Permits**

Free wilderness permits are required year-round for all overnight trips into Yosemite’s wilderness. They are not required for day hikes. Permits are available on a first-come, first-served basis the day of, or one day prior to, the beginning of your trip. In winter, permits are issued at Badger Pass and the Hetch Hetchy Entrance Stations, or by self-registration at the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center, Big Oak Flat Entrance Station, Yosemite Meadows Ranger Station, and the Wawona Information Station at Fall’s Studio. For wilderness trip planning information and trail conditions, stop by the Valley Visitor Center, call 209/372-0200 for recorded information, or visit online at www.nps.gov/yose/wilderness. To make reservations for summer wilderness permits, call 209/372-0740 no sooner than 24 weeks before your planned date of departure.

**Self-Guiding Trails in Yosemite Valley**

The Mlawok in Yosemite is a garden path that winds through the Indian Village of Ahwahnee, a reconstructed Mlawok-Paunite village. A booklet is available at the trailhead and in the Visitor Center. The trail begins behind the Yosemite Museum.

**YOSEMITE VALLEY DAY HIKES**

For detailed descriptions, ask for a day hikes information sheet at the Valley Visitor Center.

### Destinations / Trails

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination / Trail</th>
<th>Starting Point</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Elevation Gain</th>
<th>Approximate Hiking Time</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridalveil Fall</td>
<td>Bridalveil Fall Parking Area</td>
<td>1/2 mile round trip (0.8 km)</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>20 minutes round trip</td>
<td>Paired trail, last 50' may be steep for visitors with mobility impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirror Lake</td>
<td>Mirror Lake Shuttle Stop #17*</td>
<td>2 miles round trip (3.2 km)</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>1 hour round trip</td>
<td>Vehicle access available via road with placard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Yosemite Fall</td>
<td>Lower Yosemite Fall Shuttle Stop #6</td>
<td>1/2 mile round trip (0.8 km)</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>20 minutes round trip</td>
<td>Sections of trail remain open during construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Yosemite Fall</td>
<td>Camp 4 near Shuttle Stop #7</td>
<td>2 miles round trip (3.2 km)</td>
<td>Strenuous</td>
<td>2 to 3 hours round trip</td>
<td>Check conditions at Visitor Center in winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top of Yosemite Fall</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
<td>7.2 miles round trip (11.6 km)</td>
<td>Very Strenuous</td>
<td>6 to 8 hours round trip</td>
<td>Check conditions at Visitor Center in winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mist Trail on John Muir Trail</td>
<td>Happy Isles/Shuttle Stop #16*</td>
<td>1.4 miles round trip (2.0 km)</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>1 to 2 hours round trip</td>
<td>Check conditions at Visitor Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernal Fall Footbridge</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
<td>4 miles round trip (6.4 km)</td>
<td>Strenuous</td>
<td>2 to 4 hours round trip</td>
<td>Check conditions at Visitor Center Winter route available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top of Nevada Fall</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
<td>7 miles round trip (11.3 km)</td>
<td>Strenuous</td>
<td>3 to 6 hours round trip</td>
<td>Check conditions at Visitor Center Winter route available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top of Half Dome</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
<td>17 miles round trip (27.4 km)</td>
<td>Extremely Strenuous</td>
<td>10 to 12 hours round trip</td>
<td>Cables up from late May to early October; otherwise cable route is inaccessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glacier Point</td>
<td>Southside Drive</td>
<td>4.8 miles one way (7.6 km)</td>
<td>Very Strenuous</td>
<td>3 to 4 hours one way</td>
<td>Check conditions at Visitor Center; closed in winter and early spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley Floor Loop</td>
<td>Lower Yosemite Fall Shuttle Stop #6</td>
<td>1.3 miles half loop (2.08 km)</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>5 to 7 hours full loop</td>
<td>Get full description from Visitor Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Shuttle stop may not be serviced in winter. See Yosemite Today for route information.
Lost and Found

To inquire about items lost or found at one of Yosemite’s restaurants, hotels, lounges, shuttle bases, or tour services, call 209/372-4417, or write DNC Lost & Found, P.O. Box 578, Yosemite National Park, CA 95389. You can also inquire by email to YoseLost@DNCinc.com.

For items lost or found in other areas of the park, call the National Park Service at Yosemite general offices in Yosemite Village or call 209/372-1236.

For employment opportunities with the park’s main concessioner, stop by DNC Parks & Resorts Volunteer Program Manager at 209/379-1850. Free camping is provided and entrance fees are waived during your work project. Details on how to apply are available online at www.nps.gov/yose/jobs.

Support Your Park

The Yosemite Fund is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and preserving Yosemite. Thanks to gifts from dedicated “Friends of Yosemite,” the Fund has distributed over $25 million for more than 150 projects that would otherwise not be possible. The Fund has helped restore meadows, rebuild trails, install over 2,000 bear-proof food lockers, and is providing $12.5 million to transform a visit to Lower Yosemite Fall. You can help by becoming a Friend of Yosemite through a donation to the Fund. All donors of $35 or more receive a discount on Yosemite accommodations, access to a special park accommodation reservations hotline, the Fund’s full-color bimonthly magazine, and acknowledgement at the Friends of Yosemite Honor Wall at the Valley Visitor Center. Contact The Yosemite Fund, P. O. Box 637, Yosemite, CA 95389. 800/4MY-PARK, www.yosemitefund.org.

Accessibility Information

An accessibility brochure is available at park entrance stations and visitor centers. Information is also available online at www.nps.gov/yose/phtml/accessibility.html. Alternative formats may be available upon request. Phone NPS accessibility coordinator Don Fox at 209/379-1160 or send an email to Don_Fox@nps.gov.

Wheelchair rental is available at the Yosemite Medical Clinic, 209/372-4637, and in spring at the Yosemite Lodge bike rental stand, 209/372-1208. See Yosemite Today for hours of operation.

The Golden Access Passport waives entrance fees for blind or permanently disabled U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Inquire at entrance stations or visitor centers in the park.

A temporary access placard is available at park entrance stations and visitor centers. Displayed on the windshield, it allows driving on paved roads normally closed to vehicle traffic.

Designated parking spaces are marked throughout the park with the international access symbol.

In Yosemite Valley

- Valley Visitor Center–Take Southside Drive past Chapel to stop sign. Turn left over bridge onto Sentinel Drive. At stop sign, turn left on Northside Drive and follow the signs with ⋅. Turn right on Village Drive. A few close-in spaces are available near Yosemite Museum.
- When weather permits, park in the day-visitor parking area at Yosemite Village and ride the free shuttle bus. All shuttles in Yosemite Valley are lift equipped.
- Audio description devices and closed captioning are available for the film, Spirit of Yosemite, shown daily in the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center Theater. Assisted listening devices may be available for some National Park Service interpretive programs. Check at the Valley Visitor Center.
- TTY phones are available for visitor use at the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center and for guests at Curry Village, Yosemite Lodge, and The Ahwahnee. TTY pay phones are also available outside the Curry Village registration area, inside the Yosemite Lodge lobby, and at The Ahwahnee in the mezzanine area.
I can't wait for that first snowflake. I've been told I'm odd that way, but that's how it's always been. Every fall season in memory the highlight is that first flake. Sometimes it floats by my window, other times it lands on my cheek or windshield. Wherever and however it comes, it's much more to me than a flake of crystallized water.