

Classic Yosemite: 4-Day Must-See Adventure for Families (Iconic Landmarks & Experiences)

DAY 1: ARRIVAL & YOSEMITE VALLEY ESSENTIALS

MORNING (8:00AM - 12:00PM):

- **Breakfast:** Grab a hearty breakfast at *Erna's Elderberry House* in Oakhurst (30 min south of park entrance) for a special start, or opt for *Sweetwater Bakery* for quicker, family-friendly fare.
- Drive into Yosemite via the **South Entrance** – allow 1 hour from Oakhurst to Yosemite Valley, plus 10-15 min for parking at **Yosemite Village Parking Lot** (fills by 10AM; arrive early for best spots, especially in summer).

Afternoon (12:00PM - 6:00PM):

- Stop at **Tunnel View** for a classic first photo (10 min from entrance, 20 min stop).
- Visit **Yosemite Valley Visitor Center** for maps and Junior Ranger booklets for your child (1 hour, bathrooms and gift shop available).
- Explore the easy **Lower Yosemite Fall Trail** (1 mile loop, stroller friendly, 45 min), perfect for families.
- **Lunch:** Dine at *Degnan's Kitchen* in Yosemite Village for sandwiches, pizza, and salads (mid-range prices, quick service).
- Stroll to **Sentinel Bridge** for iconic views of Half Dome reflected in the Merced River (15 min walk from the visitor center).
- Optional: Rent bikes at *Yosemite Valley Lodge Bike Stand* for a leisurely valley ride (allow 1-2 hours; reservations recommended in summer).

Evening (6:00PM - 10:00PM):

- **Dinner:** Enjoy a relaxing meal at *Yosemite Valley Lodge's Mountain Room Restaurant* (reserve ahead; stunning waterfall views, classic American fare).

- Check in to your accommodation. **Recommendations:**
 - **Inside the park:** *Yosemite Valley Lodge* (best for access, family rooms, fills up quickly—book ASAP!)
 - **Just outside:** *Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite* (family suites, pool, 15 min from South Entrance)
- Evening stroll to **Cook's Meadow** for sunset views (gentle, flat walk—bring a flashlight for return).

DAY 2: GLACIER POINT & MARIPOSA GROVE

MORNING (8:00AM - 12:00PM):

- **Breakfast:** *Base Camp Eatery* at Yosemite Valley Lodge (casual, kid-friendly) or *Starbucks* in Yosemite Village for a quick bite.
- Drive to **Glacier Point** (open late May–October; check road status). Allow 1 hour drive from Yosemite Valley. **Parking is limited**; arrive by 9:30AM for best chance.
- Enjoy breathtaking vistas over the Valley, Half Dome, and High Sierra peaks. Walk the paved path to the main overlook (20 min round-trip; stroller accessible).
- Optional: Short hike to **Sentinel Dome** (2.2 miles round-trip, moderate, 1.5–2 hours; not suitable for strollers but doable for active kids).

Afternoon (12:00PM - 6:00PM):

- Picnic lunch at **Glacier Point** (pack sandwiches/snacks from *Degnan's Deli* or *Village Store*).
- Drive (1 hr) to **Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias** near South Entrance. Park at **Mariposa Grove Welcome Plaza**, then take the free shuttle (10 min ride) to the grove.
- Stroll the **Big Trees Loop Trail** (0.3 miles, flat, perfect for kids) to see ancient sequoias, including the Grizzly Giant and California Tunnel Tree. For a longer walk, try the **Grizzly Giant Loop** (2 miles, easy-moderate).

Evening (6:00PM - 10:00PM):

- **Dinner:** *Jackalope's Bar & Grill* at Tenaya Lodge (family-friendly, American classics), or head back to the Valley and try *Base Camp Eatery* for a casual meal.
- Relax at your lodge or enjoy s'mores by the fire pit (offered at some lodges, especially Tenaya).

DAY 3: MIST TRAIL, ANSEL ADAMS GALLERY & VILLAGE LIFE

MORNING (8:00AM - 12:00PM):

- **Breakfast:** *Ahwahnee Dining Room* (splurge for historic elegance, reservations recommended) or *Degnan's Kitchen* for quicker fare.
- Park at **Curry Village** (arrive by 8AM; fills fast) or use the free Valley Shuttle.
- Hike the **Mist Trail to Vernal Fall Footbridge** (1.6 miles round-trip, moderate, steep but doable with kids over 6; bring rain gear for the spray; allow 2–3 hours).
- Alternative: For smaller kids, stroll the **Mirror Lake Trail** (2 miles round-trip, easy, stroller-friendly).

Afternoon (12:00PM - 6:00PM):

- **Lunch:** *Curry Village Pavilion* (buffet-style, variety of choices for families) or picnic at Sentinel Beach (tables, river views).
- Visit the **Ansel Adams Gallery** for kid-friendly photo activities and stunning historic images of the park (30–45 min).
- Explore **Yosemite Museum** and **Indian Village of Ahwahnee** for an interactive look at Native American history (1 hour).
- Souvenir shopping at **Yosemite Village Store**.

Evening (6:00PM - 10:00PM):

- **Dinner:** *Pizza Patio* at Curry Village (budget-friendly, outdoor seating, fun for kids), or *The Ahwahnee Bar* (upscale, small plates, beautiful setting).
- Optional: Evening **Ranger Program** at the Yosemite Theater or outdoor amphitheater (check schedules at the Visitor Center, usually 7PM, free/low-cost, great for families).

DAY 4: VALLEY VIEWS, EL CAPITAN & DEPARTURE

MORNING (8:00AM - 12:00PM):

- **Breakfast:** *Yosemite Valley Lodge* or *Base Camp Eatery* for something quick and filling.
- Short drive (10 min) to **El Capitan Meadow**—watch for climbers on the granite wall, use provided telescopes (30–60 min).
- Stroll the **Bridalveil Fall Trail** (0.5 miles round-trip, easy, paved; may be misty in spring/early summer; allow 45 min including photo stops).

- Optional: Stop at **Cathedral Beach** or **Swinging Bridge** for a last riverside picnic or playtime (tables, restrooms).

Afternoon (12:00PM - 6:00PM):

- **Lunch:** *Village Grill Deck* (seasonal, burgers & salads, outdoor seating) or pack a picnic to enjoy by the river.
- Last-minute souvenir shopping or return to favorite spots for final photos.
- Check out of your accommodation. Allow ample time for your drive out of the park, especially if heading toward San Francisco (~4 hours) or Los Angeles (~6 hours).

SUMMARY: WHY THIS ITINERARY IS SPECIAL

This classic four-day Yosemite itinerary is crafted for first-timers and families, ensuring you experience the park's most iconic sights—Yosemite Valley, Half Dome, El Capitan, Glacier Point, and Mariposa Grove—at the best times of day with minimal backtracking. | **KID-FRIENDLY HIKES** , easy picnic spots, and **memorable ranger programs** are woven throughout.

Pro Tips:

- Book accommodation and popular activities well in advance, especially in peak seasons.
- Arrive early for parking at trailheads and major viewpoints; use the free **Yosemite Shuttle** in the Valley to avoid parking hassles.
- Pack layers—weather can change quickly in the mountains!
- All listed dining options have vegetarian choices and are family-friendly.