

Call of the Wild

Adventure Travel for Women since 1978



Yosemite: Merced River Canyon Loop with Climb of Half Dome September 4-9, 2008

Rating: Moderate Backpacking

Group Size Limit: 13

Accommodations: 5 nights camping

Cost: \$725; Reservation Deposit \$200. Balance due 3 months before start date of trip.

This classic Yosemite backpacking trip starts at Happy Isles in Yosemite Valley and takes us up the wild Merced River Canyon. Our route takes us past many gorgeous waterfalls and loops around to join the John Muir Trail. There are incredible views throughout the trip and the bare granite domes and other obvious topographic features in this country make it a perfect trip for learning (or improving) topographical map reading skills.

Our trip culminates in a climb of Half Dome. We think this trip offers the very best way to climb Half Dome because our camp is remote, yet nearby—only 3.6 miles from the summit. We'll ascend Yosemite's most famous landmark by the non-technical hikers route assisted by the banister-like cables which lead to the summit. What a feeling of accomplishment when you stand on top of Half Dome with sweeping views of Yosemite Valley, Tenaya Canyon and the far reaches of the High Sierra! If you love Yosemite but want to escape the crowds, don't miss this opportunity to experience with us Yosemite's pristine and quiet Merced River Canyon.

Day 1, Thursday ~ Arrival

Please arrive by 3 PM. We'll meet in our reserved campsite in Yosemite National Park. When you get to the campground, our site number will be listed with the attendant at the kiosk and also posted. We'll sort out gear and get our packs organized and have a good dinner about 7 PM.

(Dinner)

Day 2, Friday ~ John Muir Trail to Little Yosemite Valley; 5.4 Miles

After breakfast we'll break camp and drive to the backcountry visitor parking lot where we'll load up our packs and set off on our hike up the John Muir Trail. Our destination today is Little Yosemite Valley, and there are gorgeous views along the way: Vernal Fall, Nevada Fall, Illilouette Fall, Yosemite Falls and the Valley. *(Breakfast, Dinner)*

Day 3, Saturday ~ Merced River Canyon; 6.5 Miles

Today we leave behind the busy John Muir Trail leading up to Little Yosemite Valley and head up the gorgeous, pristine Merced River Canyon. The trail takes us past Lost Valley, Bunnell Cascade, up smooth glacier polished granite and past many little waterfalls and swimming holes on the Merced River. We'll camp near the Junction of Echo Creek and Merced Lake trails.
(Breakfast, Dinner)

Day 4, Sunday ~ Views of Half Dome, Moraine Dome; 5 miles

Our route loops around to Sunrise Creek and meets the John Muir Trail again. Along the way we have gorgeous views of Half Dome, Bunnell Point, Moraine Dome. We'll take time to stop for lunch, enjoy the view, and for those who are interested we can work with matching up topographical features with our maps. Tonight we have great camp above Sunrise Creek.
(Breakfast, Dinner)

Day 5, Monday ~ Half Dome Summit; 6.5 miles

Today we climb Half Dome. It's only 3.6 miles from our camp to the summit of Half Dome and we can be on top well before noon—ahead of the many hikers that come up from the Valley—and most likely earlier than any afternoon thundershowers. Last year after the climb we had time to come back to camp, take a bath and enjoy the afternoon. *(Breakfast, Dinner)*

Day 6, Tuesday ~ Vernal Falls, Nevada Falls; 8 Miles

Today we complete our loop. The John Muir Trail takes us down to the Valley along the Merced River, past Little Yosemite Valley, Vernal and Nevada Falls, and ends at Happy Isles. We should be back at our cars around 2 PM (depending on group hiking speed). *(Breakfast)*

Note: Itinerary subject to change at leader's discretion due to weather and other contingencies.

Mileage: 24.9 miles with backpacks; 6.5 miles day hike.

Topographical Maps (one of the following):

- 7.5-minute USGS Maps: Half Dome, Tenaya Lake, Merced Peak, Yosemite Falls
- 15-minute Wilderness Press Maps: Hetch Hetchy, Yosemite, Tuolumne, Merced Peak
- Tom Harrison Trail Map of the Yosemite High Country

WHAT YOUR TRIP INCLUDES:

- Experienced leadership
- Excellent food (provided meals are noted on itinerary)
- Tents and community camping equipment
- Camping fees and permits
- Go-Light backpacking and wilderness trip class

NOT INCLUDED:

- Transportation (Some participants may be interested in carpooling--call us.)
- Entrance fee to Yosemite National Park (\$20 per car)
- Lunches and trail snacks
- Personal gear (See equipment list mailed in your registration packet)
- Optional tips for your guides

About tipping: People on our trips often ask us about gratuities, so here are some guidelines: Each person usually tips \$5-\$10 per day for each guide depending on the level of service and the number of guides assigned to the trip (people do not usually tip any guide interns.) If Carole Latimer is leading your trip she, as the owner of the business, does not accept tips, but our other guides do. They cook and serve your meals and take care of many extra details to give you a safe and fun trip. Tips at the end of the trip are a way of showing your special appreciation if you feel that your guides have given very good service to you.

MILEAGE AND ELEVATION CHANGE

Day 1 ~ No hiking

Day 2 ~ Mileage: 6 miles. Elevation change: 4035'-6120'

Day 3 ~ Mileage: 7.5 miles. Elevation change: 6120'-7200'-7000'

Day 4 ~ Mileage: 6 miles. Elevation Change: 7000'-7600'-7200'

Day 5 ~ Mileage: 7.2 miles. Elevation Change: 7200'-8842'

Day 6 ~ Mileage: 7.7 miles. Elevation Change: 7200'-4035'

QUALIFICATIONS

Call of the Wild trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and have a spirit of adventure. We expect trip participants to be in good physical condition, aerobically fit, and willing to undergo the potential hardships of outdoor living. You must have your own health insurance. Our best trips are those where everyone is equipped with a positive attitude, the sensitivity to recognize the needs of the group, and a sense of humor!

HOW TO REGISTER

First, call us or e-mail (trips@callwild.com) us to see if there are spaces available on the trip. We will hold your space for 7 days while you are completing the application process, making travel arrangements, and mailing your deposit check.

Next, send in completed and signed Trip Application. The Trip Application is available by fax, mail, or from our Web site at www.callwild.com/trip_application.htm. After receiving your deposit and application, we will send you confirmation of your reservation and an information packet on your trip.

TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE

We strongly suggest that you take out trip cancellation insurance. Call of the Wild does not issue cash refunds, no matter what the circumstances of your cancellation may be. Depending on the time of your cancellation, you may or may not be eligible for a credit for another trip. Please read our refund and cancellation policy at www.callwild.com/jointrip.htm. You may be committed to going on your trip, but you may be forced to cancel because of some completely unexpected misfortune. To sign up for Travel Guard insurance call us for a brochure or visit www.callwild.com/travelguard.htm. For certain coverage, you must purchase insurance within 14 days of making your initial deposit with Call of the Wild.

Please Note: Call of the Wild provides TravelGuard insurance brochures and a link to the TravelGuard Web site for your convenience. However, there are many travel insurance companies such as HTH Worldwide, Travel Safe, and Travel Insured. When you buy travel insurance, it is your responsibility to know the restrictions and provisions of your policy.

ARRIVAL PLANNING

We'll meet 3 PM on Monday at our reserved campsite in Yosemite National Park. Yosemite can be accessed from Manteca on Highway 120 East, or at the Arch Rock entrance via Highway 140 East from Merced, or at the South entrance from Fresno via Highway 41. Yosemite National Park charges an entrance fee (\$20 per car unless you buy a National Park or Yosemite yearly pass).

For air travel, please contact Wendy Fazio at Skyline Travel 510-530-1100 or e-mail wendyatskyline@aol.com. Let her know that you are traveling with Call of the Wild. The closest airport is in Reno.

DIRECTIONS

From San Francisco Bay Area: Distance: 195 miles; Time: 4-5 hours

Take I-580 east to I-205 east to Highway 120 east into Yosemite National Park.

From Los Angeles: Distance: 313 miles; Time: 6 hours

Take I-5 north to Highway 99 to Fresno. In Fresno, take Highway 41 north into Yosemite National Park.

WEATHER

We will most likely experience sunny, benign weather (with perhaps scattered evening showers). However, there is always the chance of experiencing dramatically changing mountain weather. It is important to be prepared for all kinds of weather, including sun, wind, rain or lightening. The Sierras in summer are especially prone to afternoon thunderstorms. Your guides will inform you of what to do in the case of a thunderstorm.

CONDITIONING

The two main aspects of your physical conditioning are aerobic and strength conditioning, and altitude acclimation. See below for altitude acclimation information. The best aerobic and strength conditioning for backpacking is backpacking! If possible, hike with your pack on steep, rocky trails. Start with a low weight of 15-20 lbs and gradually add weight. Of course, most of us can't hike on wilderness trails every day. So, the next best alternative is to spend time running and hiking on inclined trails with a daypack. If you can't get to a trail, Stairmasters, Nordic trainers, and treadmills are good for your aerobic capacity and weights are good for your strength. You want especially to strengthen your quadriceps, also your back, and upper body. How many months ahead of your trip you start conditioning depends on your general level of fitness. Someone with a good level of fitness should begin conditioning at least 8 weeks before this trip.

ALTITUDE ACCLIMATION

This is not a high altitude trip, but it will likely be higher elevation than you are used to at home. There are a few things that you can do to help you acclimate. First, have a high level of fitness (see above for aerobic and strength conditioning). Second, drink lots and lots of water, at least two days before the trip starts! It gives your body and muscles the water it needs to be well hydrated to facilitate acclimation. Also, a sign of acclimation is frequent urination. So if you are not drinking enough water, it is hard to tell if you are acclimating properly. Third and most effective, spend significant time at altitude. This includes sleeping and exercising at altitude.

Some people arrive a couple of days early on this trip. The first day they exercise moderately (a hike) and sleep at altitude (about 8000-9000') and the second day, they rest and sleep at altitude. This does wonders for acclimation. Be aware that altitude will increase your heart rate. You may also feel lassitude, nausea, shortness of breath, headache, no desire to eat. All these can be symptoms of what is known as acute mountain sickness (the effects of not being acclimated to altitude), or AMS. For most people, the symptoms of AMS abate in 12-48 hours.

SHARING TENTS / WILDERNESS CAMPING

Our tents are Sierra Designs Comets or Meteorlights, designed for 2-3 people. On backpacking trips, we have 2 or 3 people in each tent depending on the number of people in the group. On non-backpacking camping trips we have 2 people in a tent. If you prefer not to share a tent, you can bring your own *small* tent or rent one from us. However, if you choose this option, keep in mind that on a backpacking trip you will have to carry the weight of a whole tent rather than just your portion of a shared tent. Be sure to let us know if you will be bringing your own tent.

ABOUT OUR GUIDES

Call of the Wild guides have extensive wilderness experience and bring proven leadership to your wilderness trip. We pride ourselves on giving women safe opportunities to venture into the wilderness and do something they've never done before. Our guides are certified Wilderness First Responders and they'll go the extra mile to make you feel at home in the wilderness. They are interesting people and include a pilot, a former paramedic, a personal trainer, an exercise physiologist, a glacier guide, and the owner of a wild mustang. They share a love of the wilderness and an enjoyment of people's company.

ABOUT OUR FOOD

Our menu features hearty, healthy meals made with recipes from Carole Latimer's cookbook *Wilderness Cuisine*. You'll feast on dishes such as Pesto Fettucini, Anasazi Stew, Truffled Porcini Potato Soup, and fresh-baked Coffee Cake. Our meals tend to be higher in carbohydrates and lower in fat for hiking trips, and we dehydrate some food in order to preserve freshness and decrease weight. Meals are often vegetarian, but we serve meat dishes as well. We avoid processed food, but you won't get a strict brown rice and wheat germ regime either, and we think there's nothing wrong with an occasional backslide to decadently rich food after a hard day on the trail.

Most people love our food and much care and effort goes into preparing your meals. However we are not able to accommodate each person's preferences. Often we are cooking in the wilderness and our menus are limited by weight, fuel, refrigeration, space, and so on. We cannot make separate meals or bring different provisions for individual diets and preferences. Therefore, if you have food allergies, if you are vegan, or if you don't eat certain foods we suggest that you call us. You can then plan your own food to supplement our menu.