

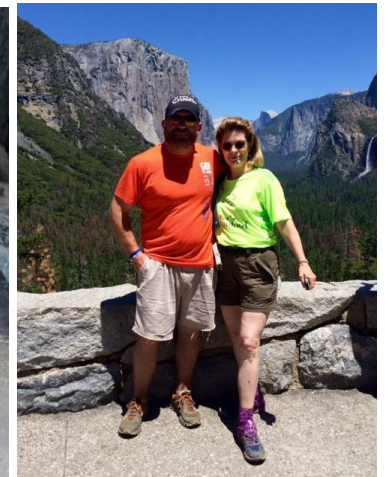


## Yosemite with Half Dome Trip Notes June 23 – July 2, 2017

### Highlights:

- It's always nice to have younger ones on a hike and this was nephew Chad. It's also nice to NOT be the oldest one in the group and I was 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest with the oldest being a True Superman of 79.
- This was my umpteenth trip to Yosemite and hopefully I'm not done. As a kid and tourist, day trips out of San Francisco, a week's guided hike with Steve and Nola in 2009, a week on my own to climb Half Dome and Yosemite Falls in 2009, a tourist trip with Tom in 2015 and now THIS!
- Only hoping for One-Half of Half Dome, I got about 4,000' of the 5,000' accomplished and found it to be plenty satisfying.

**The Group:** Everyone seemed quite compatible, and oftentimes it was like a summer camp reunion.



**Superwoman?** I was? Now I'm not. Humbling and sobering. What a difference a few years (and a few pounds) can make not to mention having been in marathon shape when I hiked to the top of Half Dome, the next day up and across Yosemite Falls, then drove to San Francisco for their marathon the next day.

### Daily Notes Home:

#### Saturday as a free day in lovely Fresno

I got a lot of comments about Fresno and everyone seemed to agree it's the pits. In addition to being well over 100°. Here is from a well-traveled Los Angeles friend:

*"Fresno is the worst city in CA. Nothing but the doldrums. Can you imagine when I was Secondary Literacy Coordinator we had a conference there? Getting there was a nightmare. The only good thing good about the trip was visiting wineries in the area."*

Yet: There is an REI. And they have In-n-Out Burgers. Tom and I ate at our only In-n-Out Burger ever while we were here for the Sequoia hike. (They don't exist on the East Coast.) They have their followers and a wonderful reputation shared by my tour guides who offered to take me there for dinner tonight. Pic of a burger.

Me? With these temperatures I have stayed inside. The hotel is probably upscale for Fresno and certainly a bargain by our standards. I did note that every time you go through a hallway you have to use your room key for Security. (That is three times to get to my room). And there are posters in the room reminding to leave no valuables and a sign at the TV declaring that it will not work anywhere else (so don't steal it). Chipped paint suggests that at one time the doors and woodwork were a tacky red-brick color. But now the room is re-decorated nicely.

California having had such a severe drought, I didn't mind when the faucets were a mere trickle. Then the hotel really got my admiration and vote when I stepped in the shower and saw a double showerhead. That's one way to get around the showerhead restrictions. Pic attached.

Jet lag is alive and well and I was awake from 4 AM until 5 AM and finally got up. It was then I saw that my nephew Chad had a flight delay coming here that would cause him to miss his Denver connection into Fresno. A call to the United 1K Desk revealed that they had already booked him on the next available flight and he advised that they offered snack food and he had even made friends with the gate agent.

A sign of a good tour company and guides is when faced with adversity they can come up with a solution. [www.ParksPlusHiking.com](http://www.ParksPlusHiking.com) came to the area a few days early because main roads are closed and trails are still snow-covered. Nola joined me at breakfast and told of the challenges and solutions. (At the end of the report you could find their explanation and offer to cancel with full refund.) For me it's almost good because I did the scheduled hikes before and now we will have alternate trails. I did feel for them and their challenge. Our circuitous drive to the first hotel will now take 5 hours.

For my international hiking group [www.countrywalkers.com](http://www.countrywalkers.com) I am having no good feelings. They are pretty much daring Tom to be anywhere near whereas the last trip he was only nearby for three hotel dinners. I sat at his table. He paid. Gads! I might have done more hikes with them than most anyone and have a few more paid and they couldn't cut even a bit of slack for two or three dinners in a week? Sad? Anyone who knows Tom would know that the idea of interrupting "group dynamics" is a farce. Can you tell that I'm teed off at this big company -itis?

Chad made it in on time and we were just coming back from our burger dinner and were able to pick him up at the airport. He has been a particularly good sport about the long day and delays.

Yosemite coming up. We leave early in the morning. I have attached a web picture of what we'll see. It is the valley with half dome in the background; some people go up half dome with ropes and we will hike up the backside using handheld cables. Or we think we will.



**Sunday - Day 1 of hike.** In Lee Vining which is on the eastern side of the park. It didn't exactly go as planned. These poor leaders really had to work hard to make it work.

From the itinerary and what I did with them in 2009: *Much of our first day in Yosemite will be spent commuting across nearly the entire park from Fresno near the south entrance to the Tioga Pass gate in the northeast. Along the way we will stop at the newly restored Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias. Following our hike among these amazing trees, we'll continue north through the park past Yosemite Valley and Crane Flats, then turn east for along Tioga Pass road toward Lee Vining, a quaint western town and our home for three evenings. Note that hiking in Mariposa Grove is contingent upon the Park Service's planned 2016 completion of its major restoration project in the grove. The backup hikes for this day are May Lake or Dog Lake on Tioga Pass road.* End.



But the road was closed. Mariposa Grove was not even open yet. And the only other alternative road was a 6 Hour drive and even that road had been closed until about two weeks ago. Fortunately the drive on highway 108 over the Sonora pass was dramatically beautiful plus it was snow-covered and it gave us a lovely picnic spot. Unfortunately it was a curvy little road, up over near 10,000' and that is always a big challenge for me. I ate a lot of ginger, sucked a lot of peppermint, and just made it. But that's all I need and I was glad to have done it but almost got sick when I learned that we have to do that road again in three days going back to the valley. That is unless the Tioga road opens.

We had two small alternative hikes planned around Mono Lake but at the last minute the second one received a closure by the parks. Some of us didn't mind because it was 88° and full sunshine and high elevation that I'm not used to so I was delighted to watch the movie called "spirit of Yosemite" in the air-conditioned visitor center.

Do you know about mono lake? This year has been a big "salt" year for me having been to the Dead Sea, then to the famous huge important salt flats of Slovenia and here I am looking at salt hoodoos called tufas.

From Wikipedia: *Mono Lake is a large, shallow saline soda lake in Mono County, California, formed at least 760,000 years ago as a terminal lake in an endorheic basin. The lack of an outlet causes high levels of salts to accumulate in the lake.*

From [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org): *One of the oldest lakes in the western hemisphere, Mono Lake is hauntingly beautiful, reflecting the snow-capped Sierra Nevada in its shimmering blue waters. An immense inland sea, the 70 square-mile lake fills a natural basin, 700 square-miles in size. Together with nearby volcanoes, ghost towns and trout-filled streams, this area is a natural wonderland for the entire family.*



*Pictures include: our picnic spot with the bridge over a rushing river. All rivers are rushing now as are all waterfalls. The heat wave on top of heavy snow pack might be a first. From our first walk, here's an early view of mono lake. Tomorrow we will see better views of the tufas. I'll add a web shot of the lake with tufas.*

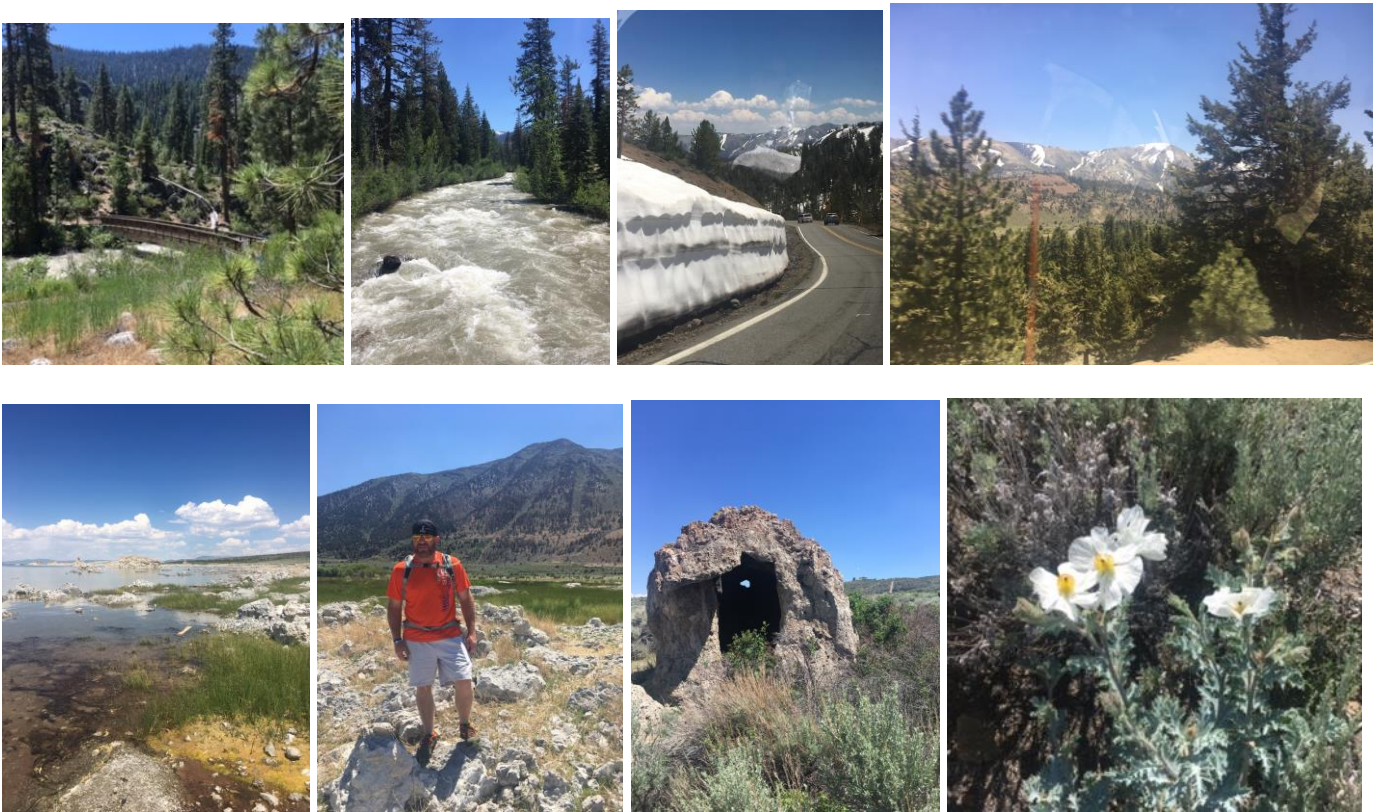
Chad is good company and I just hope we can keep him active and busy enough that he doesn't think he's just with the old folks.

Some tufas were used to store food stuff and as refrigerant units. And as we walked through the scrubs all of a sudden was a lone little flower. But on the drive, because of all the water and now the heat, there were wild flowers galore.

We are in a sweet little motel that I used to complain about but now realize the owners have done enough upgrade that it's quite livable, in a good location, and has enough pluses. Just as good is that it was within a walk of a nice little barbecue restaurant called Biody Mikes (where I had a barbecue pulled pork sandwich as well as the salad bar) and close enough to the famous gas station with a noted restaurant we will visit tomorrow night. (Chad really did himself proud by having the combination barbecue chicken, baby back ribs, regular ribs, corn on the cob, salad bar, and probably more. He's a big boy and can handle it).

The Yosemite area really is dramatically beautiful and just goes on and on. Most only see the valley and don't get to other gorgeous sections.

Yet don't you hate people who send you notes about their fabulous fantastic wonderfully perfect trip with their dearest and bestest friends ever and ever? With an effort to be realistic, I will tell you that the heat and elevation are affecting me enough that I have to wonder whether I'll be able to do very much of the hikes. I drank a huge amount of water and never felt well hydrated today. On the other hand, who can complain if all they could do is sit in a lounge chair and look at some of the scenery? Me! I want to do and hike it all! And I'm just NOT ready to grow old! Amen.



## Monday - Day 2 of hike

I thought today might be a little boring since we had to substitute hikes and I was just going to add it to the end of yesterday. Not.

From the itinerary and what I could do another trip if I feel up to it: *Today we'll venture up to lovely Tuolumne Meadows. We will hike a portion of the 2,650 mile Pacific Crest trail through the quiet meadow then down along the Tuolumne River past several spectacular waterfalls. Our turnaround and lunch spot is at thundering White Cascade adjacent to Glen Aulin High Sierra Camp. On our way back up the trail the warm California sun will be pleasantly offset by several cold but easily managed creek crossings. End.*

Obviously even if the roads were open those creek crossings would not have been manageable. You still see lots of snow pack in the mountains.

After a breakfast at the local Nicely's Inn just a couple blocks away, we headed out to the trailhead for Parker Lake. Here is a website and a lot of pictures of this 2 1/2 to 3 hour hike that is about 650 feet of elevation gain. It's pretty rocky and climbs rather steadily but we were lucky that it was cooler than expected and with some breeze. We did run into a buggy area but we were well prepared. The creek beds showed very heavy fast running water that had overflowed the edges and the lake itself was up quite a bit.

<https://modernhiker.com/hike/hike-parker-lake>

After a picnic lunch in town in an area by the lake reminded us to be careful what you wish for. Though a bit hot the wind was really very strong and we had to hold our picnic supplies down. That wind would pay off when we headed up to Panum Crater. Instead of yesterday's 88° it was a mere 84° today but the wind made it manageable. It didn't require a lot of fluid intake and I was surprised to have downed 70 to 80 ounces of liquid. (Nope. I used it all. No pit-stops needed).

From the web: *An otherworldly remnant of a geologically recent volcanic period, Panum Crater is the smallest and most accessible of the Mono Craters. Just south of Mono Lake, a hike around Panum Crater Rim Trail provides visitors with a unique vantage point to view the Eastern Sierra and Mono Basin.*



*Panum Crater was formed only 650 years ago by forces that are still shaping the volcanic and seismically active region. In fact, the Mono Craters are the youngest mountain range in North America. Having both youth and a durable composition of rhyolite on its side, Panum Crater is a perfectly preserved specimen. Hiking the Panum Crater Rim Trail requires modest physical fitness and good footwear. Loose, pea-sized pumice gravel is prevalent throughout the trail and may present a challenge to those with limited mobility. The 1.5-mile track is completely exposed and subject to high winds. Circumnavigating the crater can take up to an hour; carrying water is recommended. End.*

We did two trails and the circling of the crater was said to be about 3 miles with a lot of up-and-down. When hiking in scree it's often times 2 steps up, one step down so we will probably all feel it tomorrow.

All and all for the day we put in around 8 miles with plenty of elevation and challenge. Just the starting elevation was enough for me. I could breathe hard in the parking lot.

Pictures include: our hotel on our way back from breakfast.

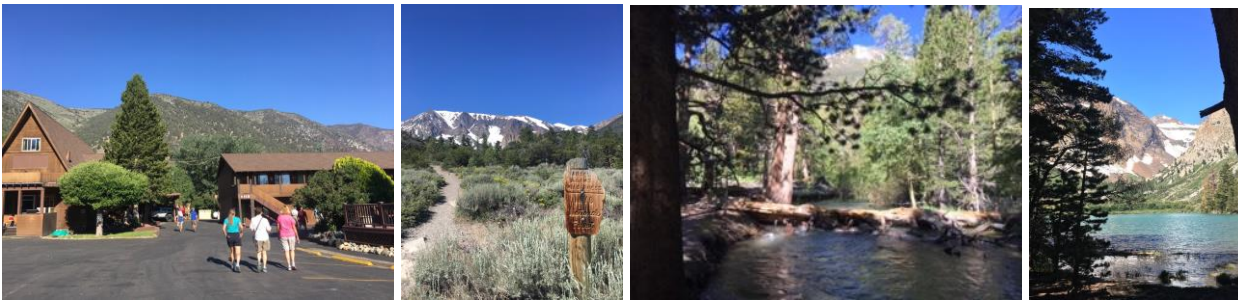
The beginning of Parker Lake Trail is in the Adam Ansell wilderness. I've given you a picture of the first bit of rushing water alongside our trail well before reaching the lake. There were fishermen in the lake. There were dogs along the trail and one had been gussied up and very colorful.

Remember this is the land of the giant trees and here is a California redwood.

The rock formations at the volcano were huge. Notice a little teeny person next to the first picture. The rock formations at the volcano were huge. Notice the little teeny person next to the first picture. This is the young volcano but to put that in perspective that was probably before Christopher Columbus discovered America. Along the Rim Trail we sometimes had the thought that we were going out on a ledge before continuing on. Dinner was at the famous gas station restaurant. Noted for gourmet food where you order at the counter and eat on the picnic benches. I had fish tacos that are quite unusual with mango topping on one and black bean and salsa on the other. Chad had some sort of a steak burger. It might have served two people but he managed it all.

If you are a foodie or just need a little entertainment you might enjoy this link. The article about the restaurant was too lengthy to cut-and-paste.

<http://amp.sacbee.com/entertainment/living/travel/sam-mcmanis/article2578395.html>





### Tuesday - Day 3 off-hiking.

Sometimes after a full week of hiking some friend will ask "How do you do it?" The answer is "I don't always". In fact today I'm taking the day off. I'm too under-exercised before getting here and thus over-exercised yesterday and the pulse rate stayed high as a result, coupled with a very high elevation that I'm not used to, all resulting in NO sleep.

So like when I did marathons I bragged about sometimes having DNS. I had at least eight DNSs. Today I had a DNS. In the marathon world people have the hated DNF for "did not finish". So I bragged about having a DNS for "did nothing stupid". That was my thought this morning: my legs felt fine and I sort of wanted to go on the hike, but with an abundance of caution it is a DNS day.

Today I will see what Lee Vining has to offer for the tourist and I will have a long nap. And when the hiker's come back they will all tell me how it was the best hike ever and how much I missed and how awful I should feel about missing it and I will just remember that there's a lot in this world that I missed and one more place missed probably won't hurt me.

I didn't expect much of Lee Vining but it was plenty. And it was uniquely quiet; one must feel sorry for the town, usually full of tourists but, because of the unusual snow pack the main road in is closed indefinitely.

<http://www.abc10.com/amp/news/local/california/record-snowpack-will-keep-tioga-pass-closed-indefinitely/452192650>



I'd gone to breakfast with the group where I created a reasonable Swiss Rosti (one of my favorite meals) from hash browns and eggs. Then went to fix my lunch with the group that I'd eventually take lake side where the Sea Gulls! begged and nagged me but didn't get much. But not until a long snooze before-hand.

The weather was finally delightful. First I sat in the shade and then I had to move to the sun. It was quite an unexpected change of weather. There was a swing set that I couldn't resist but equally like how I don't ride very well I don't stay on a swing-set very long either. I tried twice.

I looked up the top 10 things to do in Lee Vining and had either done them or had them covered after a couple of hours. I again had the thought that this is a sweet little town with beautiful backdrop and plenty to do in the vicinity and one could live here or anywhere. Then I remembered Fresno.... (Voted worst city is true).

Walking in the back streets I found a number of little homes that could well have been converted trailers but most very well kept with sweet little Gardens. That took me to a backstreet with a giant Sequoia or redwood. It was full of Christmas lights. There's a total of three souvenir shops and I saw all of each. The most interesting I found was red pottery made with horse hair.

The main attraction is the Old Schoolhouse Museum and Upside-Down House operated by the Mono Basin Historical Society. It's next to Hess Park where we've picnicked twice before and where there is good view of the Cinder cone we hiked. The museum is said to be full of both commonplace and odd artifacts, photographs, books, maps and equipment chronicling the cultural history of the area. Outside is Nellie Bly's legendary Upside-Down House, along with farming and mining equipment from the days when they tried to build a multi-mile canal which never worked due to sandy soil. Inside the museum are Indian artifacts, gold mining implements and the wheel of an old Mono Lake tour boat.

The Upside-Down House was created by Nellie Bly O'Bryan (1893–1984), visionary, entrepreneur and long-time resident of the Mono Basin. Originally located along US-395 north of the Tioga Lodge, it was inspired by two children's stories—"Upside Down Land" and "The Upsidedownians." Upon her death in 1984, the Upside-Down House fell into disrepair until it was rescued and moved to its current site in October 2000. The house became Mono County's first "man-made" tourist attraction in 1956. End.

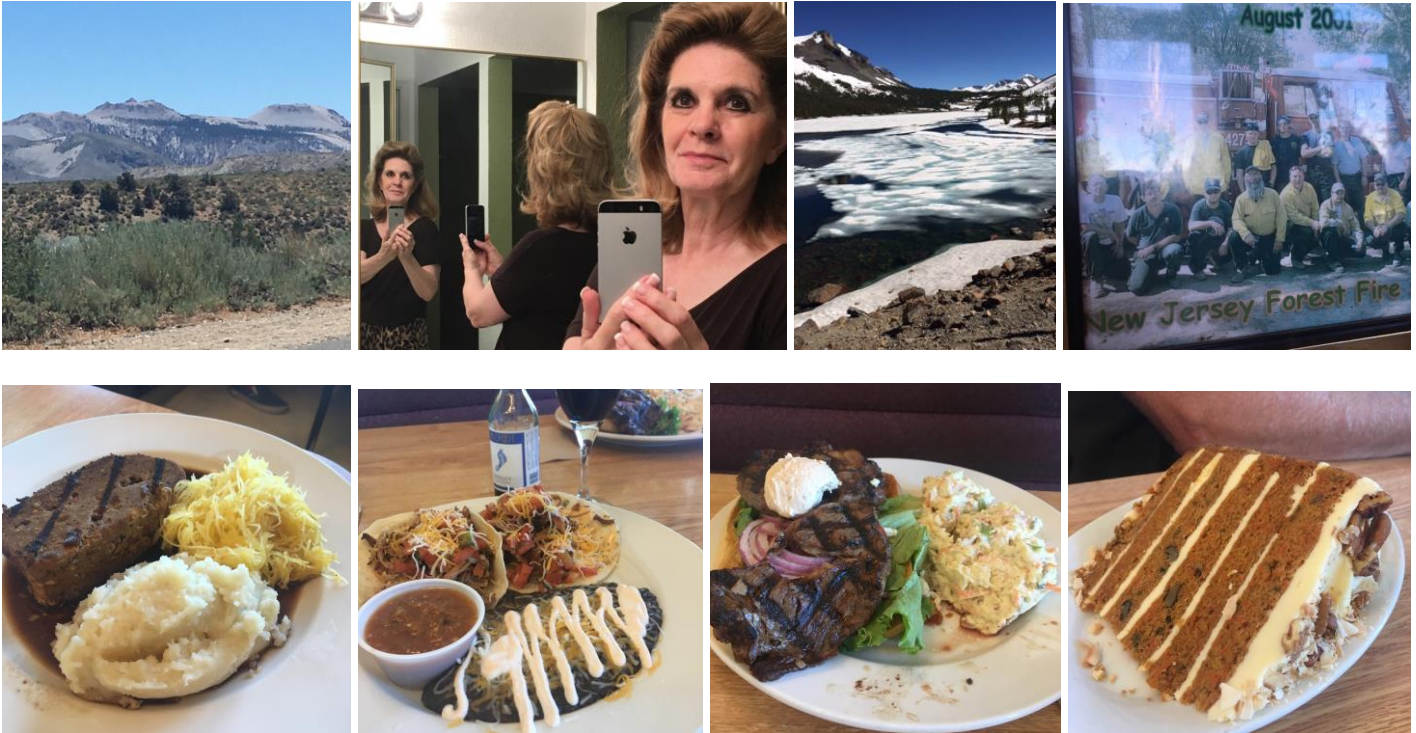
Hey look! For someone who hates selfies I certainly made up for zero selfies with a three-in-one. Late in the day the group had an hour and a half drive to see the snow and closed road -- which obviously I chose not to do. Here is Nola's report: *Tioga Lake - We drove up to the east edge of the park where the road was closed today. Still lots of snow... hard to believe but here's proof! ;)*

There only being two reasonable places to eat in Lee Vining, hikers got a choice and everybody asked for the gas station again. Look! As I sat down, at my dinner booth I found a framed picture of New Jersey firefighters helping Yosemite in a disaster of 2001.

And since a lot of you enjoy food pictures here ate my pork tacos, Chad's meatloaf, Steve and Nola's shared steak sandwich, and a major piece of carrot cake shared all around. Tomorrow we start earlier than usual and have breakfast at 7 AM before heading out for our long long drive via a circuitous route to Yosemite Valley. We will have a short hike to see the famous Sequoias on the way.

Life is good!





**Wednesday - Day 4 from Lee Vining to Yosemite Valley (the long way).**

Yes, we are driving about five hours which is 2 to 3 hours out of our way because the Tioga road is not yet open. Imagine our dismay to find out that Tioga Pass opens tomorrow! Add "insult to injury" is the fact that the alternate route we had to take was being paved and allows for one way traffic in more than one spot. There was a time when we had been driving for five hours and I saw a sign that said 48 miles - I'm afraid it was 48 miles to Lee Vining. I didn't ask.

Yet the road was again majestic and beautiful. We passed the US Marine Corps mountain training center and I thought that if you have to do training this is a good place.

Pictures include: A butterfly on the porch as we were leaving to breakfast. That huge plate is one cinnamon bun. No it wasn't mine. I again had my eggs on hash-browns and thought I have a Swiss Rosti.

Lots of snow on our alternate route through Sonora pass at around 10,000 feet of elevation. I was glad we were leaving the nearly 7000 feet elevation in Lee Vining and would be in the valley at about 4000 feet. My breathing was stressed standing still in the parking lot.

With Mariposa Grove still closed for renovation we went into Tuolumne Grove to see the giant sequoias. There is Chad looking at the base of the fallen Sequoia before we went through one of the tunnel trees where cars used to go through. I'm reasonably certain that as a child my father's 50 something Studebaker was pictured here.

And then finally into Yosemite Valley with the first view of El Capitan followed by Yosemite falls but not before a bear sighting. To see wild animals, just watch for all the cars pulled over and the wild tourists.

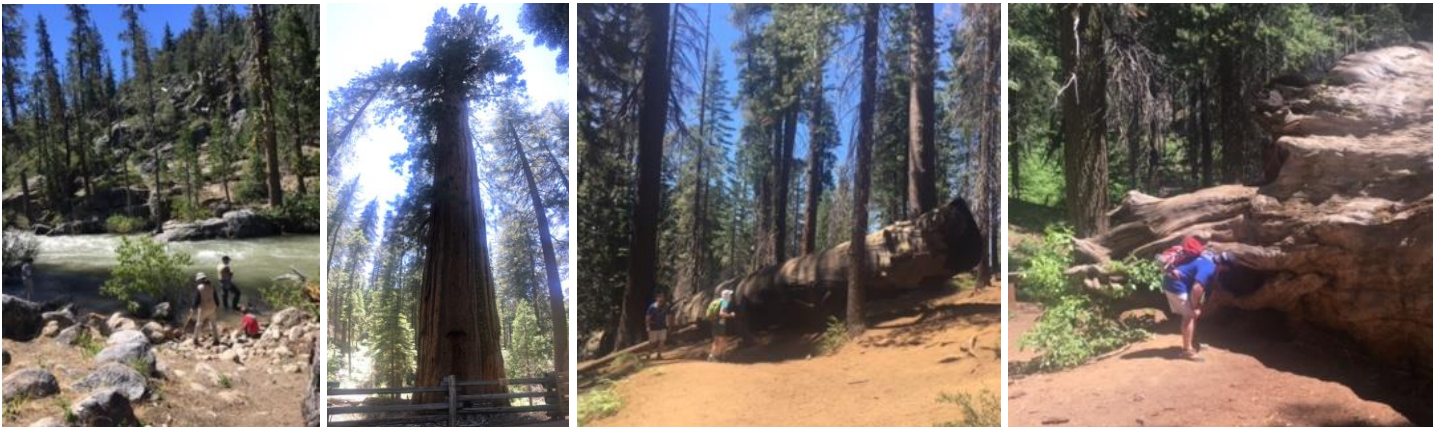
We are lodged at Yosemite Falls for three nights. The group was eating at the Mountain View lodge restaurant with a view of the falls but I chose to finish my various pieces of leftovers and make time for a little walk, some shopping, and a conversation with Tom. Tom and I were here in September a couple years ago during a week-long hike in Sequoia national Park.

In 2009, the day after summiting Half Dome, I climbed up to the top and over Yosemite falls (and the next day drove to San Francisco for their full marathon). That much activity is not available to me any longer. Smile. Here is the Park service description of that hike: Top of Yosemite Falls; Distance: 7.2 miles round trip; Elevation: 2,700 ft elevation gain; Difficulty: Strenuous; Time: 6-8 hours round trip; Begin at: Camp 4 area at El Capitan. One of Yosemite's oldest historic trails (built 1873 to 1877), the Yosemite Falls Trail leads to the top of North America's tallest waterfall, which rises 2,425 feet above the Valley floor. This trail starts near Camp 4 and immediately begins its climb, switchback after switchback, through oak woodland. You will begin to climb



above some trees and into exposed plateaus that offer you a glimpse of what's to come: great views of Yosemite Valley and its many iconic landforms. You will find steep drops adjacent to the trail. If you make the one-mile, 1,000 foot climb (via dozens of switchbacks) to Columbia Rock, you will be rewarded with spectacular views of Yosemite Valley, Half Dome, and Sentinel Rock. From there, it is worth the time and energy to hike another 0.5 miles (some of which is actually downhill!) to get a stunning view of Upper Yosemite Fall. Depending on the season, you may even feel the mist from the fall, which may be welcome respite after the tough climb. The upper half of the trail is steep and rocky, but the arduous climb is well worth the amazing views you will be rewarded with at the top. Here you may be surprised by the small size of Yosemite Creek, which feeds this massive waterfall. Use extreme caution when near the creek and remember you are directly above a waterfall. At the top of the Yosemite Falls Trail, you can extend your hike east to Yosemite Point (follow signs for North Dome; adds 1.6 miles roundtrip to this hike). Yosemite Point offers direct views of Half Dome that rival those found on the North Dome trail, gives you an opportunity to see Lost Arrow Spire up close, and provides panoramic views of many other peaks. To learn more about this Yosemite icon, [view a 10-minute podcast episode about Yosemite Falls](#). End.

Just out the front door of the falls is the Yosemite Lodge at the Falls where I have stayed twice before. Here are a couple web shots.







**Day 5 pics**

I either got tired or lazy as I didn't send home any daily logs from Day 5 onward. Maybe both tired and lazy. But now we are back to the original itinerary which states: *Sentinel Dome & Glacier Point, Distance: 5 mi, Difficulty: 3. As we rest up for the upcoming challenge of Day 6, we'll hike the relatively tame trail to Sentinel Dome, where the 360 degree views of El Capitan, Yosemite Falls, Clouds Rest, and Half Dome will absolutely knock your socks off. From the top we'll continue on to Glacier Point, with more iconic views of our next day's destination. Once back in valley, we'll cap off the day with a scrumptious dinner at the historic Majestic Yosemite Hotel (aka "The Ahwahnee").*



I remember hiking Panorama Trail out of Glacier Point, and also being up at Glacier Point with Tom on a bus tour. One feels like Half Dome is there with you all the time. It was rather steep hoofing it up to the top of Sentinel Dome. We were rewarded with a bear sighting far too close to the hikers. Chad had trouble keeping his eyes on the bear for the little lovely with a sexy gorgeous back. She didn't need a front with a back like that. The likelihood was that her front was equally bare.



Hiking leader Steve with Chad. This would be about as close as I'd get to Half Dome on this trip.





We would walk to Yosemite Falls later in the afternoon where the hordes of tourists flock but since this is probably the heaviest snowfall, followed by the record heat, it might also be the record waterfall strength.



It is a major and generous gift to go to the Ahwahnee for dinner as it's pricey and spectacular. It's known as one of the major dining rooms of the Park System (and maybe only Jackson Lake is anywhere near.) As we were leaving at night, I took the picture looking up at the suite Tom and I occupied about a year and a half ago.



Dinner is pricey. Dinner is huge and spectacular, as it should be. The prime rib served two. My fish had about 30 cloves of garlic. Chad's dessert was picture perfect. My eau d'vie was enough to knock me out for the night. Did that contribute to my slow burn up the mountain?





Chad, Chuck, Marie-Claire, Matt, Joseph, Sally, Steve and Nola

**Day 6 pics** – and description from the itinerary: *Half Dome, Distance: 16 mi, Difficulty: 5 - Today we hike the extraordinary trail to the summit of Half Dome--what we believe is one of the best hikes in the world! Besides our most famous destination, along the trail we'll also ascend the renowned Mist Trail past Vernal and Nevada Falls, enjoy calmer waters of the Merced River at Little Yosemite Valley, and scale the innumerable rock steps of 400' Sub Dome. Please be aware that the hike to Half Dome is a full 16-miles round trip with 5,000' of vertical gain on sometimes rocky, uneven surfaces. The final 1/4 mile is a very steep route up the eastern granite face of Half Dome. The famous "cables" are mounted along this section as hand holds and you will need them--not for the faint of heart! Because this is such a strenuous day (even by Parks Plus standards), each guest should evaluate their fitness and ability level prior to attempting this hike.*

I must have gotten lost somewhere as I had more miles on my iPhone pedometer (which is usually low) as on this day it was a full 18 miles which took 12 hours, from 7:15am to 7:15pm.



The mist trail is a slippery pile of steps necessitating full rain gear. A few waterfalls later and we'd get to Half Dome. The three boys with Steve as their guide made it up to the top. We four girls with Nola as our guide did not.





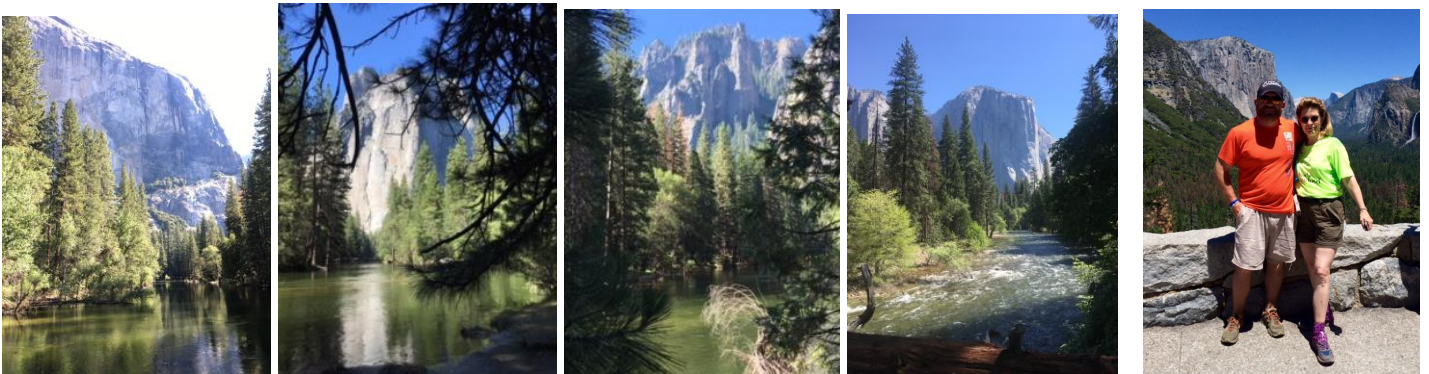
Critters abound and they are not shy and they might eat a hole in your backpack while it's next to your picnic. Going up the Half Dome cables now requires a permit which is good as it keeps from long waiting times. Nola pumped filtered water for many of the hikers, as Steve would do for the boys later. I had carried 120 ounces and finished it ALL, adding at the fountain at the lower falls (that with only one pit stop all day which tells you something about the heat and exertion.)

Following are pictures of the Half Dome area, with Sub Dome first and the cables that can be 50-60% grade on the next level. Sub Dome is thought to be the toughest portion and that was as far as I got until I decided that I might NOT make it, that it was hot and buggy, and that I just didn't care enough to keep pushing. The views were spectacular and I probably didn't see them as well in 2009 in my hurry to the top.



### Day 7 pics

From the itinerary: *West Valley Trail, Distance: 6 mi, Difficulty: 2 - As we recover from our encounter with Half Dome, we explore the quieter side of Yosemite Valley this final day on the West Valley trail. We'll hike along the banks of the Merced River, through lovely old growth Ponderosa Pine and Incense Cedar forests, and along the massive granite wall that is El Capitan. Besides scanning the rock face for climbers, we'll also get great views of Bridal Veil Falls. After our hike, we'll stop for a final lunch together before heading back to Fresno to conclude our tour.*



### The End.

Not exactly The End as I'm home long enough to repack for a hike in the Canadian Fiords mid-month, followed by another hike with PPH late month to Colorado with an add-on 5 days in Colorado Springs early August. Later August Tom and I depart for Barcelona where I'll do a hike to Monserrat Monastery and up the Costa del Sol Coast followed by a few more days in Barcelona. Later September we head to Krakow Poland for ten days. October is Bucharest and Budapest with a river cruise in between. November brings sister Beverly into NJ when we have NYC Opera tickets for Madame Butterfly and then tickets for Skate America in Lake Placid. December is a solo trip to Paris, followed by later December Marie joining us for a new adventure for her to Florence and Rome – multiple repeats for us. And on it goes with lots more arranged and in arranging mode for 2018. Did I say "Life is Good"?

## **Ten Facts You Might Not Know About Yosemite:**

On October 1, 1890, President Benjamin Harrison signed legislation that created Yosemite National Park. Check out 10 surprising facts about the UNESCO World Heritage Site nestled in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains that is home to thundering waterfalls, sheer granite monoliths and towering sequoia trees.

1. Yosemite was not America's first national park. When President Abraham Lincoln signed legislation in 1864 that designated the 7-mile-long Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias a public trust of the state of California, it marked the first time that the U.S. government had protected natural wonders for public enjoyment. Although the creation of the public trust laid the foundation for the national park system, Yosemite did not become a national park until 18 years after the establishment of Yellowstone National Park and a week after the creation of Sequoia National Park.
2. A Scottish immigrant spearheaded Yosemite National Park's creation. John Muir, a native of Scotland who grew up in Wisconsin, first set eyes on the Yosemite Valley in 1868. "No temple made with hands can compare with Yosemite," the amateur naturalist wrote. Muir lamented the destruction of the forests and vast meadows that surrounded the state-controlled Yosemite Valley. His popular articles in newspapers and magazines raised the awareness of the region's beauty and contributed to the eventual establishment of Yosemite National Park in 1890.
3. Sheep were once among the primary threats to Yosemite's natural landscape. A particular threat to Yosemite's natural beauty came from shepherders who frequently set meadows ablaze to promote the growth of edible grasses for their grazing sheep. In 1870, as many as 15,000 sheep pastured in the Tuolumne Meadows alone. "To let sheep trample so divinely fine a place seems barbarous," wrote Muir of the "hoofed locusts" that were devastating the region's subalpine meadows and spreading diseases that depleted the native bighorn sheep.
4. At first, the national park did not include the Yosemite Valley and its iconic landmarks. When the federal government first established Yosemite National Park, it did not include those lands already bestowed upon the state of California in 1864, including the Yosemite Valley and its natural icons—El Capitan, Half Dome and Yosemite Falls. California, however, failed to prevent incursions by miners, loggers, cattlemen and shepherders into the Yosemite Valley, which led Muir in 1895 to lament that it was "downtrodden, frowsy, and like an abandoned backwoods pasture."
5. A presidential camping trip led to Yosemite National Park's expansion. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt traveled to California and requested that Muir take him camping for several days in Yosemite. Roosevelt spent a night beneath the giant sequoias of Mariposa Grove and compared it to "lying in a great solemn cathedral, far vaster and more beautiful than any built by the hands of man." Muir implored upon Roosevelt the need to expand the national park to include those lands still in California's possession, and in 1906 the president signed a law that brought the Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove under federal jurisdiction.
6. The buffalo soldiers who initially patrolled Yosemite pioneered the distinctive hat worn by National Park Service rangers. Before the 1916 establishment of the National Park Service, management of Yosemite fell to the military. Many of the regiments of African-American men, known as buffalo soldiers, who patrolled the park were Spanish-American War veterans who had discovered that they could better shield themselves from the tropical rains of Cuba and the Philippines by pinching their high-crowned, broad-brimmed hats into symmetrical quadrants. They continued to sport the distinctive "Montana Peak" style on the home front, and it eventually became part of the National Park Service ranger uniform.
7. Yosemite bid to host the 1932 Winter Olympics. After visiting the 1928 Winter Olympics in Switzerland, Don Tressider, president of Yosemite's concessioner, sought to bring the quadrennial sporting event to the park. An 800-foot snow slide, a large ice-skating rink, toboggan runs and a small ski jump were constructed in an attempt to make Yosemite a winter destination and the "Switzerland of the West." Yosemite and several other American locales ultimately lost out to Lake Placid, New York, but the park did host the West Coast tryouts for America's Olympic speed-skating team. Yosemite still offers winter sports, including downhill and cross-country skiing at Badger Pass, California's oldest ski resort.
8. A waterfall of fire was once one of the park's top tourist attractions. Beginning in the early 1870s, Irish immigrant James McCauley, who owned a hotel atop Glacier Point, ended evenings spent around the campfire with guests by kicking the burning embers over the soaring cliff. Visitors below enjoyed the shower of fire so much they began to pay McCauley to continue the practice. David Curry, the proprietor of Camp Curry, revived the Yosemite Firefall in the early 1900s after hearing guests reminisce about it. It became a nightly summertime entertainment until the National Park Service, frowning upon the man-made attraction, ended it in 1968.
9. Yosemite's most luxurious hotel once served as a military hospital. In 1943, the U.S. Navy leased the posh Ahwahnee Hotel and converted it into a military hospital offering neuro-psychiatric treatment. Doctors hoped the park's tranquility and scenery would soothe shell-shocked patients, but as the National Park Service reports, they soon discovered that the towering cliffs caused claustrophobia, and the park's isolation left bored sailors and marines preoccupied with their



*disturbed thoughts. Hospital administrators quickly converted the facility into a general physical rehabilitation unit, and administrators added more facilities, including a library, pool hall and bowling alley.*

*10. A riot broke out inside Yosemite in 1970. During the 1960s, the national park became an increasingly popular hangout for California's hippie subculture. "Some complaints are being heard from Yosemite park that there are more hippies than bears," reported one newspaper, which added, "apparently, like the bears, the hippies forage off the tourists, eating any food that is left unprotected and begging for handouts." The tension came to a head on July 4, 1970, as park rangers on horseback attempted to disperse several hundred youths from Stoneman Meadow. The situation quickly escalated with rangers using tear gas and batons against a crowd throwing rocks and glass bottles. Law enforcement was called in to quell the riot, which left seven people hurt and 138 people under arrest.*

## ***Itinerary***

### **Fri Jun 23 - Diana**

9:05am Depart Newark EWR via UA#1241  
11:55am Arrive Los Angeles LAX for plane change

1:10pm Depart Los Angeles LAX via UA#5336  
2:18pm Arrive Fresno FAT

Hotel Piccadilly Inn Airport – 2 nights Diana  
5115 E. McKinley Ave., Fresno, California 93727 Tele: (559) 375-7760  
<http://piccadillyairport.com/> Mini Refrig, WiFi, Coffee

### **Sat Jun 24 - Chad**

9:12am Depart St Louis STL via UA#4505 on confirmation #DW42SE  
10:38am Arrive Denver DEN for plane change

1:39pm Depart Denver DEN via UA#5862  
3:13pm Arrive Fresno FAT

Hotel Piccadilly Inn Airport – 1 night Chad  
5115 E. McKinley Ave., Fresno, California 93727 Tele: (559) 375-7760

**From [www.ParksPlusHiking.com](http://www.ParksPlusHiking.com)** - Yosemite National Park is a spectacle of incredible granite icons, waterfalls ranging from thundering to sublime, and views upon views upon views. For this seven-day excursion in the park, we'll split our time between the quieter, less-traveled, higher trails of Tuolumne Meadows and Tioga Pass Road and the equally scenic trails accessed from the more famous valley floor. We will visit park landmarks such as Clouds Rest, Glacier Point, and Sentinel Dome, and of course, this trip includes the renowned hike from Yosemite Valley to the summit of Half Dome!

### **Sun Jun 25 – Day 1 of hike – Note change of hikes due to snow and road closure**

Mariposa Grove, Distance: 4 mi, Difficulty: 3

Hotel Murpheys Lodge – 1<sup>st</sup> of 3 nights  
On East side of park near to Mono Lake  
51493 Highway 395, P.O. Box 57, Lee Vining, CA 93541  
Tel. (760) 647-6316 or Reservations Only (800) 334-6316  
Email [info@murpheysyosemite.com](mailto:info@murpheysyosemite.com) <http://www.murpheysyosemite.com/>  
Mini Refrig, WiFi and Coffee Maker

Much of our first day in Yosemite will be spent commuting across nearly the entire park from Fresno near the south entrance to the Tioga Pass gate in the northeast. Along the way we will stop at the newly restored Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias. Following our hike among these amazing trees, we'll continue north through the park past Yosemite Valley and Crane Flats, then turn east for along Tioga Pass road toward Lee Vining, a quaint western town and our home for three evenings.

Note that hiking in Mariposa Grove is contingent upon the Park Service's planned 2016 completion of its major restoration project in the grove. The backup hikes for this day are May Lake or Dog Lake on Tioga Pass road.

### **Mon Jun 26 - Day 2 of hike**

Tuolumne Meadows/Glen Aulin, Distance: 12 mi, Difficulty: 4



Hotel            Murpheys Motel – 2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 nights

Today we'll venture up to lovely Tuolumne Meadows. We will hike a portion of the 2,650 mile Pacific Crest trail through the quiet meadow then down along the Tuolumne River past several spectacular waterfalls. Our turnaround and lunch spot is at thundering White Cascade adjacent to Glen Aulin High Sierra Camp. On our way back up the trail the warm California sun will be pleasantly offset by several cold but easily managed creek crossings.

**Tue Jun 27 - Day 3 of hike**

Clouds Rest, Distance: 15 mi, Difficulty: 5

Hotel            Murpheys Motel – 3<sup>rd</sup> of 3 nights

Clouds Rest! Towering a thousand feet above its more famous cousin Half Dome, the hike to Clouds Rest is one of the best in Yosemite. Beginning at shimmering Tenaya Lake, we'll first cross the lake's outlet stream before climbing towards Sunrise Lake High Sierra Camp, passing through an awesome stand of California Red Fir, and eventually gaining the ridge leading to the fabulous rock ledges of Clouds Rest itself. A hike you'll never forget!

**Wed Jun 28 - Day 4 of hike**

Mono Pass, Distance: 9 mi, Difficulty: 3

Hotel            Yosemite Valley Lodge at the Falls – 1<sup>st</sup> of 3 nights  
Yosemite National Park, CA  
Tele: 209 372 1274 direct or 888-439-5003 reservations  
No a/c but fans provided; yes mini-refrig, WiFi and coffee maker

As part of our transfer from Lee Vining to the Yosemite Valley floor, we will recover a bit from Glen Aulin and Clouds Rest with a (slightly) shorter hike from near Tioga Pass to Mono Pass at 10,600', our high point for the tour. Our turnaround for this hike is just far enough beyond the pass itself to afford a fantastic view of Mono Lake and the Excelsior Mountains to the east.

**Thu Jun 29 - Day 5 of hike**

Sentinel Dome & Glacier Point, Distance: 5 mi, Difficulty: 3

Hotel            Yosemite Valley Lodge- 2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 nights

As we rest up for the upcoming challenge of Day 6, we'll hike the relatively tame trail to Sentinel Dome, where the 360 degree views of El Capitan, Yosemite Falls, Clouds Rest, and Half Dome will absolutely knock your socks off. From the top we'll continue on to Glacier Point, with more iconic views of our next day's destination. Once back in valley, we'll cap off the day with a scrumptious dinner at the historic Majestic Yosemite Hotel (aka "The Ahwahnee").

**Fri Jun 30 - Day 6 of hike**

Half Dome, Distance: 16 mi, Difficulty: 5

Hotel            Yosemite Valley Lodge – 3<sup>rd</sup> of 3 nights

Today we hike the extraordinary trail to the summit of Half Dome--what we believe is one of the best hikes in the world! Besides our most famous destination, along the trail we'll also ascend the

renowned Mist Trail past Vernal and Nevada Falls, enjoy calmer waters of the Merced River at Little Yosemite Valley, and scale the innumerable rock steps of 400' Sub Dome.

Please be aware that the hike to Half Dome is a full 16-miles round trip with 5,000' of vertical gain on sometimes rocky, uneven surfaces. The final 1/4 mile is a very steep route up the eastern granite face of Half Dome. The famous "cables" are mounted along this section as hand holds and you will need them--not for the feint of heart! Because this is such a strenuous day (even by Parks Plus standards), each guest should evaluate their fitness and ability level prior to attempting this hike. Alternative hiking options will be provided for those not choosing to tackle Half Dome.

### **Sat Jul 1 - Day 7 of hike**

West Valley Trail, Distance: 6 mi, Difficulty: 2

As we recover from our encounter with Half Dome, we explore the quieter side of Yosemite Valley this final day on the West Valley trail. We'll hike along the banks of the Merced River, through lovely old growth Ponderosa Pine and Incense Cedar forests, and along the massive granite wall that is El Capitan. Besides scanning the rock face for climbers, we'll also get great views of Bridal Veil Falls. After our hike, we'll stop for a final lunch together before heading back to Fresno to conclude our tour.

Hotel            Piccadilly Inn Airport – 1 night, 2 rooms, for both Diana and Chad  
5115 E. McKinley Ave., Fresno, California 93727 Tele: (559) 375-7760

### **Sun Jul 2 – Diana**

6:15am        Depart Fresno FAT via UA#5541  
7:22am        Arrive San Francisco for plane change  
  
8:10am        Depart San Francisco SFO via UA#233  
4:41pm        Arrive Newark EWR

### **Sun Jul 2 - Chad**

9:59am        Depart Fresno FAT via UA#5842  
1:22pm        Arrive Denver DEN for plane change  
  
2:35pm        Depart Denver DEN via UA#4559  
5:46pm        Arrive St Louis STL

### **Participants**

Diana  
Chad Faris  
Chuck Michalik  
Sally and Joseph from Myrtle Beach but now moving to Davidson NC  
Marie-Claire and Matthew from Myrtle Beach

Link to Diana's 6-day Yosemite hike and then the Half Dome week accomplished the following month (followed by one of three San Francisco marathons.)

[http://libertyladies.weebly.com/uploads/3/4/8/4/3484697/yosemites\\_trip\\_notes\\_7-09.pdf](http://libertyladies.weebly.com/uploads/3/4/8/4/3484697/yosemites_trip_notes_7-09.pdf)

### **Reading Ideas:**

One of the funniest books I've ever read about hiking is linked here. If you can get it through your library, I recommend Cactus Eaters by Dan White. It takes place on the Pacific Crest Trail.

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-cactus-eaters-dan-white/1115137811?ean=9780061376931>



I was also told about the book called Blind Courage by (blind) Dan Irwin. It came with seriously good references, but I haven't read it. It's apparently made into a movie too. It's on the Appalachian Trail.

If you can stand being spooked about Half Dome, check out this one. I've read and re-read it. And I read it BEFORE attempting Half Dome. Shattered Air by Bob Madgic.

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/shattered-air-bob-madgic/1100085441?ean=9781580801423>

Should there be the slightest chance of rain or thunderstorms in the area, we won't be allowed to try Half Dome. There are other good hikes should that happen.

Note that there have NEVER been deaths on Half Dome by ANYONE who followed the rules and the cables.

Oh Oh – On June 16, just a week before the trip, message from PPH:

Important News: Yosemite National Park Tour

Hi All: As you probably heard in the news, California had a record year for snow and moisture this past winter. While this is obviously great for the state's drought, it is wreaking havoc on our upcoming Yosemite tour. We have dealt with snowy trails and swollen creeks in Yosemite in the past and have alternate hikes should some trails be closed due to snow or high water. Unfortunately, as of today, Tioga Pass Road across the north side of the park has not yet even opened for the season, meaning we cannot access any trails in the Yosemite High country.

To deal with this issue, Nola and I have already verified that our alternate route from Fresno to Lee Vining is open. We have also identified a number of alternate hikes near Lee Vining and plan to travel to the area next week to scout those hikes in terms of both their accessibility and quality. Finally, we're also monitoring the Park Service web site in hopes that Tioga Pass Road will open before we start the tour.

What does all this mean for the tour? Here is our opinion:

- 1) We're confident we will have enough hiking for our time in the Lee Vining area. In all honesty though, while these hikes will be scenic, challenging, and fun, they simply won't compare with the world renowned hikes we'll miss out on in Yosemite's High Country.
- 2) If Tioga Pass Road opens in time for the tour, we may be able to access one of our originally scheduled hikes (Glen Aulin/Tuolumne Meadows) and several of our alternate high-country hikes (Lyll Canyon, North Dome, and/or Tuolumne Sequoia Grove), but Clouds Rest and Mono Pass are almost certain to still be snowed in.
- 3) Except for Mariposa Grove (which is closed for a long-term renovation project), all of our planned hikes out of Yosemite Valley are accessible and should actually be spectacular due to the extreme snow melt/runoff. This includes Half Dome.

Based on the above items, Nola and I are still quite willing and excited to run the tour. We know everyone who is signed up for the trip and it is a great group that we think will have a wonderful time despite Mother Nature's obstacles. And we still get to hike Half Dome, see Yosemite's waterfalls in their swollen grandeur, and spend three nights each in quaint Lee Vining and spectacular Yosemite Lodge with a delightful group of like-minded people.

All that said, we also recognize we are not delivering our Yosemite tour as originally advertised. So if any of you wish to cancel off of the tour, we will waive our normal cancellation policy and issue you a full refund for the cost of the tour. If you do wish to cancel, please let us know (by phone or email) by 5:00 pm, Monday, June 19<sup>th</sup> so that we can cancel resulting unneeded accommodations.

Thank you for your business and support and for your understanding in this unexpected situation.

(Note that no one backed out!)