

Half Dome Hiking Weekend in Yosemite



Highlights

See the top of the world-famous Half Dome, a granite block rising majestically over the Yosemite Valley in California's Sierra Nevada! Hiking along different routes up and down, this long weekend will give you the maximum exposure to the views, geology and landscape in the Yosemite Valley.

The Half Dome lies in the very heart of the Yosemite mountains, which form part of the 400-mile Sierra Nevada range running from north to south in California. It is a well-known sight in the National Park, offering an incomparable view from its peak that rises more than 4,737 feet above the rest of the Yosemite Valley. Getting there, involves getting deep into the wilderness following the Mist and John Muir trails, some of the most famous treks in the world. A truly unique way of seeing the work nature has done on this landscape over millions of years.

This 4 day half dome hiking trip takes you deep into the back country and conquering the Yosemite's iconic natural landmark; the Half Dome. You will start off, hiking along the Mist Trail following the Merced River along its U-shaped valley. You will pass some spectacular scenery, including the 180m high Nevada Falls and the 97m high Vernal Falls. At the latter, you might be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a complete circular rainbow – an extremely rare sight elsewhere in the world. However, the ultimate highlight of the trip is reaching the summit of the Half Dome, which you will accomplish on your third day. From there, you will enjoy breath-taking panoramic views stretching across Yosemite. On your descent, you will follow the scenic John Muir trail back down to Curry Village.

Is it for me?

Before you think about signing up for a trip like this, make sure you are fit enough to complete the day hikes - some of them close to 9 miles and with a rapid elevation gain. That said, the trip is graded as "intermediate", so there is nothing to stop you from getting in shape, and preparing with a few hikes at home before you go – but make sure you are comfortable with carrying a backpack for long periods of time. With a group size of maximum 13, it will be a close and cosy atmosphere, well suited for both couples and solo travellers.

Accommodation

The first night is spent in the tent cabins in Curry Village in the heart of the Yosemite Valley, with a view of the weekend's target: the Half Dome. The remaining two nights are spent camping on camping grounds by Little Yosemite. With stunning views and a river to swim in, it is the perfect location to relax after a hard days hiking! Your guide provides tents, along with sleeping bags and any other camping gear you need, just let them know in advance.

Food is provided from lunch on day two until the end of the trip. Forget the dry sandwiches and tinned beans you usually connect with camping and wilderness – the guides guarantee you good, proper meals prepared on cosy bonfires, and aim to make this part of your experience.

Itinerary

Prices from

520 GBP (4 days) per person

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Day 1: Check in at Curry Village anytime after 5pm. At 7pm, you will meet the guide to go through the plan of the trip and last minute details.

Day 2: After breakfast on your own, you meet the group at 7.30am to set off on the hike. You will follow the Mist Trail, which makes its way eastwards through the valley of the Merced River and passing the famous waterfalls of Vernal and Nevada. The trip is 5.3 miles long, and ends at Little Yosemite Valley at 6,140 feet, where you make your camp for the night.

Day 3: After breakfast, you climb the Half Dome, the most famous top in the Yosemite Valley. At 8,847 feet above sea level, it offers a stunning view of the mountains and surrounding landscape. As you descend to complete the 8.8 miles round trip, the evening is free for relaxation, swimming and stargazing in the stable summer weather.

Day 4: After a nourishing breakfast, you head back down to the Yosemite Valley, this time following the famous John Muir Trail that stretches about 6.6 miles along a scenic route. Arrival back at Curry Village is in the early afternoon.

Details

Getting there

Fly to San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles or Fresno International Airport. Hire a car and drive from there.

Price includes

Price quoted is per person for a group of 2 people (lower rates available for groups of 4 and more). Price includes personal gear, tips for guides, transportation, cancellation insurance (optional), meals day 1 and breakfast day 2.

Comfort level

Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)

Experience required

Some previous experience is needed

Travellers should bring

This kit list is by no means an exhaustive list. All group cooking gear, stoves, water filters, maps, matches, compasses, emergency/first aid gear, and toilet paper will be provided.

Recommended kit list

Backpack (65 litres); sleeping bag (15/20 degrees F) (can be provided); sleeping mat (can be provided); 3 season tent (can be provided).day rucksack (15-20 litres); trail hiking boots; 2-3 pairs of socks, (wool/synthetic: Smartwool or Thorlo); 2/3 pairs of underwear; long underwear trousers (light/mid-weight wool/synthetic: Icebreaker and Patagonia); long underwear top; hiking trousers/shorts; 1/2 hiking shorts; insulating layer; insulating jacket; heavy fleece; waterproof trousers; warm hat.

Sun protection: sun hat, sunglasses, sun screen, etc; personal toiletries: toothbrush, toothpaste, sunscreen, lip balm, insect repellent (all soap must be biodegradable); personal medication; headlamp (rather than a hand-held torch); water bottle or bladder (2/3 litres); whistle; a medium size bag or large stuff sack to put your clothes in (examples: Columbia Freeboard, Regular; Granite Gear Large); rubbish bag (if your stuff sack if it is not waterproof).

Additional items you might want to bring

Trekking poles (highly recommended to reduce fatigue and add stability: Leki Thermolite); book; knife; camp towel; small towel (MSR Pack Towel); lightweight gloves for early or late season trips; swimming costume; camp shoes (Crocs, Teva/Chaco sandals, flip flops); fishing gear (including licence: kids under 16 fish free); camera: For posterity.