

Trip Notes for Twice to San Francisco and Yosemite(s) plus the SFO Marathon June 25-July 4 and July 18-27, 2009



Does the heading confuse you? At times it confused me too. There were two trips, both to Yosemite and San Francisco. It all started in 2006 when Maricar and I traveled to San Francisco for the July marathon and gambled away our finish time by hiking the prior day in Yosemite National Park (See footnote 1 for Yosemite summary and facts.)



All it took was the view of Half Dome (and having read the book *Shattered Air*) for Maricar to declare the summiting to be our next challenge but she had a heck-of-a-time convincing me to try.

Here's a view of Half Dome from the top of Yosemite Falls, one from the Valley floor 5,000 feet below, and one with us having successfully completed our ascent.



Well, somewhere after 2006 Maricar convinced fellow hiker and neighbor Kathy (who hiked Grand Canyon with me last December) that we all should climb Half Dome for our birthdays – her 35th, Kathy's 60th and mine, like in the Beatles' song "When I'm 64 . . ." Darned if I can exactly figure out how it happened, but I ended up going it alone for the first week. Two weeks later I went to Yosemite for my 2nd time but with Maricar in tow and with both of us trying for the Half Dome ascent. Here we are with my other major climb in the background – called Clouds Rest which overlooks Half Dome.

I have suspicion that everyone is tired of my multiple trip reports so I'll be brief and combine Yosemite #1 and Yosemite #2. In between was a busy 8 days with a visit from 11-year old new found friend, Marie, from Kansas City. She's the niece of a running friend and the cutest and smartest little gal around. (Do I sound like a proud adoptee grandma?)

It's hard to go near California without stopping in San Francisco for a few days and both these trips were no exception. Just when you think we know the city well we learn of something new and exciting. My first visit included a 7 hour fast walk from town up and over the Golden Gate Bridge and my second visit included the SFO Marathon, also over the Bridge.



So there's no suspense and so you can quit reading, both trips plus the marathon were successful. On my second trip Maricar and I made it up to Half Dome (Tuesday – 15 1/2 hours – see picture taken at 8pm at the bottom of the trail), I got to the top of Yosemite Falls (Thursday – 8 1/2 hours), and my SFO Marathon finish time (Sunday – 5:40 hours) was only a couple minutes slower than my '06 SFO Marathon when I was Boston Qualified. The added bonus was it being my 64th birthday.

Yosemite Trip #1 was with Linda who Tom and I had met years ago on a "Backroads" bicycling trip to the Grand Canyon, Bryce and Zion, then another one in the San Juan Islands, and still another in Vermont. Traveling with Linda has some similarities to traveling with Tom in that she convinced me to stay at the famous Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite Valley (see footnote 2) as well as eating in their equally famous dining room. San Francisco with Linda bore similarities in that our short time included a special restaurant and a run through the Ferry Building's Saturday food market. She saved me from myself and my usual Subway sandwich diet.

This trip #1 was hiking with Timber Tours (see footnote 3 for description of the tour) who had taken me to Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons last July, Death Valley in February and soon to the Canadian Rockies. They included both the far eastern side as well as the far southwestern side of Yosemite, exposing numerous surprises and variety in the park that would otherwise be lost to a tourist without a guide. I'd say the headline was getting to the top of Clouds Rest, an 8 hour climb that allowed the leaders to think I had a chance at getting to the top of Half Dome on my next trip. Clouds Rest overlooks Half Dome but lacks about 2,000 feet of elevation and 4-6 hours additional effort to say nothing of the 45-60% angle of the very strenuous last climb up the steel cables.



If you're more interested in the Timber Tours trip, fellow traveler Linda wrote an interesting diary which I'm sure she'd be okay with my sharing. Just ask. Of interest since Linda is an excellent photographer is her Photo Show at this link: <http://www.photoshow.com/watch/aH9Tp8jC>.

Yosemite Trip #2 was in part a way to hedge my bet on getting up to Half Dome. Five full days to allow for potential bad weather and/or a second attempt, plus five nights in Yosemite Lodge close to the trail head should have been enough, and traveling with 30-years-younger Maricar should have been the icing. However, I'm not so sure that she wasn't so spooked that her physical conditioning was secondary. Also to save you



the suspense, she did make it up to the top, but as she says, not until after at least two melt downs and that's not counting her need for full climbing harness. If you don't know, it takes pulling yourself up by the imbedded cables the last 800 foot rise in elevation to get to the top. The pitch is extreme from 45 to 60% grade. Here's a picture of me starting up towards the cables which you can just barely see in the background going straight up Half Dome. Also one taken by Maricar from above while we were stuck in transit – someone had frozen coming up and there was no way to pass so I tried to rest my quivering legs by sitting. It didn't work.



Maricar got spooked during Half Dome so she begged out of the Yosemite Falls hike (wisely taking a bus trip to Glacier Point after a lunch at the Ahwahnee). She did however needle me into a rubber raft floating trip down the Merced River.



Here are a few pictures of my hike up to the top and over Yosemite Falls, one of five tallest falls in the world, and which seemed safer than being on the water for me.

Some of you might remember that last July I forced myself on a white-water rafting trip down the Snake River (in honor of my birthday) and swore to never do another water trip but the conditions were



something like #00 versus #3 and #4 white water so I reluctantly went. Neither of us knows how to swim – not a stroke – but after Half Dome and the Stairs and the Cables, we felt like Super Women.

Ask Maricar what she bought if you want a big rip roaring laugh. She just couldn't stop . . . Her answer will tell a lot of the story about how exciting this Half Dome hike really was. "I Made It to The Top" is from one of Maricar's six (yes, 6) t-shirts celebrating the ascent. See here a picture of one of the 6.



Touring in Yosemite isn't all hikes and climbs. We took a guided tour of the famous Ahwahnee hotel, a national landmark, as well as watched the Visitor's Center film which was so good that I wanted to bring home a copy. There were ranger programs and live theatre, the best being a "John Muir" actor appearing on stage.

Where on my first trip everyone looked for animals, on my second we saw more than Maricar might have wanted. The first day on our way to Mirror Lake we were startled to hear munching and realized it was a good sized bear within spitting range. I was all for hurrying on but Maricar did even more and insisted on purchasing a noise maker in case her own voice wasn't enough to disrupt the entire valley. We saw two snakes, various lizards, a big buck, a moose, many birds native only to the area, and fortunately no more bears close up.

A note on poison ivy: I started this trip with a major case collected while on a Palisades Park hike on June 17 necessitating a double dose of steroids and cortisone. The blisters were still weeping on the first flight and new eruptions were still coming forth by the last flight. I didn't know the poison could become systemic or remain so long.

The weather wasn't exactly favorable. On the second trip it went up to 104 degrees in the valley, yet fortunately it was a mostly dry heat. Thank heavens we had been upgraded from the Curry Village tents to the Yosemite Lodge, even though there was no a/c there either. It was just another challenge. Of all the places I lodged, the Ahwahnee was the best but not worth the price, and the edges of the parks at Murphy's in Lee Vining or Yosemite View in El Portal were the best accommodations, though I'd still choose Yosemite Lodge in the Valley as the best overall choice.

SFO Trip #1 and #2 by myself and then with Linda gave me a lot of leg exercise going from one side to the other of the city before Linda arrived. I saw the completed parks within the old Presidio, crossed the Golden Gate Bridge in the heavy fog, and climbed up to Coit Tower, as well as the Pacific Palisades, Russian Hill and Nob Hill. I walked the major hills of Powell and Sacramento and all of Lombard to include up and down the crookedest street in the world. I wandered through the newly renovated Palais of Fine Arts from the 1915 Pan Am Expo and renewed acquaintances with Chinatown. Maybe more time than was logical was spent in the North Beach section (which isn't a beach at all but was before land was reclaimed) as well as watching the huge numbers of surfboarders (with kites attached) along Marina Green. With Linda we spent much of a day at the new Science Academy in Golden Gate Park with a short stop in the DeYoung Art Museum and the Japanese Gardens. On my way back from Yosemite I stayed at a newly formed yacht basin called Oyster Point near to the airport.



SFO Trip #3 and #4 with Maricar took me up to Coit Tower again, through Chinatown for bubble tea, around Nob Hill and into Grace Cathedral two times (the second time to see a famous youth choir.) On the second trip we tried to save our legs for the marathon and did one of those 9-3pm fast-wave-as-you-go-by tours through the city which included the Ferry Building market, walking in Chinatown, into a Painted Ladies Victorian home off Alamo Square, and an hour lunch stop in Sausalito before taking a ferry back to the city by Alcatraz. On our own we walked the renovated Mission area of Yerba Buena Gardens, with waterfalls and memorials within the Mascone Convention Center. Well, so much for saving our legs. That was after going into the Metropolitan Museum of Art. As always, we enjoy hotel hopping and saw many of the famous ones.

SFO Marathon was our second run through this famous course. Imagine running the Embarcadero, up (and I mean UP!) the Presidio, over the Golden Gate Bridge and back again, through the Golden Gate Park with waterfalls, botanical gardens, where the buffalo roam (honest!), through Haight Ashbury with the Dykes on Bikes and Harley Boys serving as course-marshals, along the waterfront to the finish line after crossing by the AT&T sports stadium -- with a finish line at the Ferry Building.

Maricar rocked with a finish time of 5:12 whereas I slowed to a crawl after the half way mark and came in at 5:40, yet that was only about a minute slower than three years prior.

San Francisco as a destination should be tops on everybody's list. While it might not be the easiest for running since the city goes from sea level to 933' with 40 hills, its 7 miles by 7 miles makes it compact and exciting. It has a reputation for being tolerant of all types to include having had the largest gay and lesbian parade in the country which occurred the day I left SFO on the first trip. I want to go back and I have a list of things to do: walk the Barbary Coast tour, go to Muir Woods again, take another docent tour in the Asian Art Museum, spend a day in the Palace of the Legion of Honor in Lincoln Park, tour City Hall (the largest dome in the world), walk through the Botanical Gardens which might take a week, do the AAA driving tour as well as the little yellow GO-carts with GPS touring, and take a Victorian homes walking tour.

Next on my plate comes fast. I'm home a bare 2 days until leaving for the Chicago half marathon. Tom, brother-in-law and new runner Carl, and Sister Bev will meet up for a few days and stay at the historic Blackstone Hotel. Once home I'll unpack and repack for Kansas City but not before trying for my 2nd ultra marathon. Hopefully, in Kansas City I'll be of some help to my father since mother just passed away. (Please – no condolences -- she has been in hospice since January of this year so we've had 7 months to prepare.) Once home from Kansas City it will be unpack and repack just as quickly for my Canadian Rockies hiking trip out of Calgary, Banff and Kootenay. This might be sounding like a stuck record, but that next homecoming is the same with unpack and repack for the Albuquerque Marathon over Labor Day. How do I stay married? Well, maybe in part because I'm gone so much, but probably because Tom is a Saint.

Tom and I do manage more trips together than just Chicago and September will take us to the Italian Lakes region and then, if not before, we'll figure out another nice destination though we keep reverting to Paris whenever we discuss favorites.

Farther afield: This all being history, I am in major need of a new challenge. The planning is just as fun as the accomplishment. Numbers have been exhausted with playing the numbers ever since my 6 in '06 for my 60th year, then 7 and 7 in '07, and 8 and 8 in '08 (each year having beat the half and full numbers), and this year 9+9=18 full marathons booked for this year (with a slim chance of getting them all done), there's not much way I can keep adding numbers. Any ideas? Any invites?

Additional information as footnotes:

(1) **Yosemite Facts** from a favorite book called "Yosemite: The Complete Guide" by James Kaiser - www.jameskaiser.com

Nestled deep in the heart of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Yosemite is one of America's finest national parks. Its granite landscape, polished by Ice Age glaciers, is bursting with superlatives: the highest waterfall in North America (Yosemite Falls), the most famous vertical rock face in the world (El Capitan), and the largest living organisms of all time (giant sequoias). But no statistic can ever capture its staggering beauty. Yosemite's scenery has inspired some of the world's finest artists, and it continues to humble millions of visitors each year.

Yosemite Valley is the crown jewel of the park. Just seven miles long by one mile wide, it represents less than 1% of the park's 1,200 square miles. But concentrated among its forests, meadows, and 3,000-foot cliffs are some of the world's most remarkable physical landmarks. Half Dome, El Capitan, Bridalveil Fall—all can be seen in a single, sweeping panorama. Because Yosemite Valley is the most popular part of the park, its home to the vast majority of Yosemite's lodges, campgrounds, and visitor facilities.

Above Yosemite Valley lies the High Sierra: a stunning alpine wilderness of shimmering lakes, snow-capped peaks, and oceans of sparkling granite. Reached via Tioga Road—the only road that cuts through the heart of the park—the High Sierra is an outdoor paradise for hikers, backpackers, and rock climbers. Tuolumne Meadows, lying at an elevation of 8,600 feet, is the High Sierra's unofficial headquarters—the starting point for many spectacular hikes.

The park's southern tip is home to Wawona, famous for its proximity to the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias (the largest of the park's three sequoia groves). And 20 miles north of Yosemite Valley lies Hetch Hetchy—once a beautiful valley, now a massive reservoir. Although its waterfalls are impressive in the spring, Hetch Hetchy is interesting mainly for the contentious environmental battles that it spawned nearly a century ago.

For thousands of years Yosemite Valley was home to the Ahwahneechee Indians. Following the Gold Rush, adventurous artists sought out the remote mountain valley, and their dramatic paintings and photographs soon brought Yosemite international fame. John Muir arrived in 1868, and his writings helped spur the creation of Yosemite National Park in 1890. In 1916 Ansel Adams made his first trip to the park, and starting in the 1930s rock climbers pioneered advanced techniques in Yosemite that are now used throughout the world. Today Yosemite's cliffs, peaks, and waterfalls lure nearly four million visitors a year.

Excerpts:

Over 800 miles of trails crisscross the park. 13,000 foot peaks, glacial lakes, lush meadows with some of the most dramatic alpine scenery in America.

On a geological timescale: The last glaciers to sweep through the park melted 10,000 years ago. In geological terms, 10,000 years is the blink of an eye. If the age of the Earth (4.5 billion years) was represented by a 24-hour clock, the past 10,000 years would only represent a fraction of the final second before midnight.

Prior to the Ice Age, tectonic forces had thrust up a massive, 400-mile long block of granite that created the Sierra Nevada.

At the height of the Ice Age one million years ago, only Yosemite's tallest peaks remained above the glaciers, poking out like rocky islands in a sea of ice. Today these angular peaks, called nunataks, can be seen throughout the High Sierra.

Earthquakes are common in the Sierra Nevada, which is riddled with active faults along its eastern boundary. In 1872 an earthquake shook the ground near Lone Pine which lies at the base of the eastern Sierra. The earthquake, which was probably bigger than the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, killed 27 people and pulverized nearly every building in town. In an instant the mountains above Lone Pine jumped 13 feet higher and shifted 20 feet laterally. An observer near Nevada Falls claimed the waterfall stopped flowing for at least a half a minute and several thousand tons of rock shook free from nearby Liberty Cap.

Around 1740 a massive rockslide took out 5.6 million tons of Slide Mountain in a remote northern section of the Park. Dozens of smaller rockslides have taken place since, including a 2006 whopper along the Merced River Canyon west of Yosemite Valley. That rockslide buried 600 feet of highway 140 and closed the road for nearly two months.

Parts of the eastern Sierra Nevada are also volcanically active. A large magma chamber exists under Mono Basin directly east of Yosemite.

Running half the length of California, the Sierra Nevada is the longest, highest, and grandest mountain range in America. Although the Rockies and Appalachians are longer, they are technically mountain systems made up of several smaller ranges. The Sierra Nevada, by contrast, is a single unbroken range that is nearly as large as the French, Swiss, and Italian Alps combined. At roughly 26,000 square miles, it covers 17% of California.

All told, the entire range contains roughly 500 peaks above 12,000 feet. Over half of the alpine Sierra is exposed rock, and nearly all of it is protected as national parks or federally designated wilderness. The Sierra is bounded in the west by California's Central Valley, where flat agricultural lands grow a quarter of America's food.

Sierra summers are generally dry, but winters can dump up to 70 feet of snow.

The largest valley, Kings Canyon, is deeper than Grand Canyon with walls over 7,000-foot high.

Ecology: Covering 1,200 square miles and over 10,000 feet of mountainous elevation, Yosemite is home to thousands of fascinating plants and animals.

All told, over 80 species of mammals, over 150 species of birds, and over 1,400 species of plants have been identified in the park.

Ecologists have divided the Sierra Nevada into half a dozen vegetative zones – five of which occur in Yosemite.

Driving from the arid plains of the Great Central Valley to alpine Tioga Pass – at 9,943 feet the highest paved road in California – is the ecological equivalent of driving from Mexico to Alaska in a single day. It's the highest unbroken mountain range in the continental U.S., and the second snowiest range on the continent (after the Cascades in the Pacific Northwest).

Over 3,500 plant species are found here – a number greater than the total number plant species found in the entire state of Florida.

The Alpine Sierra, which lies above tree line, has the largest, richest flora of any alpine area in North America.

It is home to nearly 200 species found nowhere else in the world.

Although area-wise the Sierra Nevada covers just 20 percent of California, the mountains contain over half of California's 7,000 plant species. Roughly one-third of Sierra plant species are endemic.

Summers in the Sierra Nevada are hot and dry, resulting in less than five percent of the region's annual precipitation.

Three-quarters of the Sierra snowpack melts between April and June, and the combined outflow of streams and rivers tumbling down from the Sierra Nevada is often 10 times larger than the Colorado River, which drains seven western states.

Thousands of streams flow down from the Sierra Nevada, coalescing into 11 major rivers on the western slope. Yosemite is home to two of the Sierra's most impressive rivers: the Merced and the Tuolumne, which drain 511 square miles and 680 square miles respectively within the park. All told, over 1,600 miles of streams flow through Yosemite.

The Sierra Nevada alpine zone stretches over 150 unbroken miles from Mt Whitney to Sonora Pass, just north of Yosemite.

Giant Sequoia: Capable of weighing over two million pounds, it's the largest organism on the planet – ever. The base of a mature sequoia can reach over 35 feet in diameter, grow to a height of 320-feet and live to 3,200 years. They are virtually imperishable and immune to almost all known pests and diseases. They first appeared roughly 175 million years ago during the age of dinosaur. There are 75 known groves and they generally occur between 5,000 and 7,000 feet, exclusively on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, occupying a range of only 260 miles long by 15 miles wide.

(2) Ahwahnee Lodge architecture from the Parks Service description - The building is massed into several enormous blocks with a six-story central block and wings of three stories. The multiple hip and gable roofs are finished with green slate and further break up the building's form, making it appear as rough and textured as the surrounding landscape. The building has balconies and terraces at several different levels that add a spatial interest not only to the exterior but also to the visitor experiencing the interior of the building. The building contains approximately 95 guest rooms, various public spaces and meeting rooms, an enormous dining room, and utility spaces. The principal entrance to the building is through a porte-cochere on the north side of the building. The log and wood entrance contains painted decorations in Indian patterns, setting a tone for the interior. This entrance serves mainly as a utilitarian space to funnel the visitor to the building's interior, and to the views of the grassy meadow to the south and the impressive vistas, seen from most of the rooms. The main entrance is more subdued than noteworthy; the most impressive views of the hotel are from the southern meadows.

The north wing of the hotel contains the lobby, decorated with floor mosaics of Indian designs executed in brightly colored rubber tiles. The cornice is stenciled with Indian-design paintings. The elevator lobby continues the Indian designs with sawn-wood reliefs on the elevator doors and an abstract mural based on Indian basket patterns over the fireplace in that room. The Great Lounge's 24-foot-high ceiling has exposed girders and beams painted with bands of Indian designs. The exposure of the ceiling's structure gives the spatial impression of a coffered ceiling. The enormous fireplaces at opposite ends of the Lounge are cut sandstone. The wrought-iron chandeliers, Persian rugs hanging on the walls, and the wood furnishings are original. Their worth and delicate condition resulted in their conservation and placement in enclosed cases on the walls. Other oriental rugs, primarily replacements, are on the polished wooden floor of the Great Lounge. The floor-to-ceiling windows in the Great Lounge have 5x6-foot stained glass panels at the top, with handsome designs based on Indian patterns, but like many of the other interior elements done with a flatness found in Art Deco architecture.

Directly off the Lounge are the California Room, the Writing Room, and the solarium that overlooks the southern meadow. The California room contains decorations of memorabilia from the Gold Rush days. The Writing Room's principal feature is an oil painting on linen by Robert Boardman Howard that runs the length of one wall and depicts local flora and fauna in a style reminiscent of medieval tapestries.

The large dining room (6,630 square feet) has a gable-roofed ceiling 34 feet high at the ridge. The walls are massive granite piers interspersed with 11 floor-to-ceiling windows with the exception of the partition wall between the kitchen and dining room which has a six-foot wainscoting of wood paneling with plaster above. The sugar-pine roof trusses are supported by concrete "logs" again painted in imitation of the real thing. Original wooden furniture and wrought-iron chandeliers remain in use.

Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite National Park Could Shut Down For Structural Strengthening – 3/07/09 -

Yosemite National Park officials hope to learn in June whether they'll have the money needed to strengthen The Ahwahnee Hotel against earthquakes, a project that could shutter the iconic lodge for two years.

For quite a few years Yosemite officials have wanted to bolster the grand hotel, which opened in 1927 with the intention of attracting the elite and politically powerful. Earthquakes in the Sierra are not unusual, and they have in the past shaken the national park.

Earlier this week Yosemite officials asked their Interior Department bosses for \$137 million in stimulus funding to perform the seismic strengthening work. Park spokesman Scott Gediman told the Mercury News that if the money is forthcoming, the work would take a year to get under way -- that time would be spent obtaining the necessary construction permits and allowing the hotel to honor its current reservations.

The story did not address the scope of work that might be involved, though it could be quite substantial, given the hotel's 150,000-square-foot footprint. Unlike many national park lodges, The Ahwahnee is not exactly as it appears. Gilbert Stanley Underwood, the renowned architect who, along with his colleagues of the day, gave us "Parkitecture," designed the hotel at the request of then-National Park Service Director Stephen Mather. In drawing up his plans, the architect used slight-of-hand, figuratively speaking.

Underwood, who never graduated from high school yet wound up with an undergraduate degree from Yale University and a master's degree from Harvard, wasn't tightly wedded to "Parkitecture." He could ably design charming park lodges imbued with rustic touches of logs and rock and arts-and-crafts flourishes while also creating coldly efficient federal buildings. His federal courthouse in Seattle came to define "federal Art Deco," while the poured-in-place concrete that went into the Anchorage federal courthouse was dubbed "New Deal Concrete."

And, from time to time, the architect found good use for concrete in the national parks. When he designed the massive and breathtaking Ahwahnee Lodge, Underwood used weathered granite for the exterior walls and concrete in place of timbers and planks. By pouring concrete into wood-lined forms and then staining it so it would appear to be redwood in both texture and color he created "shadowood," a technique that he returned to a quarter-century later when he designed Jackson Lake Lodge in Grand Teton National Park.

(3) *Tour description of Trip #1* and from www.timbertours.com with some additions and slight modifications: One of the stark realities of Yosemite is its vastness and, apart from the well-documented level of activity in the valley, so much of the park is astoundingly remote, if not impenetrable. Of the park's approximate 750,000 acres, or 1,200 square miles, over 90 percent of its area is protected wilderness. The vast majority of the park's visitors never venture more than 1/2 mile from their vehicles. Five minutes removed from the trailhead parking lot and we often didn't see another person on the trail until our return at day's end. And so, during the tour, we explored the wonders of Yosemite, its giant sequoias, dramatic waterfalls, deep glacier-carved canyons, snow-clad Sierra peaks and magnificent domes. The leaders chose trails that were reasonably athletic but non-technical day hikes, and that best reflected the variety and scenic fascination that is Yosemite. After a stay at the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite Valley, we met up with the tour at Bridal Veil Falls and traveled the Tioga Road and Pass to the Day 1 hike at beautiful May Lake at the base of Mt. Hoffman (about 3 miles) passing by Soda Springs and following the river. We spent our first of three nights on the shores of Mono Lake at Murphy's Lodge in Lee Vining and devoted our next two hikes to the Tuolumne Meadows region of the eastern park. Early morning of Day 2, we shuttled to Tuolumne Meadows and hiked along the beautiful Tuolumne River to the huge Tuolumne Falls. We descended from the falls along the river and enjoyed a picnic on the rocks at the river's edge just below the falls and then returned to our trailhead (about 12 miles). After a second overnight in Lee Vining, we hiked from Dana Meadows to historic Mono Pass known for its great alpine views of the Sierra crest and Blood Canyon, as well as Mono Lake and the high desert of the Great Basin east of the Sierra. An afternoon tour exposed the unusual Tufas (salt formations) of Mono Lake. We encountered our only rain during the early part of the hike (about 8 miles.) On Day 4, we were packed

and off super early for what well may be the park's most spectacular viewpoint as we challenged the Clouds Rest Trail that ultimately led to the Clouds Rest summit. Clouds Rest is substantially higher than better-known Half Dome, supposedly safer to climb without the terrifying drop-offs for which Half Dome is famous (damn, can that be true?) and, most importantly, far less crowded with significantly better views of the park (about 15-16 miles). Following the Clouds Rest hike, we moved to El Portal on the other side of the valley, where we spent our next two overnights at Yosemite View Lodge hanging over the rip-roaring Merced River. The Glacier Point-to-Happy Isle trail, considered to be among the park's most scenic hike, was our 5th Day's hike. We began from high above at Glacier Point along the dramatic Panorama Trail with countless breathtaking views of the massive monoliths of Half Dome, Liberty Cap, and Clouds Rest — for which Yosemite is famous. Early on, the hike captured the breathtaking views of Nevada and Vernal Falls despite the foginess of the forest fires, and later, as we approach Panorama Point, we saw awesome Yosemite Falls in the distance. We visited Illilouette Falls initially, climbed to Panorama Point and then descend to the Merced River at the very brink of Nevada Fall. The Mist Trail, as it descends along the face of Vernal Falls, was our rather steep, spooky and very wet stairway route to the Yosemite Valley floor (about 9 miles) and will be our route up to Half Dome in two weeks. The magnificent giant sequoias of the Mariposa Grove were the focus of our final day, prior to our mid-afternoon lunch and then return to San Francisco (about 5 miles).

Itinerary of Trip #1

Thu Jun 25

8:40am Depart Newark; arrive SFO late morning
Hotel: San Francisco Marriott
55 Fourth Street, San Francisco, California 94103
Tele 415 896 1600 or Fax 415 486 8101

Fri Jun 26

Late morning Linda arrives SFO
Visited the new California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate State Park. Review at <http://travel.latimes.com/articles/la-trw-academy28-2008sep28>

Sat Jun 27

Am Pick up rental car at airport and drive 4-5 hours/193 miles to Yosemite.
Hotel: Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite Valley <http://www.yosemitepark.com/Accommodations.aspx>

Sun Jun 28 – Day 1 of Tour

Late morning meet Timber Tours at area outside of park.
Hotel Murphy's Lodge on east side of park near to Mono Lake for 3 nights
P.O. Box 57, Lee Vining, CA 93541
Tel. (760) 647-6316 or Reservations Only (800) 334-6316
Email info@murpheysyosemite.com <http://www.murpheysyosemite.com/>
Note: Murphy's Lodge is 250 miles from SFO, 77 miles to Yosemite Valley,
13 miles to Park entrance

Mon Jun 29 - Day 2

Tuolumne Meadows-Tuolumne River - Tuolumne Falls - Glen Aulin; overnight Murphy's Lodge - 12 miles

Tue Jun 30 - Day 3

Dana Meadows-Mono Pass; overnight at Murphy's Lodge - 8 miles

Wed Jul 1 - Day 4

Clouds Rest – 15 miles and 8 hours

Hotel Yosemite View Lodge on west side of park for 2 nights
<http://www.yosemite-motels.com/yosemiteviewlodge/>
11136 Highway 140, PO Box D, El Portal, CA 95318

Tele: 888-742-4371 or 209-379-2681 fax: 209-379-2704

Thu Jul 2 - Day 5

Panorama Trail: Glacier Point - Illilouette Falls-Nevada and Vernal Falls; overnight at Yosemite Lodge - 9 miles

Fri Jul 3 - Day 6

Mariposa Sequoia Grove; lunch south in Oakhurst; tour returns to Fresno – 4-5 miles
Oakhurst to Oakland airport for Linda's late evening flight about 3 ½ hours; about 45 minutes more to San Francisco airport

Hotel Courtyard by Marriott San Francisco Airport/Oyster Point Waterfront
1300 Veterans Boulevard, South San Francisco, CA 94080
Tele 650 871 4100

Sat Jul 4

12:55pm Depart SFO and arrive Newark at 9:29pm

Itinerary of Trip #2

Sat Jul 18

8:30am Depart Newark (EWR) via CO #548, arriving late morning

Hotel San Francisco Marriott in Mascone Center area
55 Fourth Street (Market & Mission), San Francisco CA 94103 Tele 415 896 1600

Sun Jul 19

Rental Car

Hotel Yosemite Lodge at the Falls
Yosemite National Park, CA
Tele: 209 372 1275 direct or 801 559 4892 reservations

Fri Jul 24

Drive to SFO.

Expo Opens at 11am to 6pm at The East Concourse at the SF Design Center
620 7th Street, San Francisco, CA

Hotel San Francisco Marriott in Mascone Center area
55 Fourth Street (Market & Mission), San Francisco CA 94103
Tele 415 896 1600

Sun Jul 26

5:30am to 6:30am Wave starts for marathon at 6:05am

Mon Jul 27

12:55pm Depart SFO via CO #549 arriving Newark late evening

And now my time and battery while on the airplane have expired!