



Wander Your Way To Serenity On Hiking Trails On The Majestic Mountain Loop

Nearly [ninety five percent](#) of Yosemite, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon National Parks are designated wilderness which means to really appreciate them you must hike. It doesn't have to be exhausting to take in its beauty either. Just through a short thirty-minute stroll or a few hours exploration, our list of day hikes will provide you as much adventure as you want on the Majestic Mountain Loop.

Sequoia National Park

Within Sequoia National Park's boundaries, the vertical relief covers more than 13,000 FEET across its 629 square miles. Due to this large elevation change, the park is divided into two sections. The frontcountry features the ONLY protected California foothills ecosystem. It contains everything from yucca plants and California black oaks to the higher elevation conifer forests including the largest Giant Sequoia by volume on Earth. While on the other end, the backcountry hosts a roadless area containing the Sierra Nevada's highest-elevation range. In fact, the peaks are so tall that it contains the highest point in the contiguous United States – Mt. Whitney.



Congress Trail photo by Daniel Chui

Congress Trail

Length: 3 miles; Difficulty: Easy

How could we highlight some of our favorite hikes in Sequoia & Kings Canyon without naming a trail that winds you through the Great Forest. This giant sequoia grove is home to five out of the ten largest trees (by volume) on planet earth. Starting at the largest tree by volume, General Sherman, this easy-to-follow route has the highest concentration of these colossal trees within such a short distance.

Tip: Majority of traffic is heading to the General Sherman Tree. If you travel a few hundred yards past it, the trail becomes remarkably quiet. Even at peak times, you may only encounter a small group of travelers every few minutes.

Shorter Alternative – Big Trees Trail

If this seems a bit too much, consider the Big Trees Trail. At 1.3 miles, this short but oh so sweet route is a perfect sampling of the area as well. With less than 50 feet of elevation gain and being paved, it's great for all visitors including those needing a smooth surface to get up close and personal with the titans of the Giant Forest.

[Tokopah Falls](#)

Length: 4 miles; Difficulty: Moderate

There's a reason why this is one of the most popular trails within the park. It provides visitors a small glimpse into what you can expect in the high country of Sequoia National Park. Starting out under a pine forest canopy, it quickly ascends into the alpine meadows. Following the Marble Fork of the Kaweah River, each step brings you further into the glaciated Tokopah Valley. The trail finishes at the huge granite headwall of the Tokopah Valley where the river roars its way down via the Tokopah Falls.

[Hanging Rock](#)

Length: 0.50 miles; Difficulty: Easy

If you Google Sequoia National Park, the first attraction that comes up is Moro Rock. Its view is legendary providing a stunning 360 degree panoramic of the park and the monstrous Sierra Nevada crest. Just a stones-throw away you'll find a hidden gem that most fly by – Hanging Rock. As the name suggests, a giant boulder the size of a station wagon balances precariously on a cliff. This is a great addition to seeing Moro Rock. As you sit there enjoying lunch, you'll get views of Moro Rock as well as have the time to contemplate how in the world did Hanging Rock end up there.

[Kings Canyon National Park](#)

If there's one place in all the Sierra Nevada that still FEELS like it was when John Muir visited, it is the "Roads End" at Kings Canyon National Park. As it's named, this is literally where the road ends. To see most of this massive park, you will need to set off on foot primarily from here. And to REALLY experience it, you must go backpacking. To inspire your soul, here's a few of our favorite treks within this park.

[Roaring River Falls](#)

Length: 0.3 miles; Difficulty: Very Easy

The drive alone into Kings Canyon is worth the effort. Designated a scenic byway, this road starts at 2,000 feet and summits at over 6,500 feet plunging back down into the deepest canyon in North America, which contains the wild and roaring Kings River. Taking approximately three hours to drive round-trip, this hike is a perfect opportunity to get out and stretch your legs. The short stroll along a paved path provides an incentive to do so – the Roaring River Falls. The powerful waterfall shoots through a tight granite flume showcasing the true power of water.

[North Grove Loop](#)

Length: 1.5 miles; Difficulty: Easy

The primary attractions in the twin national parks are the majestic giants and that's where most visitor's beeline. If you want to take in Mother Nature's cathedral in solitude, head to the North Grove Loop. This

lightly traveled route provides an up close and personal view of these giants, meadows, and creeks all in a peaceful setting. The trailhead is at the Grant Tree parking area, 1 mile (1.6 km) northwest of the visitor center.



Buena Vista Peak photo by Daniel Chui

Buena Vista Peak

Length: 2 miles; Difficulty: Moderate

If you're looking for your first summit, this short but sweet hike to the top of Buena Vista Peak is a good one to start. Spanish for "good view", the four-hundred-foot ascent in a mile does just that. From its top, you're given a 360-degree view over the majestic Sequoias in Redwood Canyon, Buck Rock Fire Tower, and beyond to a splendid panorama of the High Sierra.

Trail Advisory: Any user of trails that are within recently burned areas such as Buena Vista Peak need to be aware of the risks associated with traveling in these areas. Look for overhead hazards, stay on the trails and watch your footing. For further information regarding traveling safely: [Stay Safe in Burned Areas - Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

Paradise Valley Trail

Length: 18.2 miles; Difficulty: Challenging

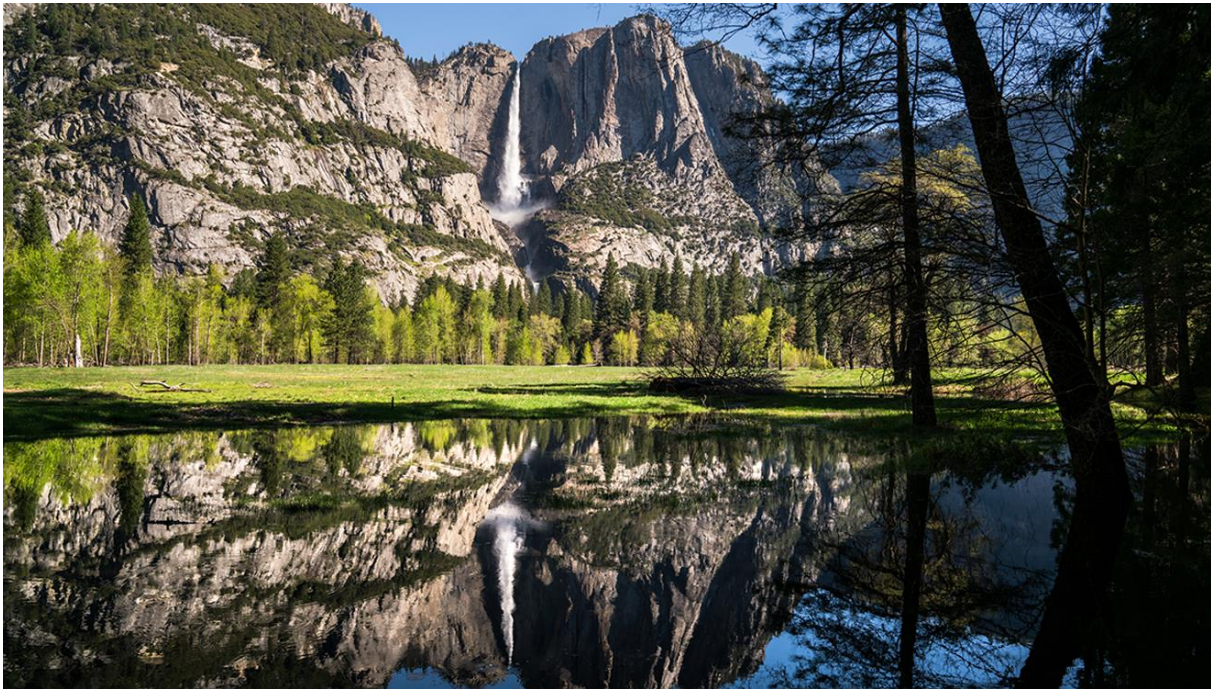
Starting at the Roads End trailhead, as soon you step onto this trail, you'll understand why John Muir stated that Kings Canyon is "a rival to Yosemite." Following the thundering Kings River, it has a little of everything that makes this place special. The route winds its way through a forest full of Ponderosa and other pines. Ascending the canyon, the riverbed becomes filled with larger and larger boulders until you come upon the Mist Falls. After the cascades, this is when the trail breaks out of the forest, and you're rewarded with some of the best views of the Canyon.

Tip: A nice feature about this trail is there are many spots you can make this hike easier by turning back. Places like Bailey Bridge (4 miles roundtrip) or the iconic Mist Falls (8.7 miles roundtrip).

Yosemite National Park

The park that needs no introduction. The 3,000-foot-deep granite walls of Yosemite Valley. Impossibly tall peaks in the high country. The highest concentration of waterfalls anywhere in the world especially in spring. It's no wonder that this scenery sparked the idea of the national park. There are the main attractions that everyone should take in like Half Dome, Yosemite Falls, and Mist Trail. Our list focuses on a few that that will give you an opportunity to see the park through John Muir's eyes – its scenery with some solitude.

Tip: For the more popular trails in the summer months, start your hikes early (at dawn) or better yet visit them during the shoulder seasons.



Yosemite Falls photo by Stephen Montalto – High Mountain Images

West Valley Loop

Length: 6.5 miles; Difficulty: Easy

As you would expect, most hiking trails in this park have big elevation changes. One of the few that doesn't is the Valley Loop Trail. The full loop covers over eleven miles in distance, but most visitors head to the East Valley Loop segment to see Mirror Lake. Instead, head west from the El Capitan Bridge. Don't let the mileage deter you. Throughout its length, the route stays relatively flat and still provides the classic views of Sentinel Rock, Cathedral Rocks, El Capitan, and even the Yosemite Falls.

Alder Creek Falls

Length: 8 miles; Difficulty: Moderate

Sure, there are bigger and bolder falls, but if you're looking for one that's away from the hustle and bustle of Yosemite's stars, this 100-footer is well worth the hike. Located on the greater Alder Creek loop, the trail winds its way through a dense forest of cedars and pines. Under the canopy, you'll find ground cover of wildflowers such as Mountain Misery or Mountain Violets until finally coming upon the roaring falls themselves.

Tip: The best time to visit is when the snow is gone at mid-elevation, but the Glacier Point Road remains closed.

Glacier Point

Length: 9.2 miles; Difficulty: Challenging

When listing classic hiking trails, “Four Mile Trail” rises to the top literally. Starting at the base of Yosemite Valley, this switchback route climbs over 3,200 feet to the top of Glacier Point. With each foot gained, the views become grander. Finally, from Glacier Point’s birds-eye perch, you can take in the hard work of the glaciers that carved and shaped the awe-inspiring valley. The view includes iconic attractions like the full 2,425 feet of Yosemite Falls as well as Half Dome.

Tip: If the hike seems a bit long, you have the option to do it one-way and catch a tour bus shuttle from Glacier Point. We HIGHLY recommend reserving a seat on the bus ahead of time because they do fill up quickly.

These are only a small sampling of the hikes available to you along the Majestic Mountain Loop through Yosemite, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon National Parks. We hope these inspire you to set off and explore this wondrous part of the country via foot. As John Muir once stated, “Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt.”

For more information go to www.MajesticMountainLoop.com

Article written by:



Alex Silgalis

Alex founded localfreshies.com® in 2014 to be the #1 website providing the “local scoop” on where to eat, drink & play in mountain towns throughout North America. When he’s not writing and executing marketing strategies for small businesses & agencies, he’s in search of the deepest snow in the winter and tackiest dirt in the summer.