

YOSEMITE

SCHOOL GUIDE





How to plan the perfect student trip to Yosemite Brought to you by Evolve Tours

Welcome! Evolve Tours has designed this guide as a helpful resource for those interested in planning a trip for their students to Yosemite. In the following pages, you'll discover how to decide on the type of trip for you, the right destination, some of the activities your students can enjoy in Yosemite, where to sleep, where to eat, an explanation of travel insurance, travel tips and more. Our goal is to make the trip planning process as seamless and as stress free for you and your colleagues as possible.

Why should my student group visit Yosemite?

A trip to Yosemite can be a fascinating, educational and cultural experience for students. Considering the various destinations of potential trips can seem overwhelming at first. The best first is to determine the intended focus of the educational trip, after which you can then decide which part of Yosemite best suits what you and your group are looking to experience. For example:

Educational Student Trip – Curriculum-related activities that bring to life the subjects of the classroom.

Biology - Show your science students the incredible biodiversity of this place, by having them participate in meaningful field research. The Yosemite Valley is surrounded with 80 species of mammals, 250 species of birds and 37 species of trees. The expansive park is stretched up to 747,956 acres.

Outdoor Adventure - Do you want your students to experience an amazing outdoor adventure? Camping in Yosemite is definitely the adventure tour of a lifetime.

Mixed focus - A balance of educational activities, outdoor activities, and cultural focus. The variety of geography, culture and history of within Yosemite makes for a well-rounded trip.



Yosemite is a fantastic destination for students of the following subjects: Geography, Outdoor Education, Biology and more! Whatever subject your student group is interested in, Yosemite is sure to be a great destination for your group.

What time of the year should my student group visit Yosemite?

Weather and Climate

Yosemite National Park covers nearly 1,200 square miles (3,100 square km) in the Sierra Nevada, with elevations ranging from about 2,000 feet (600 m) to 13,000 ft (4,000 m). Yosemite receives 95% of its precipitation between October and May (and over 75% between November and March). Most of Yosemite is blanketed in snow from about November through May. (Yosemite Valley can be rainy or snowy in any given winter storm.)



Average Temperatures & Precipitation

Month	Maximum (°F / °C)	Minimum (°F / °C)	Precipitation (inches / mm)
January	48 / 9	29 / -2	6.5 / 165
February	52 / 11	30 / -1	6.7 / 170
March	58 / 14	34 / 1	5.2 / 132
April	64 / 18	38 / 3	2.8 / 71
May	72 / 22	45 / 7	1.7 / 43
June	81 / 27	51 / 11	0.7 / 18
July	89 / 32	57 / 14	0.4 / 10
August	89 / 32	56 / 13	0.1 / 2.5
September	82 / 28	51 / 11	0.7 / 18
October	71 / 22	42 / 6	2.1 / 53
November	56 / 13	33 / 1	4.6 / 117
December	47 / 8	28 / -2	5.5 / 140

Educational Trip Length

Most Yosemite trips are 3 to 5 days long, though trip length varies depending on activities planned and budget.

Check the following links for more information about weather in Yosemite throughout the year and some tips on deciding when to travel.

<https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/weather.htm>

What are The Best Student-Friendly Activities in Yosemite?

Check out this list for some of Evolve Tour's favorite and most popular activities for school groups in Yosemite:

Hiking - Hiking the Yosemite valley would offer the best view to its waterfalls, wildflowers and wildlife. Yosemite national park offers 800 miles of hiking trail.

Biking – Yosemite valley offers bike rent during warmer months. The half dome bike tour and Yosemite bike valley lodge bike stand are 2 renowned bike tour.

Art & Photography - Yosemite's epic scenery freely lends itself to the artist's eye like only a few places can. For many, Yosemite is a natural source of never-ending inspiration. The bouncing of light, graceful vibrancy of water, and austere mountain lines have provoked artists of all backgrounds to create works of art. Not surprisingly, many artists have played a role- directly or indirectly- in the promotion and protection of Yosemite National Park. Recognizing this meaningful influence in Yosemite's history, various opportunities to explore art in its many forms are available.



Birdwatching - Yosemite provides essential habitat for over 165 species of migrating, wintering, and breeding birds, in addition to nearly 100 species recorded as passing or roaming. Designated a World Heritage Site and an Important Bird Area, the park harbors diverse avian assemblages and habitats, numerous bird species of special concern, and prized habitat ranging from gently sloping grasslands up to alpine meadows and peaks.

Frazil Ice - During some mornings in Yosemite Valley, when streamflow is relatively high but temperatures are below freezing, some creeks may seem to be full of slush rather than full of water. This is frazil ice, which forms when mist (for example, from a waterfall) freezes, then floats down the creek.

For more information about attractions and more, visit <http://www.yosemite.com/things-to-do/>



Should I work with a travel company?

Our next step is deciding whether you will plan the trip on your own, or use the help of a student travel provider. Some teachers are used to planning the trip themselves, but many enjoy the less stressful and time consuming route of hiring a travel company that will expertly take care of all the pre-trip planning. To make the decision easier, we've made some comparison charts, comparing the pros and cons of doing a trip on your own vs. with a tour provider.

ON YOUR OWN

Pros	Cons
✓ Cheaper	✗ A lot of stressful planning. Organizing the hotels, transportation, meals, activities and more.
✓ Plan exactly what you want, without sticking to a schedule	✗ Missing out on professional, time-tested itineraries.
	✗ No on-ground tour director with local knowledge who oversees the trip.

WITH A TOUR COMPANY

Pros	Cons
✓ Having a guide(s) with local knowledge. As with any form of travel, whether it be museum hopping or outdoor activities, you're bound to learn more, gain a greater understanding of the local community, and just get more out of the whole experience when following a knowledgeable expert.	✗ Set itinerary: although some travel companies like Evolve Tours are flexible and dedicated to customizing their trips, many others offer no customization.
✓ Safety and Security - A travel provider will ensure all supplier companies (restaurants, hotels, activities) are safe, reputable and provide quality services. As well, emergency protocols and first-aid trained tour staff.	
✓ No details to worry about! You're free to focus fully on the ride, and have someone else sweat over the small, yet paramount details.	✗ Generally, planning with a tour company is more expensive than doing it on your own.
✓ Allergy, food restrictions communicated to all the suppliers (hotels, restaurants and activities)	
✓ Group rates on transportation and accommodation since they work with suppliers year round with many student groups	
✓ Years of expertise	

How to choose the perfect student travel company

(Adapted from "How to Choose a Reputable Adventure Travel Company or Guide" at <http://gadling.com/2011/08/05/a-guide-to-choosing-adventure-travel-companies-and-guides/>)

There are many student travel companies nationwide that run Yosemite trips. Not all are created equal. There are some key things you should look for when choosing a company to plan and run your student trip. Check out the following tips on what to look for or avoid.



Reputation and Safety

A brief online search will bring to light any serious breaches in safety or conduct. Safety doesn't just apply to those who plan to scale the Andes or kayak the Zambezi. Even the tamest "adventures" require guides who are knowledgeable about the area and activity. Make sure you have someone on hand that is currently certified in emergency first aid and rescue procedure and ensure that the company has emergency protocols and risk management policies in place and that the truly value safety over all else.

Client Communication

How clear and accurate is the company's literature or website? How long does it take them to respond to your emails or phone calls? A few days is standard, but if you find yourself having to follow up repeatedly, move on. A reputable travel company will detail exactly what is included and what is not for the price. All services should be clearly spelled out and agreed upon.

Customized Itineraries

A legitimate student travel provider will have trip itineraries that they have successfully run time and time again. They know what works and developed what they believe to be a flawless itinerary. However, there is a big plus when finding a travel company who is flexible with their itineraries. Find someone who will work with you to create the best possible custom itinerary for your group's needs.

Guide qualifications

Are their guides knowledgeable about the region you are visiting? Do they have experience leading trips there? Ideal guides will have experience travelling in the cities you are visiting and will be energetic, informative, entertaining and organized.

Ask for referrals

We suggest asking a tour company for referrals of other schools who they have run Yosemite trips before. You can also look at reviews on sites like TripAdvisor.com, or search travel blogs.

"In the end, sometimes it just comes down to how comfortable a person feels with the company and their interactions with them."



What kind of accommodations should student group stay in while in Yosemite?

When choosing where your group will stay, it's important to keep a few factors in mind. Depending on your group, some factors may be more important than others. For example: location and proximity to activities, price, room types and sizes or youth hostels vs. hotels, or volunteer housing.

Hotels *More expensive. Private rooms, full amenities, around the clock hotel staff. Typically 2/3 students to a room.*

Browse Yosemite a hotels here:

https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotels-g61000-Yosemite_National_Park_California-Hotels.html

Hostels *Cheaper. Can request private rooms for the school group. Anywhere from 2-8 students in a room, often with a*

bunk bed setup. May have private bathrooms, or shared bathrooms on the floor. Youth hostels can range greatly, from very basic to high quality hotel type accommodations.

Browse Yosemite hostels, here:

<http://www.hostelworld.com/findabed.php/ChosenCityYosemite/ChosenCountry.USA>

Camping – Since the group is visiting the park for the scenery, why spend the night walled away from it? There are 13 campgrounds in Yosemite National Park with 1,445 total campsites. Roughly 1,000 campsites can be reserved in advance. The rest are first-come, first-served. During peak season (June, July, August) Yosemite camping can be challenging because campgrounds in the park fill up fast. Finding a campsite can also be challenging on weekends in May and September. If you want to camp in Yosemite, try to reserve a campsite as far in advance as possible. Yosemite campsites can be reserved up to five months in advance, but many of the campsites are reserved within 30 minutes of becoming available.

Check the following links for more information and tips on how to reserve a campground in Yosemite National Park.

<https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/nrrs.htm>

https://www.recreation.gov/marketing.do?goto=acm/Explore_And_More/exploreArticles/tips-for-yosemite-reservations.htm



What are the best student-friendly restaurants in Yosemite?

The most important thing when deciding on a restaurant for your student group is making sure the venue can accommodate a large number of people. There should be plenty of options for students to choose from. Ensure the restaurant knows about any allergies or dietary restrictions your students may have. For large groups, it is best to reserve well in advance and not leave it until the night of. Breakfast is often included at hotels and a light breakfast at hostels. This will vary, so ensure to check with your accommodation when booking. For lunch, we recommend giving students free time in a popular area with many options to choose from.

Browse student- friendly restaurants on Yosemite: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurants-g61000-zfp5-Yosemite_National_Park_California.html

Picnicking – This is an all-time favorite and absolute must while in Yosemite National Park. Yosemite picnicking is loved by young families, groups of friends, and couples alike. It's a great way to enjoy a meal without leaving the beauty of the park. Picnic areas are provided throughout Yosemite so you can stop and enjoy a meal with your friends and family while exploring virtually any portion of Yosemite.

What kind of transportation should we take while in Yosemite?

The best combination of transportation for your student trip to Yosemite will depend on a number of factors, such as number of destination cities, distance apart, budget, group size etc.

Plane

Of course, you will be initially travelling to Yosemite on a flight. Mammoth Lakes Airport is the closest airport to Yosemite. It has direct flights from Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego. If you are planning on visiting multiple cities over a long distance, flying is the fastest option and allows the most time to spend in each destination. However, this is the more expensive option. Remember, you will have to arrange inner city transportation as well.

Coach Bus

The most popular option for student groups is to rent a coach bus to travel. This is the most economical method for large groups, and you can rent the coach for the duration of the tour to use for transportation between activities within destination. Standard coach buses have 56 passenger seats, A/C, TVs and DVD players, as well as an on-board washroom.

Can my student group use Public Transport in Yosemite?

Public transit networks to Yosemite are much less extensive, or frequent. The quality of bus and air travel varies enormously depending on the route, and region. It is not recommended to rely on public transport for moving your student group. Rather, rent a coach bus or van and ensure you have a local driver you knows the region well.

For a list of bus services throughout Yosemite, visit:

<http://yarts.com/travel-connections/>

<https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/publictransportation.htm>



Should we purchase Travel Insurance?

Purchasing the correct travel insurance can help in the event someone becomes sick or injured before, or during, a trip. Most travel insurance providers' coverage includes cancellation, trip interruption, and lost baggage. If families purchase travel insurance and the student falls ill before the trip, they may receive reimbursement for costs paid towards the trip. You can either order insurance for everyone in the group and include this in the trip cost, or provide it as an optional addition to families who would like to purchase.

Visa and Entry requirements

Many countries around the world have visa requirements and other restrictions on traveling. Before you travel, it is important to do your research. Some countries it may take up to 3 months to get a travel visa, so make sure you check out requirements as soon as you've selected your destination(s)!

Here are a couple of great resources on entry requirements for countries around the world:

Visa HQ: <https://www.visahq.ca/>

Select your country of citizenship and then the site will update the country list with requirements for your citizenship. Make sure you click on the country/countries you're visiting to get complete information (such as passport validity requirements).

Project Visa: <http://www.projectvisa.com/>

Simply select the country you're traveling to and then read the information provided.

Vaccinations

Depending on the area you're traveling to it may be wise to get vaccinated against disease.

One of the best resources for health-related information and vaccination advice for travelers is the **Centre for Disease Control (CDC) website**. Their site gives country and region-specific information for travelers like common diseases, recommended vaccinations and tips on preventing common travelling illness. For the best and most-up-to date information, we recommend you visit a local travel clinic and speak to a doctor about your specific trip details like the areas you are going to and the type of traveling you're doing.

Your Next Steps to Making this Dream Student Trip a Reality!



1. Deciding on working with a tour company, or commit to organizing the trip on your own
2. Promote the trip!
 - o Send letter home to parents, make announcements, tell you colleagues, put up posters (available from Evolve Tours) and think creatively to get the word out!
3. Hold a Parent information night
4. Distribute a Registration package to students- Waivers, Packing lists, other forms
5. Decide on a payment schedule
6. Collect deposits, registration package and payments
7. Complete rooming lists and other lists
8. Finally, board the plane and get the show on the road!



Evolve Tours

At Evolve Tours, we've been running student trips around the world since 2006 and have been perfecting the trip planning process ever since. After deciding you want your students to experience educational



travel, there's a lot involved in organizing a trip before hopping on that bus. There's the logistics of accommodations, transportation, meals, activities and more - when planned properly they come together to ensure an incredible and memorable student trip.

If you have any questions about any of the content in this guide, please email us at info@evolvetours.com, or call us at 1.888.222.5066 (Toll Free)

You can also check out sample itineraries of our trips online at www.evolvetours.com

We'd be happy to work together to plan your student trip, or just talk travel!

Happy Travels!

Evolve Tours

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