



Yosemite Hikes

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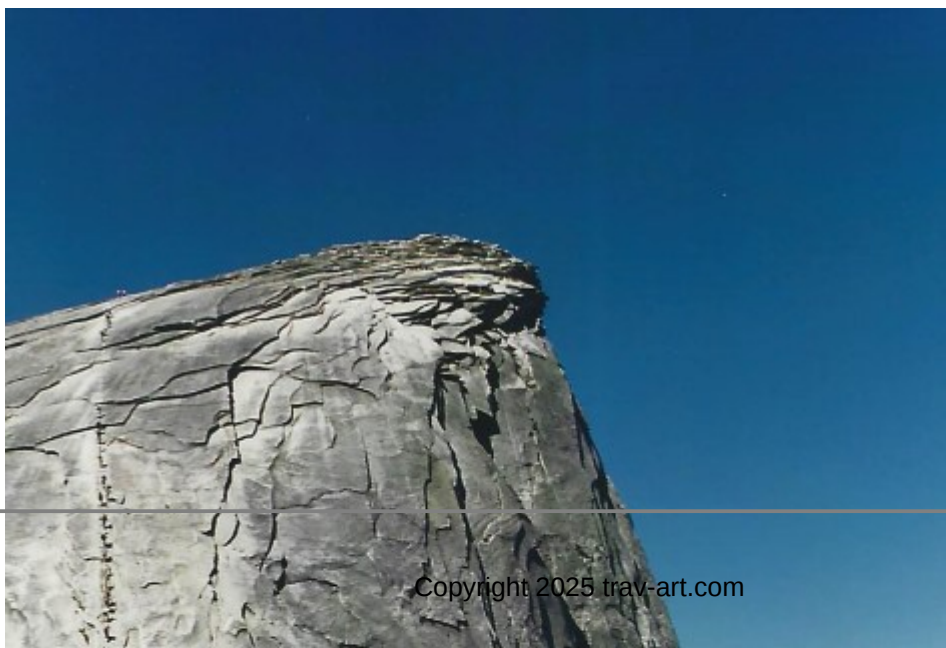
In the 2000s I spent a lot of time hiking in Yosemite National Park (in all seasons) since it was only a few hours away from where I lived (for three years) on the Central Coast of California. Hereâ??s a look at some of the many, many great hikes in that national park. I canâ??t think of too many better places to enjoy hiking than Yosemite.

Half Dome

I consider this the best day hike in the USA. Itâ??s certainly not a hike youâ??ll ever forget owing to the scenery and the varied terrain. I completed this hike twice in the early 2000s before they put a much-needed reservation system in place due to crowding.



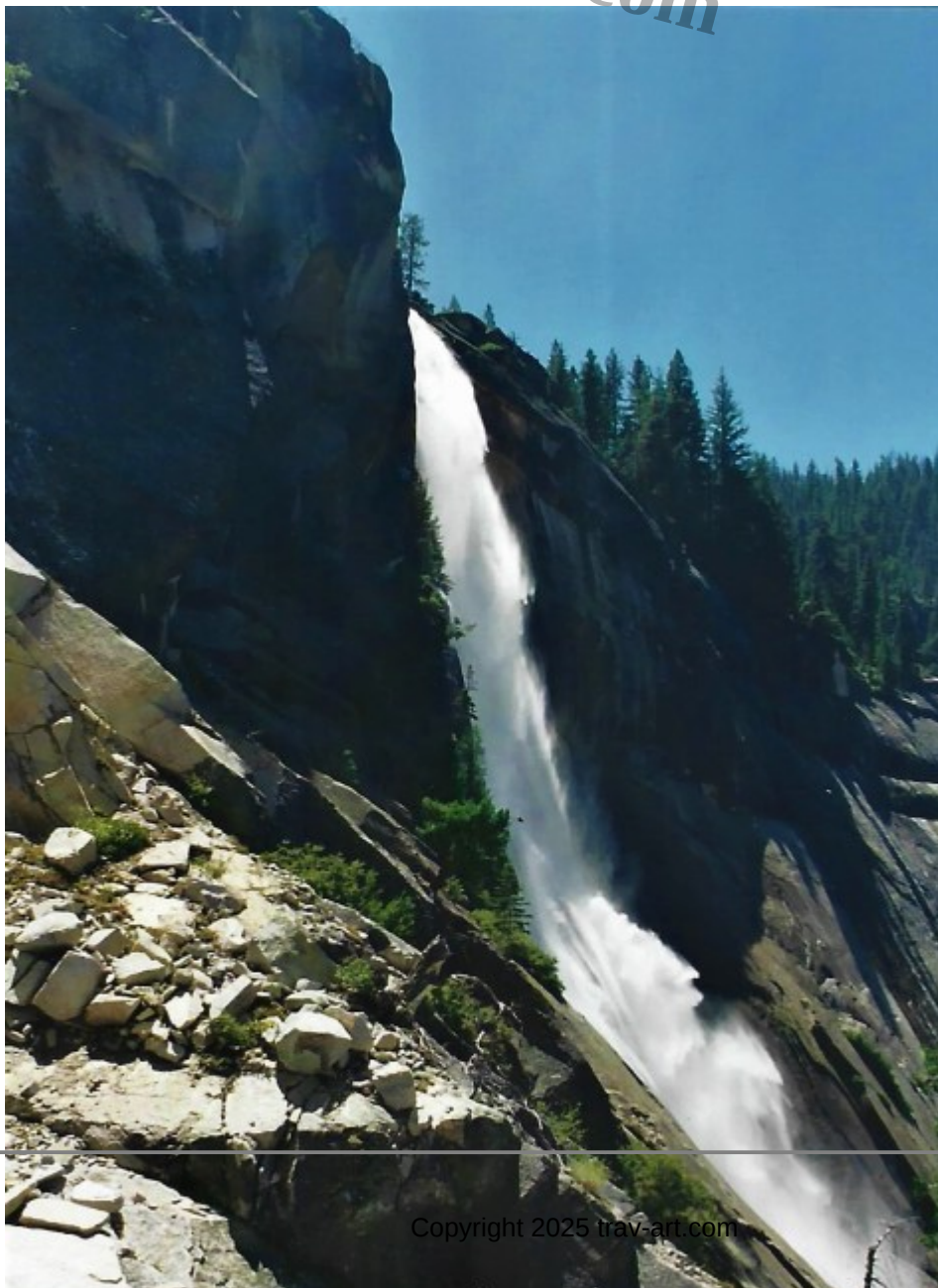
Cables to the top



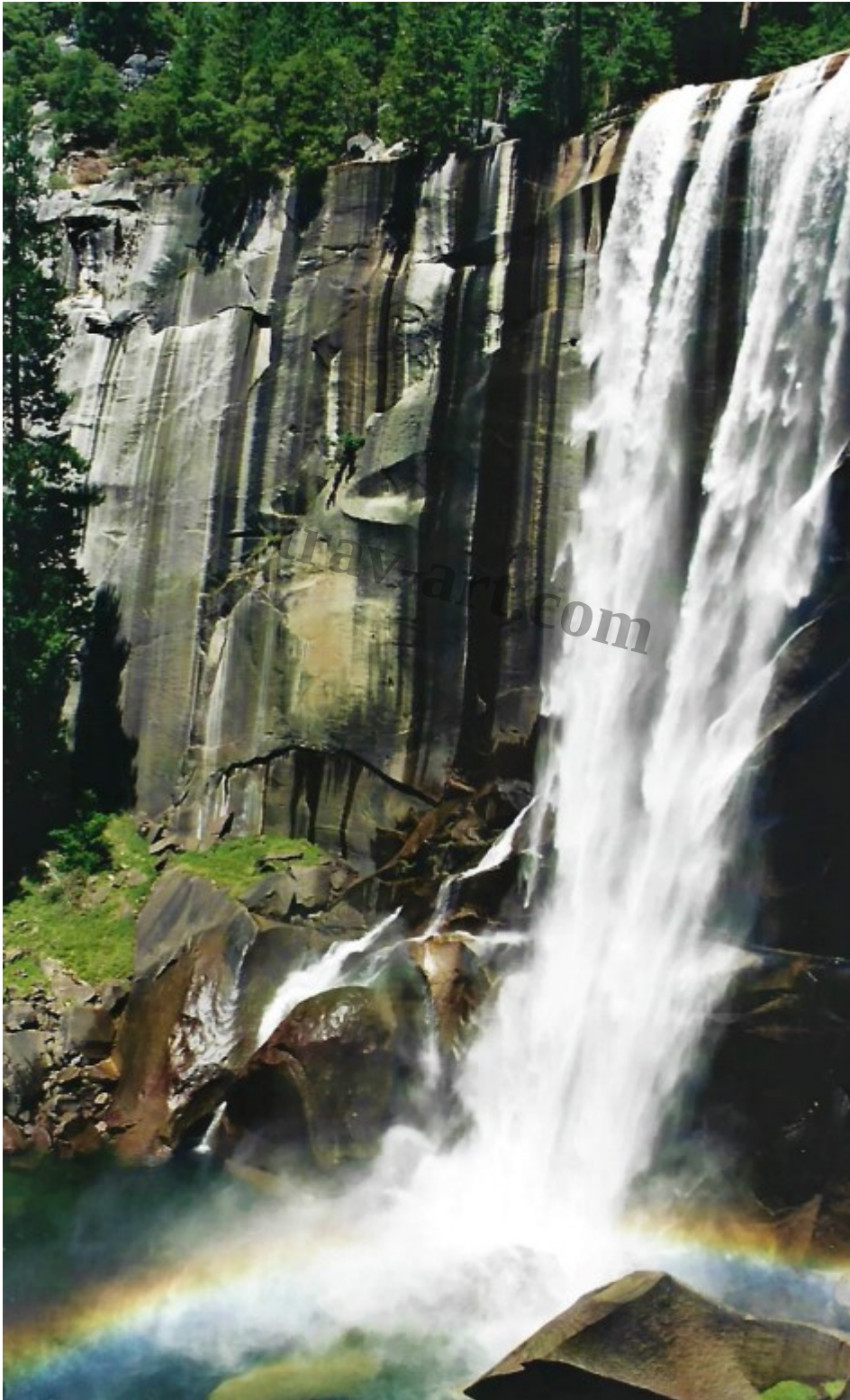
Half Dome Face



Jeff on Half Dome



Nevada Falls



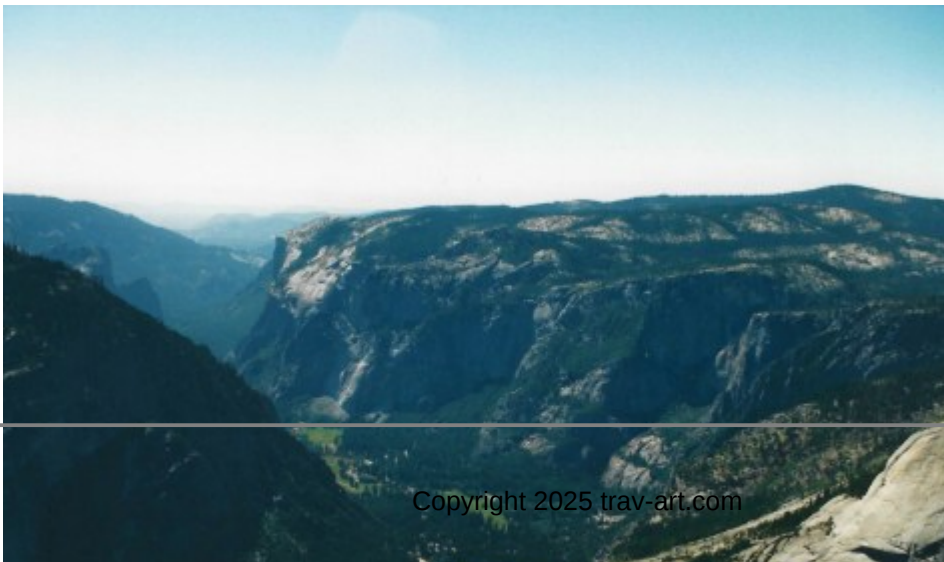
Vernal Falls



Vernal Falls in winter



Above Nevada Falls



View from Half Dome

These photographs were taken with a film camera (yes, there was a time before digital photography and it wasn't really that long ago).

The Half Dome trail begins with what is called the Mist Trail, which passes by the very beautiful Vernal Falls after about 2 miles on a stair-step ascent. If you can start early (before 8 AM) you will avoid a LOT of foot traffic on this portion of the trail and shorten the time needed to summit Half Dome. Almost every trail in the valley has a lot of foot traffic between 9AM and 3PM but most of the casual hikers turn around within the first two miles.

Following Vernal Falls it is another three miles to the almost-as-impressive Nevada Falls. You'll ascend up and over the falls on your way to Little Yosemite Valley on the path to Half Dome. These two waterfalls would alone be worth the hike, but it still gets better on this trail. From the top of Nevada Falls you'll hike another two miles to the face of Half Dome where the trail goes from great to epic.

The ascent of the cables is about 1/4 mile in length, but depending on the number of people ahead of you it can take as long as 30-45 minutes. The first time I ascended the cables there were perhaps 60 people hanging onto the cables and it was painfully slow, with people dropping water bottles as they climbed (stow your gear well).

The second time, I started the hike from the trailhead at about 6 AM in the morning and was ascending the cables at 8AM. With far fewer people hanging on for dear life it was much less tiring and nerve-wracking.

Once you pull yourself to the top you'll be able to take in all of Yosemite Valley, enjoy the view of Yosemite Falls and El Capitan, and get your photo taken on the cliff top. You can congratulate yourself on completing a big bucket list hike.

Glacier Point

You can drive to Glacier Point, but the ascent from the valley floor is more fun and more scenic.







The trail switch backs dozens of times as you rise ever higher from the valley until at last you arrive at Glacier Point. This photogenic point sits on the south rim of the valley and has terrific views of Yosemite Falls, El Capitan, and especially Half Dome to the east along with the falls of the Mist Trail. This is probably the best view of Half Dome from anywhere in the park.

Yosemite Falls

The very first time I went to Yosemite in August of 2001 Yosemite Falls had run dry (really). This occasionally happens later in the summer months (which is another reason I recommend visiting the valley between May (most spectacular) and June. By July and August you might turn your attention to the higher, cooler, and less crowded Tuolumne Meadows area.







The approach to the falls hike starts near the visitor center and the Ahwahnee Hotel (we had a terrific Christmas dinner there in 2010).

The trail will pass close to the lower falls before ascending in a series of switchback to the top of the upper falls. Be careful about wading in the river that feeds the falls (same with Nevada Falls). The water will feel cool and refreshing on a hot day but the current is stronger than you might think and there is often little to anchor your feet against. Every year a few people seem to get swept over these falls and it is difficult for the Park Service to safely recover the bodies.

Bridalveil Falls



This is only a quarter mile, but the falls are absolutely worth the stop. On a hot day the wind will often carry the misty water far enough to offer a cooling mist.

Lembert Dome

Speaking of the Tuolumne Meadows area, a quick but enjoyable hike from the parking area in this higher elevation area off the Tioga road is Lembert Dome. It's only about 2 miles round-trip to the top of the dome, but it will get you away from the crowds and the heat of summer if you arrive in July or

August.





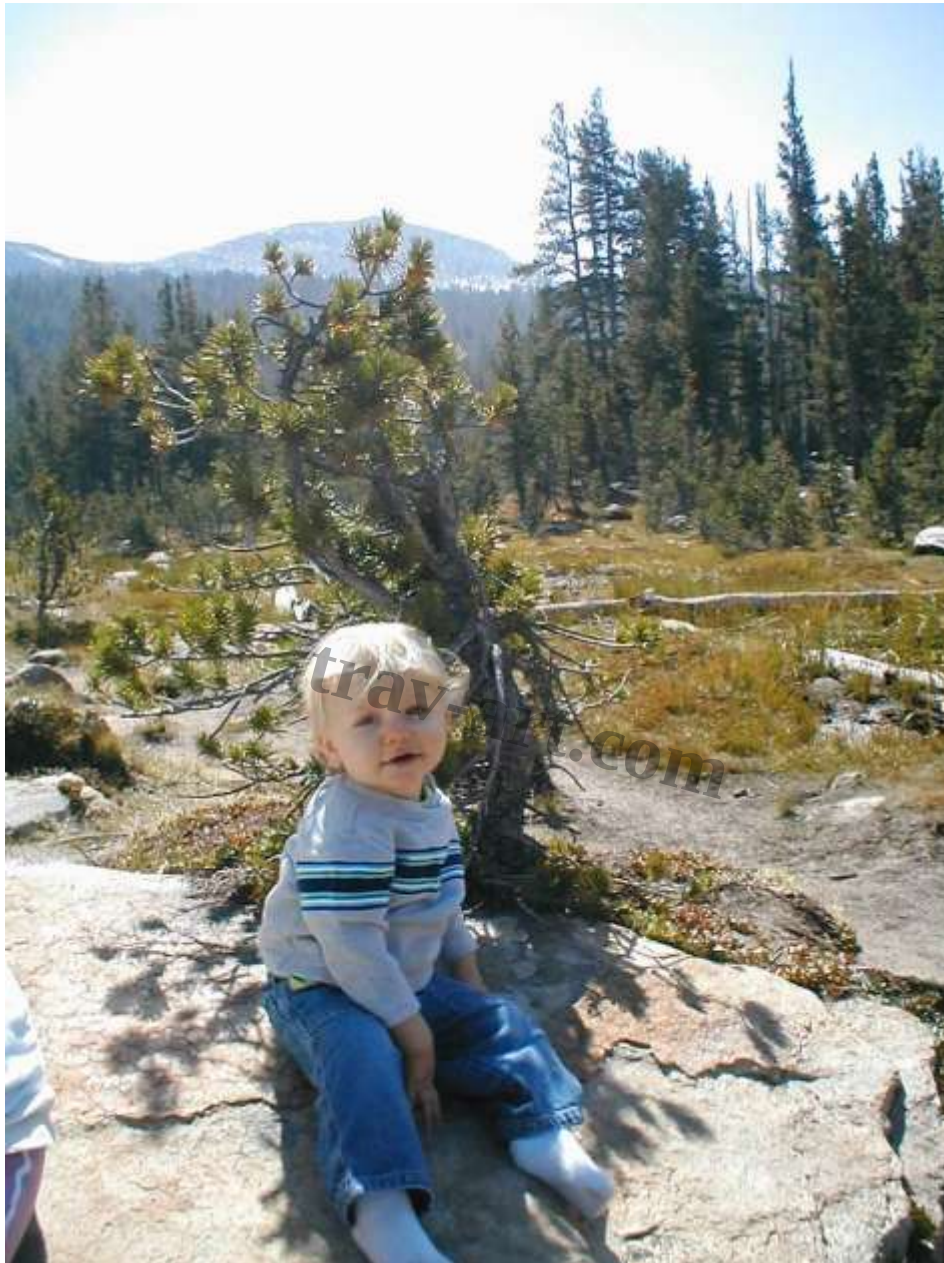
There are nice views of the surrounding peaks of the Sierra Nevada from the top.

Elizabeth Lake

Another relatively easy hike in the Tuolumne Meadows area is Elizabeth Lake. We carried my then 1-year-old son in a backpack to the lake in the late 2000s. Where has the time gone?









Cathedral Lake

The next year we took our two-year-old son on a little longer hike (5 miles roundtrip) to Cathedral Lake. Like Elizabeth Lake this lake hike starts in the Tuolumne Meadows area.

Once you start out on the trail you quickly leave all the cars and people behind and get to take in a sublime Sierra Nevada lake under the aptly named Cathedral Peak.







These photos of past hikes bring back a lot of memories!

There are also many smaller hikes worth mentioning! Sentinel Dome, Bridalveil Falls, the Mariposa Grove, and more. And there is even Mono Pass, a hike that led to the eastern edge of the park, but a hike for which I can find no photographs.

Yosemite's trails were always a fun weekend getaway for me. Time has gone by and the world has changed with reservation systems and unfortunate fires near the park, but Yosemite still has a great set of hikes to enjoy.

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