

The West Coast

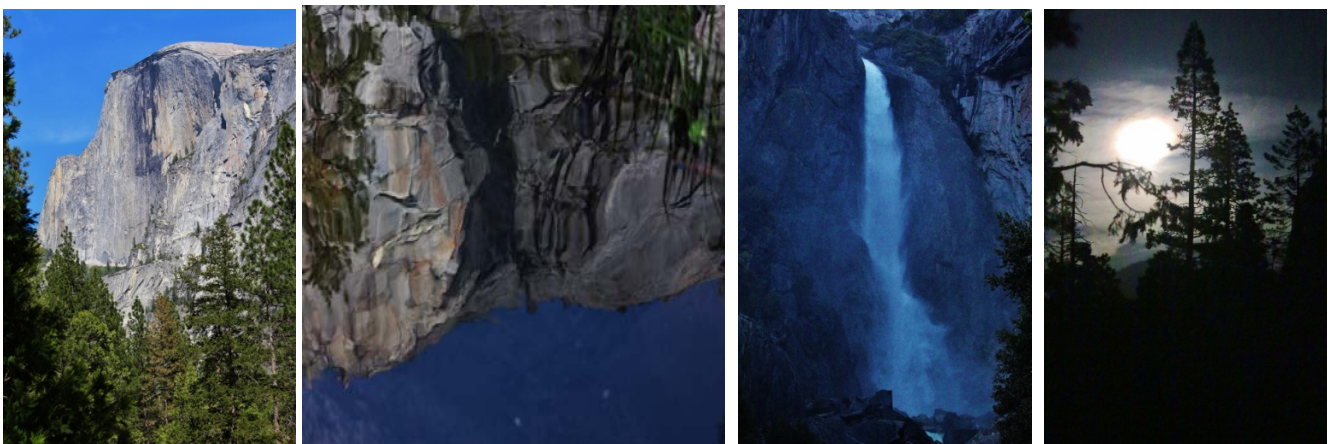
California – Part 2

I have wanted to visit Yosemite National Park for years, always saying one day I'll get there. Well the time is here and I'm going to spend 6 days exploring as much as I can.

Six months prior to my arrival I was sitting in my living room waiting for the reservation window to open. There are 13 campgrounds within the park offering both reservation and first come first serve. I wanted to reserve a spot for my stay so I signed onto recreation.gov and kept my fingers crossed. I found a site open that would be long enough for the Nook and grabbed it. All of the open sites were taken within 20 minutes. First come first serve sites may be available – I just didn't want to spend my time waiting for one.

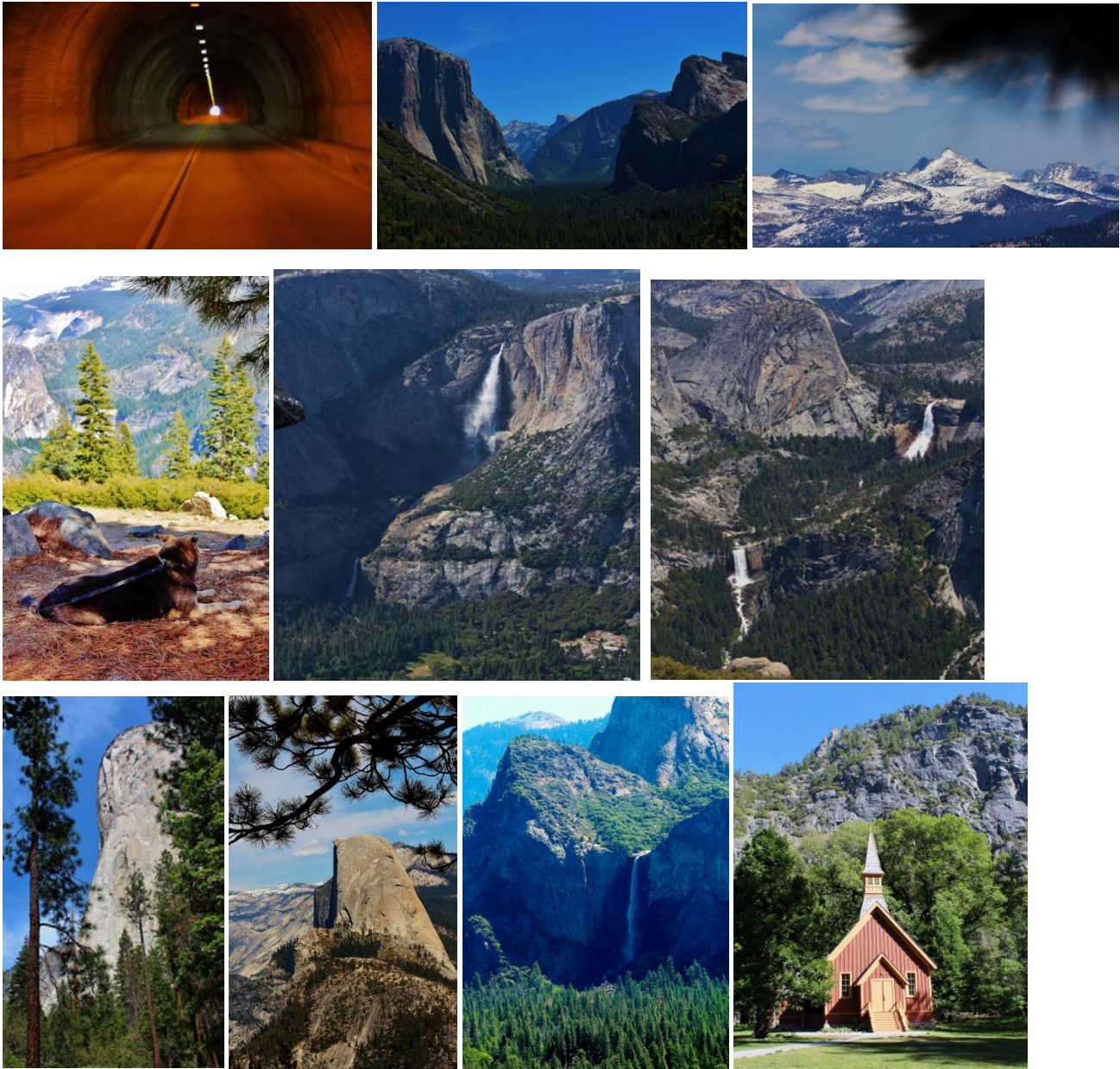
Arriving early afternoon gave me plenty of time to get settled into my site and take a walk around the immediate area. I am just in awe of this park. The natural beauty is breathtaking. From the valley floor, the numerous waterfalls, tremendous rock formations and steep mountain cliffs all blended together to take in and appreciate. Needing to stretch our legs, Tipper and I walked to Mirror Lake – just a short distance from the campsite. We were rewarded with a small lake at the base of Half Dome and, as the name implies, it provided a mirror image of the formation. Dogs are not supposed to go past a certain point but my sweet pup had just pushed up a decent incline and one of her favorite activities is to stand in a cool mountain lake so I let her go in. Talk about one happy pup.

We return to the campsite for a quick dinner and then I ride down to Lower Yosemite Falls for a nice after dinner stroll. The falls are flowing this time of year with snowmelt and the occasional rain that gets trapped by the mountains. Yosemite had not received it's normal snowfall and I'm keeping my fingers crossed that the falls will have some volume. Lower Yosemite Falls has a good flow and I spend some time at the base following a short hike. A number of people are coming in and setting up tripods and my curiosity gets the best of me. They are there hoping to see a full moon rainbow so I decide to stay for a while despite the chill that is in the air. The full moon arrives but with a lot of cloud cover and I give up the wait. I want to get a good night's sleep – tomorrow's my Birthday and I'm planning a trip to Glacier Point. Photos include first view of Half Dome, Mirror Lake reflection, Lower Yosemite Falls, Full Moon rising.



My first full day to explore the park is extra special for me – it's my birthday! My birthday wish has come true. I decide to head to Glacier Point and pack a picnic lunch for a full day. Glacier Point Road is usually closed from November to May so I'm feeling pretty lucky that it's open for travel. It's a winding road that ends high above Yosemite Valley offering incredible views of the area. I'll let the photos speak for themselves.

Photos include tunnel approach to the valley, first valley view, snow capped mountains, Tipper enjoys the view from Glacier Point, Upper and Lower Yosemite Falls, Vernal and Nevada Falls, El Capitan, Half Dome, Bridal Veil and a Church in the Valley.



I think I had the best birthday ever. Beautiful day to enjoy beautiful scenery with my favorite pup.

The next day was a full day trip as well. I wanted to see the other side of the park and luckily Tioga Road was open for travel. The lack of snow this winter worked to my advantage. I pack another lunch and head out early for a long day of driving. It's about 80 miles one way filled with many stops to enjoy the scenery and maybe some wildlife if I'm lucky. I can't think of many other ways I'd rather spend a day. Tioga Peak has an elevation of 11,526 ft. I probably got up to around 10,000 ft. Mt Dana (13,057 ft) and Mt Gibbs (12,764 ft) are 2 of the highest peaks in the park. Photos include Tioga Pass in the distance, a different view of Half Dome, Tenaya Lake, Tuolumne Meadows, frozen Tioga Lake, Tioga Pass, Mt Dana(left) and Mt Gibbs and final destination Mono Lake.

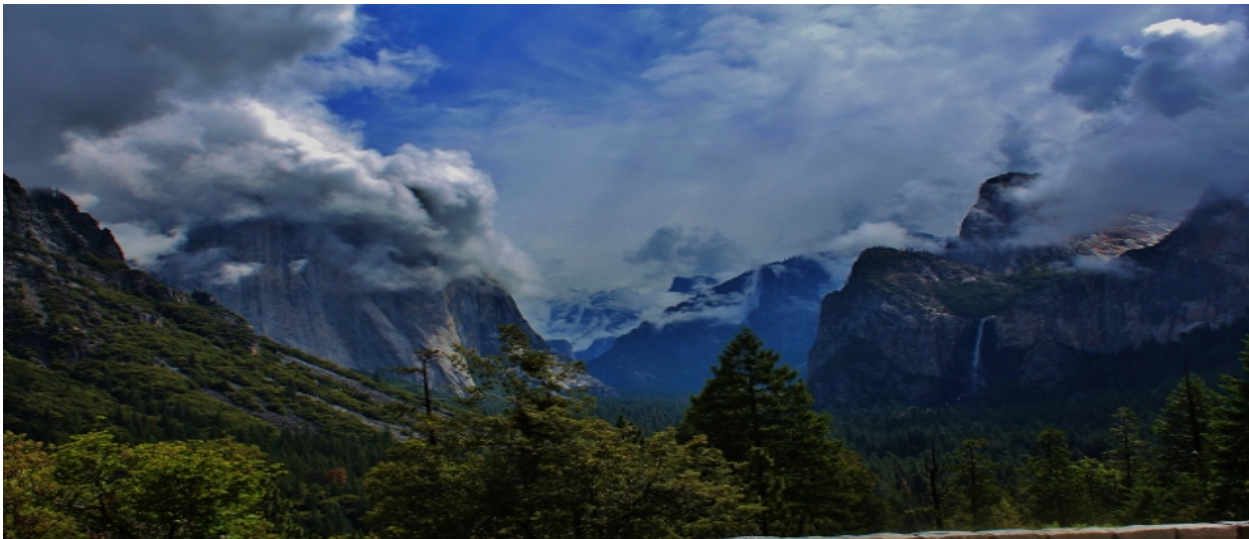


Two more day trips planned and then I plan to revisit my favorite – Glacier Point – on my last full day in Yosemite. Hetch Hetchy is a huge reservoir in the northwest section of the park. This reservoir is a result of the 1906 earthquake that destroyed water supplies in San Francisco. Congress passed the Raker Act in 1913 granting San Francisco the right to build a reservoir in a National Park to supply water to the area. The water travels 167 miles without the use of any pumps through tunnels and pipelines. There are 287 miles of trails in the watershed area including the Pacific Crest Trail but most are closed during my visit. My second day trip is to Mariposa Grove and the Yosemite Pioneer History Center. There is a Sequoia grove to enjoy some more of the giants and the history center helps to explain portions of the Yosemite history.

Photos include Gateway to Hetch Hetchy, Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, Giant Sequoia, Fallen Mammoth sequoia, the Covered Bridge, Tipper meets Cate and Cabe, a Mosquito wagon.



On my last full day I woke up to find it had rained and snowed during the night. Rain in the valley and snow up on the mountains. Huge clouds filled the skies threatening to rain/snow again. Not enough to cancel my plans – just might take a little longer traveling on the wet roads. I soon found out that my plans would change – it had snowed enough in the mountains to close the roads to Glacier Point and Tioga Pass. So very happy I had not waited to visit these areas – I would have missed them. I spent the day enjoying the valley, getting the Nook ready for travel and looking at all the photos I had taken. What a wonderful first visit to Yosemite NP. I will definitely be back to enjoy again. Photos include Blue skies break through the snow clouds covering the valley, Half Dome, Yosemite Falls.



I pack up and plan to get started by 10 am but my departure is delayed – the slide won't retract. Thank goodness there is a garage in the park and someone is available to come down and take a look. He is finally able to get the slide in and I get on the road. I call a Camping World near my next location and schedule an appointment to have it checked and hopefully repaired. There's always something!