



Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon September 2-12, 2015

Highlights

- Tom accompanied me – this may have been his first domestic hike he attended
- Yosemite for 3 days added onto front of Sequoia/Kings Canyon hiking trip
- Yosemite was a WOW for Tom; me too despite it being my 6th trip there; I'd go again
- Ahwahnee Hotel is an experience and we added to it by reserving the Tressidor Suite on 6th floor and it was like living in a tree house; the same room the Queen stayed in
- Dry and no waterfalls so think how WOW Tom will be the next time we go!
- Kings Canyon closed for major fire; some smoke in region; return road closed due to fires on last day requiring a circuitous route
- Bugs were horrendous on part of the trails but it was still worth it
- Wuksachi Lodge in Sequoia was in a dramatically beautiful spot; we had arranged for an upgraded larger room; we were able to stay all 5 nights without moving lodges
- Next up? Fast turn-around to Croatia's Dalmatian Coast so limited trip notes; see itinerary and photos below from www.ParksPlusHiking.com web site.



The group – nice size, nice mixture, nice folks, Americans, Canadians and Brits, all steady hikers



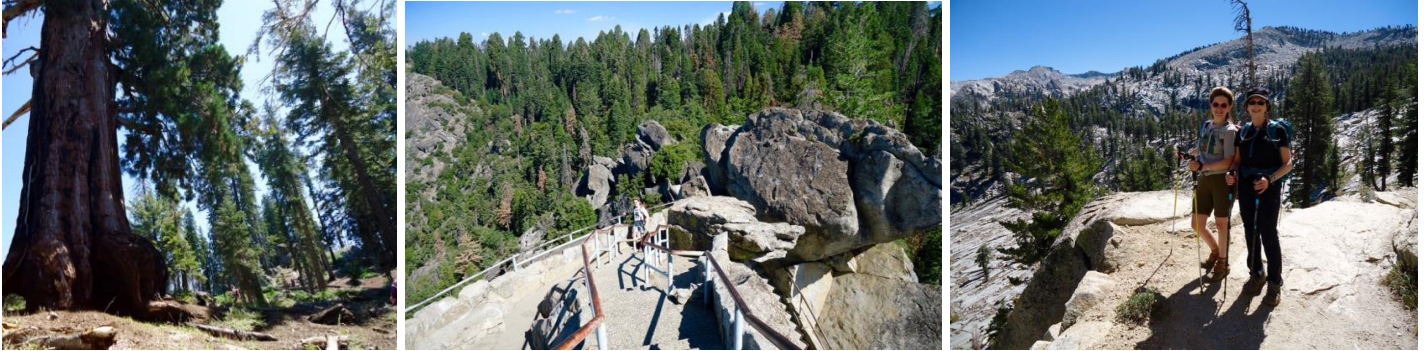
Leader Nola, Barbara, Leader Steve, Chuck, Dan, George and Patricia

Fires

We had smoke and Fresno complained of ashes but I didn't see any. It was called the "Rough" fire. Here is an article about it: "Rough fire forces evacuations in Dunlap, Grant Grove, Wilsonia | Fresno Bee." Even the Cat Haven was evacuated. www.fresnobee.com/news/local/article34639044.html

Also headlined: One dead, hundreds of Northern California homes burn in wildfires - www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/09/14/one-dead-up-1000-northern-california-homes-burn-wildfires/72248848/?csp=mostpopular

Pictures from hiking leader Nola



The first picture was headlined "where's Diana?" and I'm there as evidence of how huge are the Sequoia trees. Middle picture of about 400 steps up onto Moro Rock. Last is Barbara and Diana on the Lakes Trail. I got past two lakes, some got past the third lake, and a couple got to the fourth lake. I am in less and less of a hurry now days and actually enjoy hiking part of the time by myself and being comfortable with stopping to look around more instead of beating myself up in order to get the miles in, and/or to get to the end. You get to the "end" and then figure out there's still more anyway. Healthy? Or just old? It's nice no matter.

Hiking leaders Steve and Nola



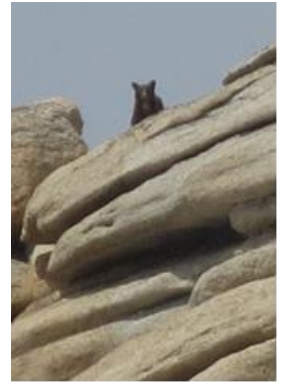
A picnic on a downed and split Sequoia, then on top of Balanced Rock, and finally with hiker Barbara on top of Moro Rock, 400 stone steps UP.

Bear Where? From www.ParksPlusHiking.com newsletter

Last week we finished up our Sequoia/Kings Canyon: More Than Just Trees tour. On the signature hike of the tour, we were sitting at 11,200' at the summit of Alta Peak enjoying a well-earned trail lunch, when to our amazement we saw a black bear walking up the same trail about 300 yards away. The bear paused at the summit ridge, gave us a good, long, deliberate look, and then headed slowly away to a nearby rocky sub-peak. As we began our descent shortly thereafter we saw the same bear peek over the



nearby rocks, obviously watching intently again as we moved away down the mountain. This has to be one of the oddest wildlife sightings ever for me (Steve). What was the bear doing at 11,000 elevation? Is the extreme drought in the area so stressing that he was following the scent of our picnic lunches only to be thwarted by the presence of a group of seven hikers? (Way too many for even a very hungry bear.) Quite the mystery that, if nothing else, will make for a good story on future tours!



An update from Tom

We got home a couple of hours ago and despite the fires nearby, they didn't impact us much. The atmosphere was a bit hazy and in places you could smell a bit of the smoke. Going from the Sequoia National Park we had to drive a bit of a circuitous route to get back to Fresno for our flight home via Denver, however.

The lack of sufficient oxygen, caused by the a-fib and high altitude had me more tired than usual which meant I just took more naps. Beautiful scenery and good group doing the hiking. Yosemite was magical and the hotel Ahwahnee (the gem of all the national parks) is super.

Photo Show on www.TomsKoi.com

Expect a photo show eventually on Tom's website. Yet it will miss all the waterfalls since California is in a serious drought so you'll need to look at www.LibertyLadies.weebly.com for one of my trips and suggest 2009 when I went twice that summer.

Photos from Tom's camera.

Tom was the tourist in Sequoia while we hiked. He probably saw the most sights since he took a guided bus tour, whereas we saw the most dirt, bugs and trees. And loved about 2/3 of that.



Not the **Last Dinner** but rather the **First Dinner** with the hiking group. We missed Canadian George in this picture made by Tom. Sorry George.



Our Lodge built in the 90s when they removed all the forest-damaging cabins. It was all set in the park without being obtrusive.



The groves were massive and many in numbers. That's Moro Rock and there are tiny people up there where we'd be in the next couple days – after climbing some 400 steps. The smoke was giving us fog-like conditions.

Photos from Diana's camera



The combination mix of rocks and forest and especially with the old trees being nature's sculpture make for my most enjoyable hikes. This was our lake hike and the last picture was the second lake. I would opt for easy and slow hiking with lots of looking around and thus miss the next two lakes.



There were a few bear sightings and this might have been the first one – just as I was saying the grass looked like an animal had been there, up popped this bear who walked the length of the fallen tree before I got my camera out. He was far enough away that I was happy. The heavy hiking day that I missed gave the rest of the group a bear sighting that was closer than needed. The middle picture is one of the few remaining squatter's cabins. The last picture could have people in it that are too small to detect. There were many huge groves.



Trails might take us through fallen trees that were tunneled out instead of being chopped up. The last picture was also a trail pathway through a natural tunnel.

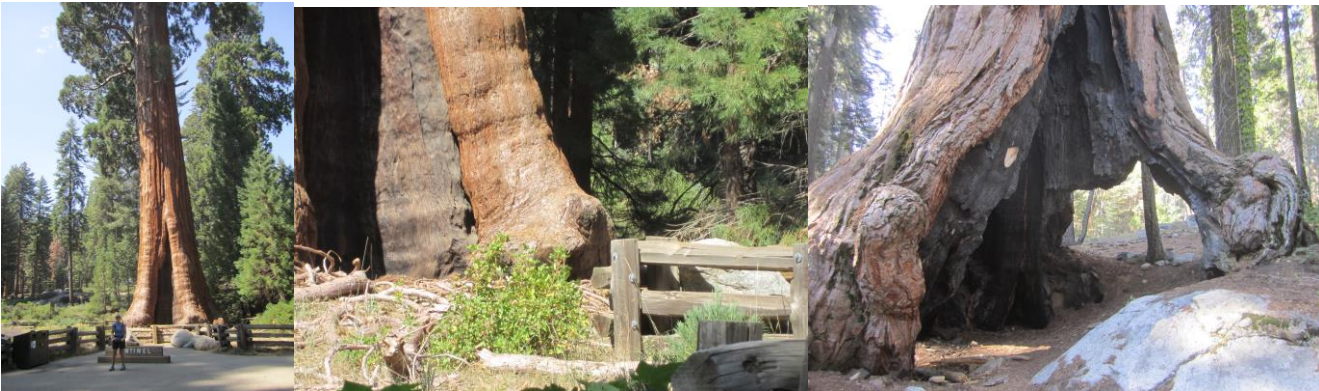


Trail markers were cute. This one was a sequoia tree. Tharp's Log was a huge horizontal hollowed out tree that a famous mountaineer and park protector made into a summer cabin, complete with fireplace, bedstead, long table and benches and fireplace. It was ventilated out the other end.

Plus we saw many sequoia that seemed fire damaged and amazingly still growing. This was called Chimney tree and the size can be identified by the hiker at the front. The last picture is looking up to the sky from the inside. It was all heavily charred which didn't keep a tree from growing.



A bear spotting from the van and that's plenty close for me. It's not a fear of them (they prefer berries over humans) but a respect that they need and deserve their space. Up on balanced rock with a view of the sierras. A climb up Moro Rock.



This 2nd largest massive tree was at the Tree Museum. Somewhere in that second picture was a bear which was far too close to humans and thus the Ranger was scaring him off and explaining how they could get used to human food and then be a danger and need to be killed. The last picture was still a living sequoia.

First – we visited Yosemite

Here are some of Tom's pictures. Mine were memorialized in a number of other trip reports, most notably in 2009 when I hiked Yosemite with these two leaders and then later that same month returned for a week to hike up Half Dome, followed by the almost as difficult Yosemite Falls (up and over), followed by the San Francisco Marathon the next day on my 65th birthday. That was the year I did 25 (full) marathons and similar numbers of half marathons and a good number of hikes too. I claimed **"25 for 65"**. I can't top that for my 70th so I quit trying.



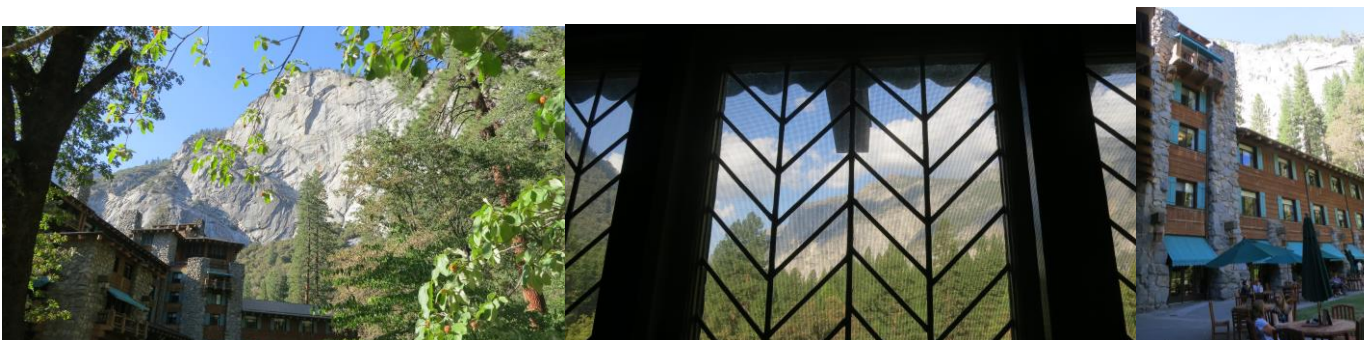
For some years we had considered visiting Yosemite and staying in Oakhurst, outside of the park, in this lovely chateau ran by a French/Swiss gal. It was a good thing we didn't, for a few reasons, not the least was the road noise in Oakhurst, and the fact that our choice top floor suite at the Ahwahnee was such a lovely experience.



The Ahwahnee dining room is a sight. The food is pretty okay for a national park and one needs to think "location-location-location".



The suite was on the top floor, part of an entire huge suite used by Mary Tressidor and administrator of the parks husband and now broken into two or three junior suites, and famous for being the room where the Queen of England stayed. It was like staying in a tree house as the multiple windows were surrounded by trees and looking out to the Royal Arches Rocks (where Nola practiced her overnight stay on the rocks.) The bathroom was especially memorable with mirrors everywhere, rows and rows of drawers and closets, and again more windows looking out to the rocks and trees.



The view from the back yard where we had drinks each late afternoon, then the view from the end of the dining room.



We took a guided tour of the valley floor and another day a guided tour up to Glacier Point. Again – I look out at Half Dome and remember hiking-guide Megan saying “you walk it, you own it” and that is MY Half Dome in the middle. I climbed about 5,000’ feet of trails, a rock garden, and up cables to get to the top. It took awhile

You’ll soon find more photos with Tom’s www.TomsKoi.com Photo Shows link.

You think I travel a lot? Little do you know! It’s a big wide world

I’ve realized that I have a wonderful wide world available to me no matter where I am. In recent books:

- I’ve been in Paris during the late 1800s through David McCullough’s “Americans in Paris” enjoying the art world. Looking forward to new things to do in Paris in December.
- I’ve been in old Rome and visited the Borgia family with the new book “The Pope’s Daughter” about Lucrezia and that after reading all four of Sarah Dunant’s books in the similar time period. Anxious for my 6th trip to Rome this November.
- I’ve spent time on the Scottish coast with a book by my last hiking leader called “Blazing Paddles” when he made records on his trip around Scotland and the islands.
- In between I’ve time with tour books for my September trip to Croatia’s Dalmatian Coast, researching places of interest in Lisbon and out-skirting towns for our December visit. Then I almost finished my itinerary for next May’s Granada to Seville trip, with Normandy and Brittany research next up for the June visit.

Pretty wide range of travels, don’t you think? Yet I’m clear that there’s a BIG world out there that I’ve barely touched. When I think that I’ve traveled a lot, then someone mentions a place I can’t even find on the globe.

On the addiction of travel

Judy sent us this article on the life of an ex-pat. I think living in a foreign country can be addictive: one likes the challenge, being foreign and not always so accountable, even not knowing of all the country’s problems. Yet after living in the Far East, then five years in Europe, I got to understand that it was artificial: One never need be accountable. One was always on vacation. There was nothing to do but enjoy. Then I felt a need to return to the U.S. and get on with life. So what do I do now? Basically the same unaccountable, artificial, but challenging vacation life!

From WSJ, “What Makes the Expat Lifestyle So Addictive?” www.wsj.com/articles/BL-272B-944

From Tom: That site is very interesting and in a way, I've always admired and even envied a little, the life of an expat. Fortunately, I've/we've had the experience a few times and can relate but must say, I'm now and have been for many years, most happy to be right here, in my little house, with my ponds and garden, living well and as I want and satisfied with short visits to foreign and exotic places. Most likely the best of all worlds (for me at least).

What's next?

This could take another trip report. With a very short turn-around of just a couple of days, I'm off to the Dalmatian Coast of Croatia for a hiking trip, starting with a couple days tourist in Split and ending with four nights in Dubrovnik. There will be five-star lodging to start and finish, and even a Relais and Chateaux during the hike.

October takes Tom and me to Madrid and Bilbao for touring and then I start a hiking trip in the Basque region, followed by three nights in San Sebastian before returning to Madrid. We are gone nearly three weeks.

November is equally exciting with my making a fifth or sixth trip to Rome accompanied by my hiking leader friends who toured Florence with me earlier in the year.

December will give me a good excuse to NOT do holiday cards or shopping since I have two weeks in Paris solo in a small rental apartment in St Germain des Pres. That is followed by two weeks with Marie when we all will travel Lisbon and surrounding areas for nine nights out of an extravagantly gorgeous looking apartment center city. I was in Lisbon with a running group in 2014 and didn't have near enough time. We will also visit Evora, Sintra and Fatima on day trips as well as take in an evening of Fado. Marie is collecting monasteries and this will give her two delightful ones to her collection.

The new year takes me to St Paul for the skating nationals; California for a photo tour in February; Boston for the skating world championships in March; hiking Chaco Canyon and de Chelly in April followed by a few days in Santa Fe; May to Spain for a few days in each of Seville and Granada with hiking in between; June to France again for hiking Normandy and Brittany with a few days bookended on either end with Tom; July to Munich for hiking in Bavaria and Austria with a few days in Salzburg also with Tom; later July to Bozeman for hiking Beartooths again plus upper Yellowstone; August to Seattle for a few days followed by hiking in Olympic National Park; September to Medford and the Oregon coast followed by hiking Crater Lake and the Redwoods; and later September to Rapid City again for hiking South Dakotas many highlights.

Do I think my legs will make it all? We'll see. I can only hope and be grateful for what I've had.

This NOT the End!

Itinerary

Wed Sep 2

6:13pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#1284
9:20pm Arrive Los Angeles LAX for plane change

10:20pm Depart Los Angeles LAX via UA#6433
11:20pm Arrive Fresno

Rental Car Car companies appear to be all closed

Hotel Holiday inn Fresno Airport – 1 night
5090 East Clinton, Fresno, CA 93727 Tele 559 252 3611
There is a shuttle but easier to just walk across the street

Thu Sep 3

10:00am Pick up Rental Car – Thrifty #G7NT3P

Drive to Yosemite - approx. 2 ½ hours

Hotel Ahwahnee Hotel – 3 nights in Mary Curry Tresiddor Junior Suite
Ahwahnee Road, Yosemite National park, CA 95389
<http://www.yosemitepark.com/the-ahwahnee.aspx>
Tele: (801) 559-4884 reservations or 209 372 1407 x0 front desk

From website: The Mary Curry Tresidder Suite features a four-poster canopy bed and rich color palette, and has a decidedly romantic aura. The large bathroom offers craftsman designed cabinets and bidet. On her trip to Yosemite in 1983, Queen Elizabeth II stayed in this suite, and since then this unique Ahwahnee accommodation has been fondly referred to as "The Queen's Room".

Sat Sep 5

Pre-tour hotel is Holiday Inn Fresno Airport – same for Friday Sep 11 post tour hotel

Sun Sep 6

Drive approx. 3 ½ hours to Waksachi Lodge to meet up with PPH

From www.ParksPlusHiking.com: Sequoia/Kings Canyon: More Than Just Trees
Sequoia is undoubtedly the best place in the world to hike amongst astounding "Sequoiadendron Giganteum" (i.e., giant sequoias). Beyond just trees though, the park offers a wealth of other features that make for a fantastic hiking experience. From spectacular alpine scenery to abundant wildlife to the comfort and convenience of Wuksachi Lodge, we think our six-day Sequoia/Kings Canyon hike should be on every hiker's "to do" list. Throw in the challenge of Alta Peak and you've got a classic. Don't take our word for it, come see for yourself! (And by the way, yes it does pain us to call a sequoia "just a tree." But we are trying to making a point here.)

Sun Sep 6 - Day 1

Tokopah Falls - Distance: 4 mi - Difficulty: 3 – PPH expects me to miss the first days hike

Departing Fresno, we make our way to the Lodgepole area of Sequoia for our first hike, Tokopah Falls. While the falls are relatively tame this time of year, the moderate 2-mile ascent along the Tokopah trail offers great views of the massive "Watchtower" looming above and the forested valley below. After the hike, we'll make the short commute to Wuksachi Lodge--our modern, comfortable, centrally located home for all five nights of the tour.

Hotel Wuksachi Lodge – 1st of 5 nights
Wuksachi Way Wuksachi Village, Sequoia National Park, CA 93262
Tele: (866) 807-3598 <http://www.visitsequoia.com/lodging.aspx>

Yes coffee maker, mini refrig and WiFi.

From website: *Every national park has its top lodge, the one place to stay that reflects all the park stands for. The Wuksachi Lodge® is Sequoia's signature motel, a striking stone-and-cedar mountain lodge situated in the heart of the park and surrounded by a mighty sequoia forest and soaring Sierra peaks. Open year-round and located with the best access to Sequoia's awesome attractions, the Wuksachi Lodge was built in 1999 in a spectacular alpine setting at 7,200-foot elevation. This alluring mountain lodge features 102 spacious guest rooms, a [full-service restaurant](#) with massive picture windows, cocktail lounge, retail and ski shop, and dedicated [special event facilities](#). Wireless Internet is available in all common areas of the lodge. All guest rooms at this distinctive Sequoia lodge are located 100-200 yards from the main lodge building, and feature upscale, natural décor highlighting native granite rock, oak, cedar and hickory woods, private baths, flat panel televisions, telephones with computer data ports, hair dryers, coffee makers, iron/boards, mini refrigerators, ski racks, central heat, and daily maid service. You'll enjoy our Sequoia lodging's remote location, yet all the modern amenities and guest services of a AAA rated three-diamond hotel. It's the perfect base camp for exploring the wonders of Sequoia by day, and as evening falls, spinning Sequoia stories next to a roaring, rock-rimmed fireplace.*

Mon Sep 7 - Day 2

Heather/Emerald/Pear Lakes - Distance: 12 mi - Difficulty: 5

Today's theme is alpine lakes so bring your swimsuits (brrr!). Our hike begins with a steady climb through the forest to "The Hump," a 9,400' granite outcropping and a great spot for a break. From The Hump, we continue on a wide trail carved into a rock ledge high above the Tokopah Valley to our next destination, Heather Lake. Past this point, the trail climbs gradually to Emerald then Pear Lake, either of which makes a great lunch/turnaround point. Whichever lake we achieve, 11,200' Alta Peak will loom well above to the south reminding us what awaits for day 5.

Hotel Waksachi Lodge – 2nd of 5 nights

Tue Sep 8 - Day 3

Mist Falls - Distance: 8 mi - Difficulty: 4

Time for a day trip to Kings Canyon National Park. Much of our outing will be spent on the extraordinary Kings Canyon Scenic Byway, which begins at the terminus of the Generals Highway and descends nearly a mile vertically into Kings Canyon itself. At "Roads End" we'll hit the trail along the south fork of the Kings River past Bubbs Creek to our destination, Mist Falls. The river above Bubbs Creek is actually a long series of falls, cascades, and rapids so to ensure their proper identification the Park Service has posted a sign designating one particularly scenic drop as Mist Falls. That is our destination, lunch spot, and turnaround point.

Hotel Waksachi Lodge – 3rd of 5 nights

Wed Sep 9 - Day 4

Giant Forest, Moro Rock - Distance: 10 mi - Difficulty: 4

There are few hikes I (Steve) look forward to more than the Giant Forest. Starting in quiet Crescent Meadow, we climb steadily past scattered sequoias, eventually joining the Congress Trail. There we'll see the Senate and House Group and many other named trees before "General Sherman," the largest known tree on earth. From the Sherman tree we make our way back toward Crescent Meadow, pausing for lunch on the Trail of the Sequoias.

Departing the Giant Forest, our day is far from over. Our next stop is a short but exciting hike to Moro Rock, a park landmark and fabulous view point. After Moro Rock, we then make a stop at the Giant

Forest Museum where we'll find answers to many of the questions we've come up with during our hike among the trees. What a day!

Hotel Waksachi Lodge – 4th of 5 nights

Thu Sep 10 - Day 5

Alta Peak - Distance: 13 mi - Difficulty: 5

Behind Half Dome, Alta Peak is the 2nd hardest hike that Parks Plus offers on any tour. It is also one of the most scenic, rewarding, and fun! What makes this hike so challenging is its 13-mile (round trip) length; 4,000' of vertical rise; the steep, rocky two mile climb below the summit; and the 11,200' elevation of the peak itself. What makes it rewarding are the fantastic views of the Sierra Crest to the east you'll enjoy for over half the climb to the peak and knowing that comfort and great food await you when you return to Waksachi Lodge. We suspect you already understand, but the "fun" part is hard to define.

Hotel Waksachi Lodge – 5th of 5 nights

Fri Sep 11 - Day 6

Little Baldy, General Grant Grove - Distance: 4 mi - Difficulty: 3

We close out our visit to Sequoia/Kings Canyon with two short hikes. First, we make the moderate climb to yet another granite promontory, in this case 8,044' Little Baldy. After admiring the view and shooting some group photos, we return to the trailhead and make the short drive to Grant Grove Village. There we'll hike the grove loop past the General Grant Tree, the second largest sequoia tree on earth, then head back to the village for lunch prior to our return to Fresno.

Hotel Holiday Inn Fresno Airport
Address and phone above

5:00pm Turn in rental car

Sat Sep 12

6:00am Depart Fresno FAT via UA#6497 operated by SkyWest Airlines

9:19am Arrive Denver DEN for plane change (3:21 connection time but nice club available)

12:40pm Depart Denver DEN via UA#1935

6:27pm Arrive Newark EWR

Note: Depart early Sep 16 to Croatia

From PPH newsletter: **Sequoia--Out of the Shadows**

Sequoia National Park is a bit of an enigma. The park contains the largest living organisms on earth (The General Sherman tree) and the highest peak in the lower 48 states (Mt. Whitney). What's more, Sequoia is our nation's second oldest National Park, designated for such protection before the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, etc. So why so little attention?

The one-word answer, of course, is "Yosemite." Sequoia's northern neighbor is obviously (and deservedly) world-renowned for its spectacular beauty and we look forward to our visit there in July on our [Yosemite hike](#). But that isn't what I want to talk about now. Rather, let's take a quick look at Sequoia; take it out of the shadow of Yosemite, so to speak.

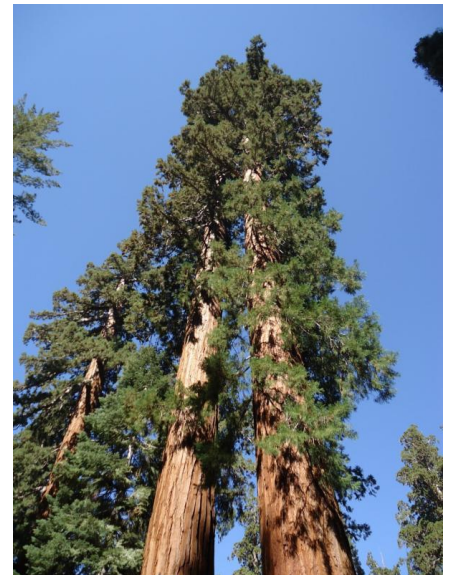


Challenging Hikes . . . Comfortable Nights

We're all about the hiking so that's the place to start in shining the light on Sequoia. If you look at the roster of hikes for our [Sequoia/Kings Canyon tour](#), you'll see healthy mileage and a mix of moderate to strenuous trails. What is hard to convey is the splendor and the variety of the terrain you'll see: massive granite spires, domes, and other formations; turquoise alpine lakes, shimmering waterfalls, and the greatest concentration of giant sequoias in the world. Add to this the exceptional quality of the trails themselves, the absence of crowds, and an abundance of wildlife, including black bears. Lest we forget, there's also Alta Peak, an 11,200' mountain that is tough to summit but worth every challenging step.

All five nights of our Sequoia/Kings Canyon tour are spent at spectacular Wuksachi Lodge. Few people have ever heard of this lodge; few who have stayed there will ever forget it. Wuksachi Lodge was built in 1999 and boasts spacious, fully appointed accommodations, a cosy central lobby, and an excellent dining room. The lodge is nestled in a mature evergreen forest, yet set in close proximity to most of the park's trailheads (i.e., less than 20 minutes drive). The star-filled night sky at Wuksachi is a sight to behold!

Here are more photos of Sequoia to perhaps whet your interest. Our six-day [Sequoia/Kings Canyon tour](#) is scheduled for September 6-11, 2015. Care to join us?





YOSEMITE PHENOMENON

http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=9V9p4mFEYXc&vq=medium#t=15