

July 29 - August 7, 2011

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Yosemite National Park, at the north end of the John Muir Trail and smack in the middle of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, is one of the premier hiking, backpacking, and climbing destinations in the world. Please join me for this spectacular week-long backpacking trip into the park's Clark Range.

## The Plan

We'll drive to Bakersfield, California on Friday, July 29th for one night in an inexpensive motel. See the links to the right. Make your reservations early. It doesn't cost anything to make a reservation. You'll only pay once you check in.

On Saturday, July 30th, we'll continue the drive to the west entrance to Yosemite National Park and find some place to park near the Happy Isles Trailhead. Later that same day, we'll catch a bus to Glacier Point (\$25.00 each) but will exit at Bridalveil Creek Campground (\$14.00 per site / 2 sites) for one night in camp before we set out on the trail.



On Sunday we'll pack our stuff, have breakfast, then head out for the Illilouette Creek watershed. We've got about 2 miles of road to walk to get to the Mono Meadow Trailhead, then another 5.5 miles to hike before we get to our camp along Clark Creek. There's not a lot of elevation gain this day, but we'll make up for it on Monday and Tuesday. 7.6 / 1,000'

On Monday morning, we'll get up and have breakfast, then start our long trek up Illilouette Creek. After about 6.5 miles and a gain of 1,800', we'll reach a trail junction between Lower and Upper Merced Pass Lakes. There, we'll turn east and climb for another two or three miles to reach Lower Ottoway Lake at 9,700', where we'll set up for our second night on the trail. 9.6 / 2,600' ❄

On Tuesday, we've got a tough hike up through Red Peak Pass to start our morning. We'll climb from 9,700' to 11,200' in just a couple of miles. From there, it's mostly downhill to another junction about six miles away. Once we reach that junction, we'll turn south and take that trail about 1.5 miles further until we reach an unnamed lake. There, we'll set up camp for a two-night stay at 10,000 feet. 9.5 / 2,700'

On Wednesday, we can sleep in a bit. We don't have any firm plans for the day, but the idea is to wander about three miles up to Isberg Pass, gaining about 600 feet along the way. We might continue

down the east side of the pass, leaving Yosemite National Park behind for a bit, and have lunch at Isberg Lakes. Return along the same trails to our camp at our unnamed lakes. 9.4 / 1,100'

Thursday is going to be another longish day. Fortunately, much of it is gently downhill. We'll be heading north all day, moving along the higher country above the Triple Creek Fork of the Merced River. At one point we'll drop down to Lyell Creek, then have to climb 600 feet over a couple of miles before the trail levels again. We'll eventually reach another downhill stretch. At the bottom of that section is a junction with an east-west trail, where we'll set up camp along Lewis Creek for our fifth night of the trip. 10.8 / 1,600' ❄

Our last full day and night is a bit shorter, mileage-wise. We've got a short seven or eight miles to hike on Friday. About two miles into the morning, and about 1,600 feet below our starting point, we'll come to the Merced Lake Ranger Station. We'll cross several streams on the available footbridges, and continue along the trail past the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp. A few miles further along, we'll meander through Lost Valley. We'll either stop there or continue a bit further into the upper reaches of Little Yosemite Valley for our last night on the trail. 7.9 / -2,100' / +200'

Saturday finds us less than nine miles from our exit trailhead at Happy Isles. If we're very lucky, we'll be back at this trailhead in 2012, starting our JMT trek. Before we think about that, we have a lovely trek through Little Yosemite Valley, then along the Merced River past two famous Yosemite waterfalls - Nevada Falls and Vernal Falls. After these spectacular sights, it's just a short drop down the Mist Trail to our trailhead and our vehicles. 8.8 / -1,100'

We'll depart Yosemite via the east entrance, driving up through Tuolumne Meadows and the rest of the park for a quick tour, then head down to Mammoth Lakes and continue on until we reach Lone Pine. There, we'll stop for one last night in a hotel (see the links to the right) before the long drive back to Tucson on Sunday.

## The Prep

This trip is planned for eight people. The cost for the backpack permit will be six whole dollars per person, plus cost-sharing for fuel and our campsite at Bridalveil Creek. Of course, there will also be two nights in motels, and meals along the way. Plan on a couple hundred dollars per person for the trip. Once I have a full roster, I'll pass out names for hotel room sharing. You can work out the arrangements between yourselves.

You'll need food for seven dinners, seven breakfasts, and six lunches, plus snacks. Everything must fit into a bear canister, with the exception of the first full day's meals. Those meals - two dinners, one breakfast and one lunch - can go into a bear box at Bridalveil Creek Campground, and straight into your pack for our first day on the trail.

## Water and Weather

There should be water all over the place. I don't foresee any problems.

The weather in the Sierra Nevada can be very nice at higher elevations, but will be warm in the lower portions of our trek - mostly the last two days. Daytime highs will be in the 70s or low 80s with nighttime lows in the upper 40s and low 50s. Click the names of the various campsites below to get spot weather forecasts. You will probably only need a cool weather sleeping bag. I'm hoping to be able to take my 40° bag.

## The Hike

day	miles	elev gain	elev	destination
Friday	600 mi	driving	-	Motel 6 #262 in Bakersfield, CA - \$45.00
Saturday	220 mi	driving	-	Yosemite National Park
Saturday	bus ride	\$25.00 each	7050'	Tour bus to Bridalveil Creek Campground (\$14.00 per site)
Sunday	2.0 / 2.0	200 ft / 200 ft	7200'	Mono Meadow Trailhead
Sunday	0.6 / 2.6	-250 ft / 200 ft	6950'	Mono Meadow
Sunday	2.3 / 4.9	-500 ft / 200 ft	6400'	Illilouette Creek and Glacier Point Jct
Sunday	0.1 / 5.0	0 ft / 200 ft	6400'	First Nevada Fall Jct
Sunday	1.6 / 6.6	600 ft / 800 ft	7000'	Second Nevada Fall Jct
Sunday	1.0 / 7.6	200 ft / 1000 ft	7200'	Clark Creek Campsite
Monday	2.2 / 9.8	200 ft / 1200 ft	7400'	Lower Illilouette Canyon
Monday	4.3 / 14.1	1600 ft / 2800 ft	8900'	Lower and Upper Merced Lakes / Merced Pass Jct
Monday	3.1 / 17.2	800 ft / 3600 ft	9650'	Lower Ottoway Lake Campsite ❄️
Tuesday	2.9 / 20.1	1600 ft / 5200 ft	11200'	Red Peak Pass
Tuesday	4.3 / 24.4	200 ft / 5400 ft	9250'	Red Peak/Isberg Pass Jct
Tuesday	2.3 / 26.7	900 ft / 6300 ft	10000'	Unnamed Lake Campsite
Wednesday	3.1 / 29.8	600 ft / 6900 ft	10500'	Isberg Pass
Wednesday	1.6 / 31.4	-400 ft / 6900 ft	10100'	Isberg Lakes
Wednesday	4.7 / 36.1	500 ft / 7400 ft	10000'	Unnamed Lake Campsite for 2nd Nite

Thursday	5.0 / 41.1	600 ft / 8000 ft	9100'	Lyell Creek Crossing
Thursday	2.5 / 43.6	700 ft / 8700 ft	9600'	Washburn Creek Crossing
Thursday	3.3 / 52.4	300 ft / 9000 ft	8700'	Lewis Creek Campsite ❄️
Friday	2.1 / 49.1	-1600 ft / 9000 ft	7300'	Merced Lake Ranger Station
Friday	3.3 / 52.4	-500 ft / 9000 ft	7050'	Echo Valley
Friday	2.5 / 54.9	200 ft / 9200 ft	6200'	Upper Little Yosemite Valley Campsite
Saturday	4.0 / 58.9	-500 ft / 9200 ft	6100'	Little Yosemite Valley Campground
Saturday	4.8 / 63.7	-600 ft / 9200 ft	4100'	Happy Isles Trailhead
Saturday	200 mi	driving	-	Comfort Inn #CA786 in Lone Pine, CA - \$175.00
Sunday	600 mi	driving	-	Tucson, AZ