YOSEMITE



DAYS **5**	NIGHTS **4**	BEST SEASON **JUN TO OCT**
FROM **$950 PP**	LEVEL **EASY TO HARD**	BEST WITH **FRIENDS**

A road trip from Los Angeles through three national parks: the granite walls of Yosemite, the river pools of Kings Canyon and the biggest trees on the planet in Sequoia. It ends with a sunset at Santa Monica pier. This is the route I drove in September 2026, with what to do in every stop and what it really costs.

THE ROUTE



00 LOS ANGELES

FLY IN, PICK UP THE CAR

One car for the whole loop, returned to the same place. No drop off fees.

01 YOSEMITE

5 TO 6 H FROM LA · 2 NIGHTS

Viewpoints, waterfalls, hikes, bikes and the river in the valley.

02 KINGS CANYON

3.5 H FROM YOSEMITE

General Grant, the road into the canyon and the river pools.

03 SEQUOIA

1 H FROM KINGS · 2 NIGHTS

General Sherman, the Giant Forest and Moro Rock.

04 SANTA MONICA

4 H FROM SEQUOIA

Sunset at the pier, then drop off the car.

Why from Los Angeles. You pick up and return the car in the same place, so there is no extra fee. Flights from Mexico to LA are usually the cheapest.

When to go. June to October everything is open. In winter Glacier Point Road, Tioga Road and the road into Kings Canyon close, and chains are sometimes required.

TUNNEL VIEW





My top tip: watch the sunset at Tunnel View and stay until the stars come out.

PHOTO SPOT

Stand on the low stone wall at the east end of the parking lot. Arrive an hour before sunset. For the stars bring a tripod and wait until it is fully dark.

GLACIER POINT



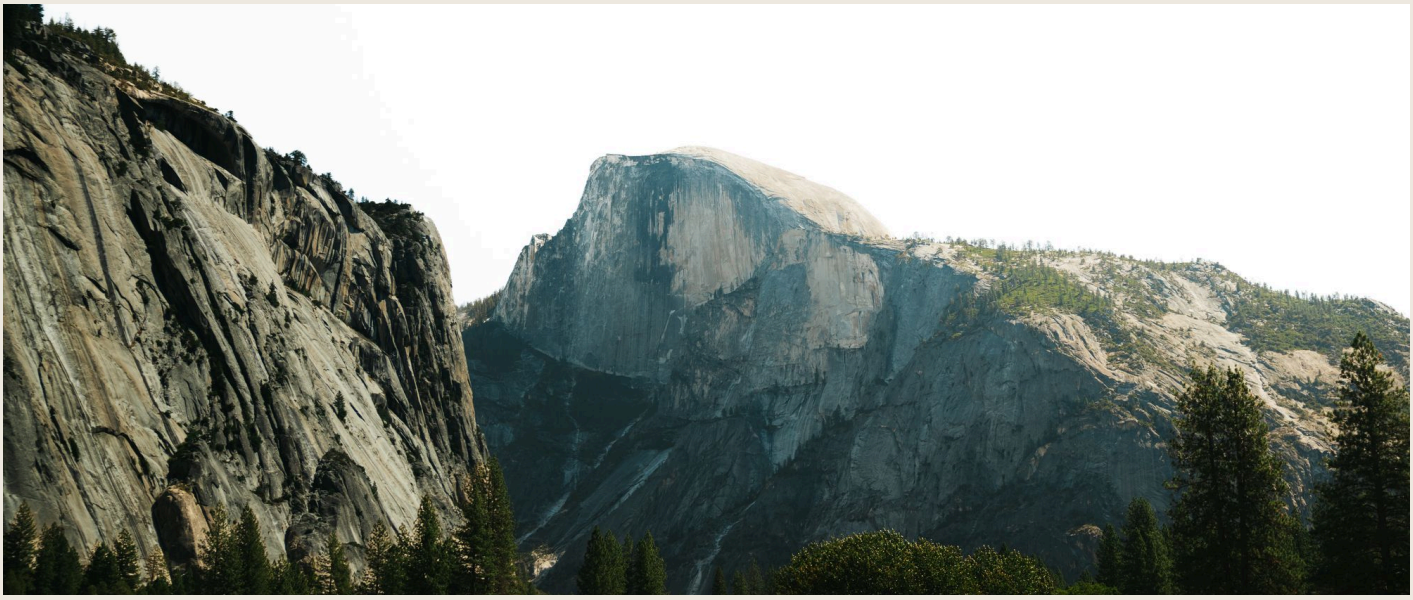


The next morning, sunrise at the top of Glacier Point with Half Dome in front of you.

PHOTO SPOT

Walk past the main lookout to the rocks on the left. The sun rises behind Half Dome and the backlight makes the mist glow.

THE VALLEY



Down in the valley the days go slow: meadows, the river, waterfalls and Half Dome watching over everything.







YOSEMITE VALLEY MAP

WHAT TO DO



VIEWPOINTS

Tunnel View

Sunset, and stay until the stars come out.

Glacier Point

Sunrise facing Half Dome. Almost an hour by car from the valley, and cold at the top.

El Capitan Meadow

Lie on the grass and spot the climbers on the wall with binoculars.

HIKES

Mist Trail

To Vernal Fall, about 3 hours round trip. The spray soaks you, even more in spring.

Lower Yosemite Fall · Mirror Lake

Flat and short. Both are best in spring, when they have water.

Half Dome

Permit by lottery. A full day and much harder than people think.



WATER AND BIKES

Rafting the Merced River

In summer you rent rafts at Curry Village and float through the valley. Depends on the river level.

Swim at the river beaches

Sentinel Beach and Cathedral Beach, when the water drops in late summer.

Bike the valley

About 20 km of flat bike paths. Rentals at Curry Village and Yosemite Valley Lodge.

FOOD AND COFFEE

Pizza at Curry Village

Really good, and the easiest dinner in the valley.

Coffee at The Ahwahnee

The park's historic hotel. Worth walking in even if you are not staying.

Groceries before you enter

In Mariposa or Oakhurst. Inside the park everything costs almost double.

Bears. Be very careful at Curry Village. No food, creams or trash in the car or the tent: there are lockers to store it and the fines are very high.



KINGS CANYON



KINGS CANYON AND SEQUOIA SHARE ONE ROAD, THE GENERALS HIGHWAY



VIEWPOINTS

Panoramic Point

Above Grant Grove, with the whole Sierra in front. Good for sunset.

Kings Canyon Scenic Byway

Highway 180 drops almost 50 km to Cedar Grove, at the bottom of the canyon.

HIKES

General Grant Tree

One of the largest sequoias in the world. A 15 minute trail.

Zumwalt Meadow

A flat meadow at the bottom of the canyon, between granite walls.

Mist Falls

From Roads End, about 13 km round trip. Half a day.

WATER

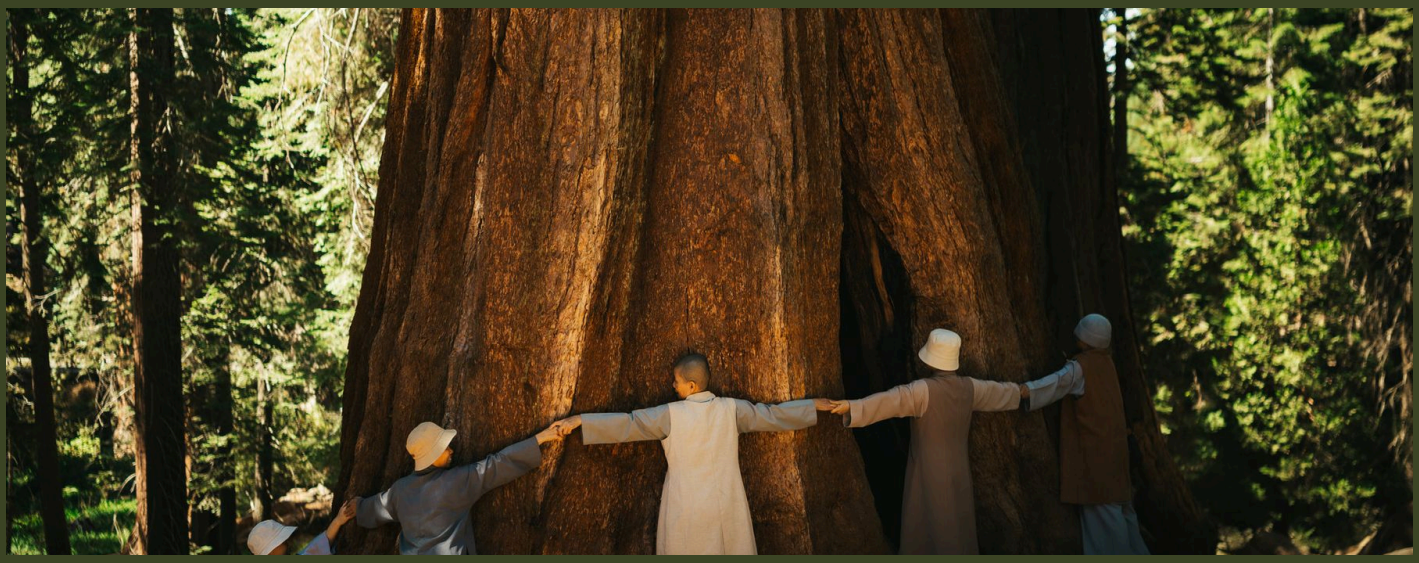
Grizzly and Roaring River Falls

Waterfalls by the road with pools. The water is freezing.

Hume Lake

Swim and rent kayaks, close to Grant Grove.

SEQUOIA



A whole group holding hands barely wraps around one of these trees.



THAT'S US, ON A BOULDER IN THE GIANT FOREST





WALKING INTO A BURNT SEQUOIA



THE GIANTS

General Sherman
The largest tree in the world by volume. 15 minutes down from the parking lot.

Congress Trail
Sequoias over 2,000 years old. Flat, about 2 hours.

Big Trees Trail
A short loop around a meadow ringed by sequoias.

VIEWPOINTS AND HIKES

Moro Rock
About 350 steps to the top. The best sunset spot.

Tunnel Log · Crescent Meadow
Drive through the fallen trunk; sometimes bears in the meadow.

Tokopah Falls
From Lodgepole, 2 to 3 hours along the river.

SANTA MONICA



SEE, WALK OR BIKE

Sunset at the pier
Drive straight down from Sequoia, watch the sun set over the Pacific, then return the car.

Santa Monica to Venice
About 40 minutes walking on the beach, or by bike on the path by the ocean.

ESSENTIALS



WHERE I SLEPT · YOSEMITE

CURRY VILLAGE

Canvas tents and cabins inside the valley. Books out months ahead.

From $140 USD a night

travelyosemite.com



WHERE I SLEPT · KINGS AND SEQUOIA

THE HOUSE

A house on VRBO close to both parks, for 4 people.

2 nights

vrbo.com/es-mx/propiedad/p9828861



RECOMMENDED · SEQUOIA

AUTOCAMP

Airstreams in Three Rivers, 10 minutes from the park.

From about $250 USD

autocamp.com

CAR

An SUV or a high car

Mountain roads, gravel lots, sometimes chains in early fall.

PACK

Layers and a headlamp

Sunrise at Glacier Point is cold, nights at Tunnel View are pitch black.

CAMERA

Canon 24-70mm f/2.8 and 70-200mm

The wide for the valley, the long one to compress Half Dome and the climbers.

INSURANCE

Travel insurance

Medical care in the US is very expensive. Do not go without it.

ADULTS

4

PER PASS

ONE PASS, FOUR ADULTS

I have the National Park Pass. One person buys it and up to 4 adults in the same car get in, with no charge at any entrance.

Without it, every park charges $35 USD per car and, since 2026, an extra $100 USD for every foreign visitor over 16. The pass for non residents costs $250 USD at recreation.gov/pass.

THE NUMBERS

ITEM	2 PEOPLE	4 PEOPLE
Round trip flight Mexico City to LA Estimate, depends on dates	$400 to $700	$400 to $700
Car for 5 days and gas Picked up and returned in LA	$220 to $300	$110 to $150
National parks pass $250 split	$125	$63
Lodging, 4 nights 2 nights Curry Village, 2 nights in the house	$300 to $480	$175 to $260
Food for 5 days	$200 to $350	$200 to $350
TOTAL FROM	**$1,250**	**$950**

Totals use the low end of each range. Prices checked in November 2026; flight, car and lodging are estimates.

ALWAYS UP TO DATE

Scan to open the live guide with links to book everything: plancha.mx/guides/yosemite

NEXT GUIDE · GUATEMALA, ATITLÁN AND ACATENANGO