

Yosemite

National Park

— Yosemite, Calif.



Angel Jr. and Aden inside the Mariposa Grove Museum.



Angel Jr., Kathy and Aden in Yosemite Valley.

Hello again, everyone! This month, we traveled to Yosemite National Park. It's just gorgeous – and huge! This is definitely the biggest park we've visited and written about in this column. *Whew!*

We won't be covering all of it here – entire books have been written on this, one of America's grandest National Parks. An outdoorsy family could spend a week here. If you're a newbie like I was, I hope I can give you some good basic information.

If you plan on going to Yosemite National Park during the summer and staying overnight, you will probably need to make reservations at least a year in advance, especially if you want to stay in the park itself. The farther out of the park you stay, the less time needed. However, I would still book your reservations far in advance. Off-season reservations – the fall can be especially beautiful – are worth considering.

Getting to Yosemite from Los Angeles is at least a six-hour drive. Plan accordingly!

Yosemite is by far one of the most beautiful places I have ever been; everything is gorgeous and just breathtaking. We were very lucky to go at a time when lots of snow was still in the area, which made all the waterfalls spectacular.

Yosemite is one of the largest and least fragmented habitat blocks in the Sierra Nevada, and the park supports a diversity of plants and animals and contains five major vegetation zones: chaparral/oak woodland, lower montane, upper montane, subalpine, and alpine. Of California's 7,000 plant species, approximately 50 percent occur in the Sierra Nevada and more than 20 percent within Yosemite. There is suitable habitat or documentation for more than 160 rare plants in the park, with rare local geologic formations and unique soils characterizing the restricted ranges many of these plants occupy.

Let's begin!

A Brief History:

Native American Indians have lived in the Yosemite region for as long as 8,000 years. By the mid-19th century, when native residents had their first contact with non-Indian people, they were primarily of Southern Miwok ancestry. However, trade with the Mono Paiutes

from the east side of the Sierra for pinyon pine nuts, obsidian, and other materials from the Mono Basin resulted in many unions between the two tribes.

Although the first sighting of Yosemite Valley by non-Indian people was probably by members of the Joseph Walker Party in 1833, the first actual known entry into the Valley was not until nearly 20 years later. After the discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada foothills in 1849, thousands of miners came to the Sierra to seek their fortune. Their arrival resulted in conflict with local native people who fought to protect their homelands.

Writers, artists, and photographers spread the fame of the Incomparable Valley throughout the world. A steadily increasing stream of visitors came on foot and horseback, and later by stage. Realizing he could make money from tourism, James Hutchings became one of Yosemite's first entrepreneurs. Hotels and residences were constructed, livestock grazed in meadows, orchards were planted, and as a result, Yosemite Valley's ecosystem suffered.

Inspired by the scenic beauty of Yosemite and spurred on by the specter of private exploitation of

Yosemite's natural wonders, conservationists appealed to Sen. John Conness of California. On June 30, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill granting Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias to the State of California as an inalienable public trust. This was the first time in history that a federal government had set aside scenic lands simply to protect them and to allow for their enjoyment by all people. This idea was the spark that allowed for Yellowstone becoming the first official national park a few years later, in 1872.

Nowadays, millions of people from all over the world visit Yosemite each year.

The Experience:

Wow! Where to begin? This was by far the best trip I have ever taken! Make no mistake, this is a vacation where you will be doing a lot of work and enjoying every minute of it.

Once you pass the front gate (western entrance), you have only two options: turn right to the Mariposa



Yosemite National Park

P.O. Box 577 • Yosemite, CA 95389-0577

PARK HIGHLIGHTS:

- Hiking (more than 800 miles of trails)
- Waterfalls
- Lakes
- Swimming
- Biking (rentals or bring your own)
- Camping
- Lodging
- Shopping
- Dining
- Information centers/museums
- Docent and hiking guided tours

ENTRY COST:

\$20 (seven-day pass)

AREA:

761,268 total acres
 MOST TRAVELED AREA:
 Seven square miles of
 Yosemite Valley

ELEVATION: From 2,127 to
 13,114 feet

HIKING DIFFICULTY

RATING: Easy to strenuous

DIRECTIONS

From downtown Los Angeles (western entry to the park; please check ahead of time if you're going anytime other than the summer for vehicle restrictions): Take I-5 north (or I-405 north to I-5) to Highway 99 north to Highway 41 north (Fresno) into Yosemite National Park.

DISTANCE FROM LOS ANGELES:
 313 miles (six hours)

PARKING:

Available in most all areas and campsites.

Angel's

**Be
 Alive!**

Send your photos to me at
agomez@cityemployeesclub.com
 I would love to see them!

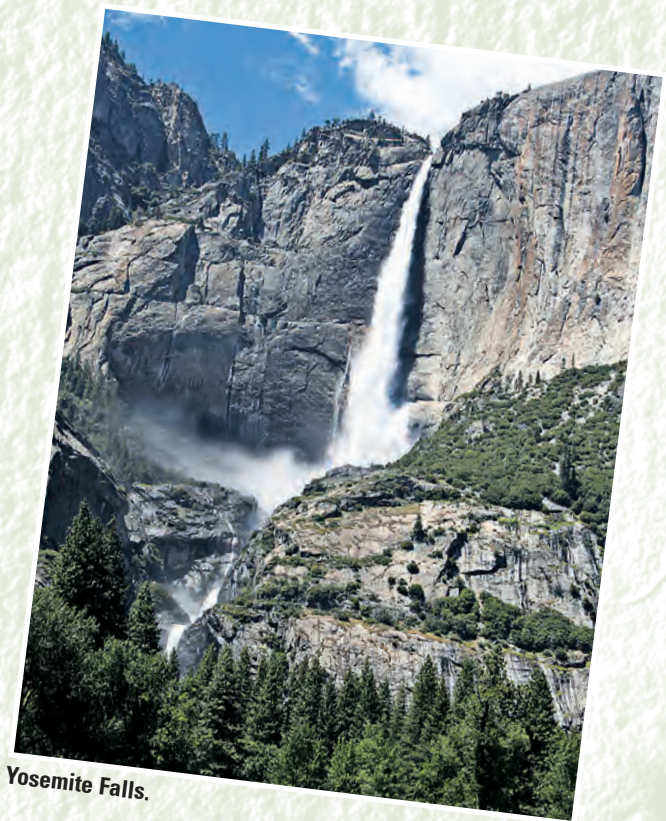
Angel Gomez,
 Club Director of Sales



Aden and Angel Jr.
 in front of a fallen
 giant sequoia.



Angel Jr., Kathy, and
 Aden in a teepee.



Yosemite Falls.

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Grove of Giant Sequoias, or turn left and go past a few small cottages areas and proceed to the Yosemite Valley. If you turn to the right, the enormous Sequoia trees are only a few minutes away. This is a five-minute trip. There is plenty of parking, but if the area is full, they will have you wait until some cars leave before they let you go to the parking area. I was never asked to wait; it was always open (maybe we were just lucky). There were lots of falling trees, and the roots are bigger than your car or standard van in length. The giant trees are everywhere. If you keep going up the trail you will see the museum and info center inside. If you are short on sunlight (late in the day), I would go see the giant sequoia trees first.

If you turn left, getting to the valley takes about 45 minutes. On your way to the Yosemite Valley, you will see lots of different landscapes, each one more beautiful than the next. After a few minutes, you will arrive



at the tunnel, and when you come out the other side you will be amazed.

Yosemite Valley is gorgeous. Everything you see is magnificent and beautiful. Please stop for a second and take lots of photos. You will find lots of tourists and tour buses, so be extra careful if you have small children.

On your way to Yosemite Valley, you will have the option of going up to Glacier Point (7214 feet). I would recommend going up early in the morning. Early is better because you can spend as much time as needed at Glacier Point. (You can also hike down to Yosemite Valley from Glacier Point; it sounds like fun to me.) If you pass Glacier Point and continue into the Valley, you will come up on to Bridalveil Falls, which is beautiful. Park your car and walk up less than a mile and you are there. Awesome!

As you drive farther in to the Valley, you will see Yosemite Falls to your left, and again it is gorgeous.

Keep going, and then a few minutes later you will see Half Dome and be right next to the Curry Valley Camp area. Once you are there, you can park your car in any of the valley areas and begin to explore. There is Yosemite Falls, the famous Ahwahnee Hotel, Mirror Lake, Half Dome, Vernal Falls and so much more. We walked, hiked, and rented bikes.

Yosemite Valley is so much fun. I promise you and your entire family will love this trip. Remember, if you plan to stay overnight, you most likely will need to reserve your place to stay at least six months to a year in advance.

I suggest getting a map or tour book that gives you [a lot more detailed information than I can here. If I have at least gotten you interested in taking your family to Yosemite, then I have done my job!

Don't forget to bring your camera and take plenty of photos and send them to me at agomez@cityemployeesclub.com. Bring water, snacks and maybe some sunscreen.

**As always, be safe and Be Alive!,
 Angel**



Half Dome.



Kathy, Aden, and Angel Jr. at Mariposa Grove Museum.