

Yosemite in Autumn



No other photo location in North America can generate as powerful an image of soaring granite monoliths and spectacular glacially-carved valleys than Yosemite National Park. More than any other landscape, Yosemite is the setting that defines the Sierra Nevada and, in a broader context, stands as a geographical icon for the American West. Within the park, the names of its prominent features—El Capitan and Half Dome—not only immediately evoke the legendary presence of John Muir and Ansel Adams, but also embody the quintessential symbols of the American wilderness.



Autumn in Yosemite is a season of welcome transition. Summer crowds diminish, returning clouds add drama to crisp blue skies, and the mad rush of waterfalls and cascades has stilled, now in wait for early winter rains. The sunlight, harsh in summer, lies at a lower angle, painting the park's iconic formations with a softer, mellower light. Temperatures are generally mild with sunny days and cold nights, yet in this season anything is possible—dramatic storm clouds gathering for a sudden rain, rolling low-lying tendrils of morning fog, a layer of frost on the fall-cured grasses of Yosemite's great

meadows, or an early snowfall to highlight autumn leaves.

The fall is the best time of year for creating “reflectionsapes.” The Merced River flows at a gentler pace and autumn-hued foliage and granite monoliths are framed in the mirror-like waters. Cottonwoods flash a golden stroke of color along river banks. Leaf color in Yosemite has a subdued palette and is at the whim of moisture, light and weather. The rose reds of dogwoods and the yellow hues of black oak and bigleaf maple can highlight dark green groves of conifers or soaring gray walls.

Our daily schedule revolves around the light, weather and color. We are out early to catch the fingers of swirling mist in the valley—conditions that can promise a spectacular image. The quiet waters and the always photogenic grand vistas of Yosemite Valley keep us busy until golden sunset light falls on El Capitan. We have time to compose diverse images from wide-angle landscapes with fall color to intimate scenes in still corners. Abstract compositions of rock, leaf and grasses present unique possibilities as textures and colors spring to life in the low light.

The towering rock walls that form the bones of Yosemite’s spectacular valley are at their finest in warm autumn light. The swiftly changeable fall weather adds an element of potential dramatic photography as clouds, mist and a possible early snowfall offer options for new photographic subjects and locations. From grand vistas to quiet reflections, from colossal crags to the delicate reds of dogwood leaves, and from expansive meadows to a moonlit nighttime sky, Yosemite in autumn is a never-ending source of inspiration.

Check out Kevin McNeal's [trip report](#) from our 2017 Yosemite photo tour

Tour Itinerary

Day 1 (Oct 27)

Participants arrive in Fresno, California, by early afternoon today. We include round-trip transportation to Yosemite National Park and our convenient lodging within the Yosemite Valley. (D)

Days 2–6

We spend these five days exploring some of the best photo opportunities in the park. We shoot the classic photo icons and grand vistas of this remarkable landscape—Half Dome, El Capitan, the Tunnel View, Valley View. Eighty-one miles of the Merced River runs through Yosemite National Park, including a stretch in Yosemite Valley that marvelously reflects the surrounding rock formations for innumerable opportunities for beautiful images during the low water levels. In a year of good color, dogwoods turn shades of red and bigleaf maples form bright yellow outlines along river edges, carpeting Fern Spring



and the still waters at Pohono Bridge and Sentinel Bridge with their leaves. The soaring columnar trunks in a grove of giant sequoias, the autumn-dried gossamer web of water at Bridalveil Fall, and mule deer feeding at the edges of meadows. Glacier Point, Upper Yosemite Road and Tioga Pass offer an opportunity to create images of classic vistas and to chase tree color in the high country, conditions permitting (the roads typically close by mid-November). Our schedule allows us to take full advantage of color and light conditions and each day's always changeable weather. (BLD)

Day 7 (Nov 2)

We drive to the Fresno airport this morning. Please schedule your return flight for no earlier than noon. (B)

Trip Details

Oct 27 - Nov 02, 2019

Fee: **\$4,495**

Deposit: **\$500**

Limit: **7**

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Tour Leader



KEVIN MCNEAL

"The tour was a wonderful experience that enabled me to photograph the iconic features of the park in vivid fall colors. The helpful leader, the lodging, the great food and the beautiful scenery made this a very enjoyable and productive tour.

— R. McRae