



Visitor Information Assistants

FAQS

Frequently Asked Questions

Visitor information volunteers come for a month of service and are dedicated to providing accurate park information to Yosemite's guests. They are assigned to a variety of work stations strategically positioned in Yosemite Valley, Wawona, and Tuolumne Meadows. They work approximately 20 days during their month with the opportunity to experience the park on days off. The information below will help you envision what it would be like to live and volunteer in Yosemite for a month.



APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

1. What are the important qualities of visitor information volunteers?

Serving as a volunteer in Yosemite National Park, a World Heritage Site, is an honor and a privilege. Our volunteers recognize this and take pride in representing Yosemite, the National Park Service, and Yosemite Conservancy. They enjoy working with people and serving the public. They work congenially with each other, the park's partners and Conservancy employees. They have excellent communication skills and a strong desire to support the mission of Yosemite Conservancy and the National Park Service. They abide by the rules and regulations of both agencies and put the needs of others above their own.

Our volunteers are passionate about Yosemite and have personal experience with trails and activities to share with visitors. They come with a commitment to work for the park rather than as a means to have a vacation. They work as part of a team and are flexible when schedule changes are needed. They are in good health with strong stamina. Whether camping, working, or enjoying time off, they are committed to helping visitors get the most out of a visit to Yosemite.

2. Do I have to be a U.S. citizen to participate?

U.S. citizenship or possession of a green card is required. International visitors are allowed to volunteer by obtaining a J1 Visa. Refer to the National Park Service's International Volunteer website for further information.

3. What is the age requirement?

Our participants must be a minimum of 18 years old. 18 year olds must be accompanied by a parent/guardian who also volunteers.

4. Do I have to be a donor to apply?

While your work as a volunteer is a wonderful contribution to Yosemite, the administration of the program is funded by donations. Yosemite Conservancy relies on the generosity of our donors to support this program and dozens of park improvement projects each year. We encourage all participants to make a monetary donation to the Conservancy but it is not a requirement or a determining factor in the selection of applicants.

5. How do I make a donation?

Online: Visit [Donate-Yosemite Conservancy](#).

Phone: Call 800 4MYPARK (800 469-7275) to donate with a credit card.

Mail: Send a check to Yosemite Conservancy, 101 Montgomery Street, Suite 1700, San Francisco, CA 94101.

6. What is the schedule of opportunities for the season?

The Visitor Information Assistant Schedule provides this season's opportunities.

7. Is there a job description for this position?

For a description of this position read Visitor Information Assistant Position Description.

8. How do I apply?

After reading all the information, use the Visitor Information Assistant Application Form to apply.

9. Is there a fee?

There is a \$25 processing fee for new volunteers – payable upon acceptance into the program. There is no cost to apply. There is no fee for returning Yosemite Conservancy volunteers; however any donations to further our projects and programs in the park are welcomed.

10. When does the application period begin and end?

When the schedule is posted on this website, online application has begun and remains open until all positions are filled.

11. What is the application process?

Applicants can list three locations and dates to volunteer. Applications are evaluated and conditional placements are assigned. Conditionally accepted applicants are notified, have their references checked (email questionnaire), and participate in a phone interview. Once admitted into the program, all the information needed to participate is emailed at a later date.

Placement of returning volunteers is based on availability, park location needs, and previous performance. They will be emailed their placement assignments ahead of new volunteers.

12. Are there waiting lists?

Yes. Applicants can ask to be placed on waiting lists if none of their choices are available. They are notified when availability occurs.

13. Can I volunteer for less or more than a month?

Because of the mandatory and on-going training involved, participants in this program are required to arrive on their scheduled date and work the full commitment of service, approximately one month. It is possible to work more than one month in a summer, but these assignments are relatively rare and decided on a case by case basis.

VOLUNTEER LOCATIONS

14. What are the differences between the park's volunteer locations?

Yosemite Valley (Elevation: 4,000 feet)

Eighteen to twenty volunteers work here each month. Most work stations are very busy with volunteers working either one location all day or switching stations mid-day. Our volunteers share campsites in Lower Pines Campground which is close to dining, showers, and laundry at Half Dome and a short stroll to the Merced River. Yosemite Valley can be smoky during some periods of the summer – due to campfire smoke or wildland fires. Because of limited parking space, everyone takes turns parking their vehicles in the Half Dome Village parking area. A free shuttle and bicycles are the preferred mode of transportation. Simple cruiser type bikes are available and free for our volunteers during their month of service. Food discounts are provided at nearby Half Dome Village Pavilion and the Yosemite Valley Lodge Food Court (Base Camp Eatery).

Wawona (Elevation: 4,000 feet)

From May-September our volunteers welcome and assist visitors in navigating the shuttle system and the walking trails to the magnificent Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias. This beautifully restored area is an exciting experience to share with people. The two duty stations for the Mariposa Grove are at 5,000 ft. at the Welcome Plaza and at 6,000 ft. up in the Mariposa Grove itself. Participants camp together in the quiet Wawona Campground and drive their vehicles from there to Wawona to catch a free shuttle to the grove. Nearby dining options range from grab and go to sit down meals and are available at The Big Trees Lodge restaurant and golf shop, and the Yosemite Hospitality convenience store in Wawona and at Tenaya Lodge in Fish Camp.

Tuolumne Meadows (Elevation: 8,600 feet)

Tuolumne volunteers staff an information booth outside of Tuolumne Visitor Center, act as the docent for the historic Parsons Lodge, and set up a portable contact station (with a spotting scope) at Olmstead Point. Because Tuolumne is a popular hiking location, knowledge and experience with the area's trails are important qualifications for these volunteers. Volunteers will need to hike a little over a mile round trip across Tuolumne Meadows to work in Parsons Lodge and will to drive their personal vehicle to Olmstead Point. They have their own campsites in Tuolumne Meadows Campground, where the terrain is more woodsy and the atmosphere peaceful. They hike or drive for local transportation. There is a 50% discount at the Tuolumne Meadows Grill.

15. What is the weather like in the different locations in the park?

Yosemite Valley and Wawona:

(Temps at Mariposa Grove will generally be a little cooler than in Wawona):

Month	Avg Highs	Avg Lows	Special Conditions
May	Mid 70s	Mid 40s	Rapidly changeable, may have rain, snow
June	Mid 80s	Mid 50s	Reached high 90s in 2018
July	Mid 90s	Mid 60s	Start of fire season, may have periods of smoke
Aug	Mid 90s	Mid 50s	Fire season, may have periods of smoke
Sept	Mid 80s	Mid 50s	Fire season, may have periods of smoke

Tuolumne Meadows: Though skies are usually clear, thunderstorms can occur during summer afternoons. Usually forming at higher elevations, they arrive suddenly and provide intense but brief downpours, lightning, thunder, hail, and gusty winds. Typically, by nightfall skies are clear again. Volunteers in June and September can wake up to frozen water bottles.

Month	Avg Highs	Avg Lows	Special Conditions
June	Mid 60s	Mid 30s	May still have patches of snow
July	Mid 70s	Mid 30s	Start of fire season, may have periods of smoke
Aug	Mid 70s	Mid 30s	Fire season, may have periods of smoke
Sept	Mid 60s	Mid 30s	Fire season, may have periods of smoke

DUTIES AND TRAINING

16. What are the duties of visitor information assistants?

All of the work revolves around greeting and informing the public. Their goal is to help visitors feel welcome in the park and give them the information they need to take advantage of the recreational and educational activities available to them. Giving directions, offering hiking suggestions, providing travel updates on roads, trails, or facilities, answering questions about the park's natural or human history, and passing on safety warnings are all part of our volunteers' work. They answer questions ranging from "where are the restrooms?" to "I have three days here, what should I do?" Our volunteers provide information on Yosemite Conservancy's array of programs for the public, promote them when appropriate, and spark interest in becoming part of Yosemite Conservancy's organization and its efforts to protect the park's resources and improve the experience for its visitors.

17. What are the skills and abilities required for this position?

Conservancy volunteers are friendly, approachable, and enjoy engaging with visitors. They are knowledgeable and experienced with Yosemite. They are also willing to promote Yosemite Conservancy's mission of education and stewardship in the park. They are outgoing, coachable, professional, and have the ability to work both independently and as team members. They are also comfortable camping in communal campsites.

18. What are the site specific duties of Conservancy volunteers?

Yosemite Valley: This is the busiest location to work and volunteers may each contact 300-500 people per day, with all the Valley stations contacting 2,000-3,000 people per day. Participants may serve as docents in the Museum Gallery and answer questions in the Visitor Center. They provide preventive search and rescue information to hikers on their way to the Mist Trail and Half Dome. They answer questions at a Yosemite Village booth and help people get oriented to valley destinations in visitor parking lots and at shuttle stops.

Tuolumne Meadows: Visitor questions are answered at a booth outside the Tuolumne Visitor Center and at Olmstead Point -which also provides a telescope to view people on the Half Dome cables miles away. Volunteers also serve as docents at Parsons Lodge and assist with cultural events that take place there during the summer cultural series.

Wawona: Volunteers staff an information booth at the Welcome Plaza (which is the second busiest contact station in the park with 600-1000 contacts per day) and do roving visitor contacts up in the Mariposa Grove among the giant sequoias.

19. Will I determine my own work schedule?

Management creates Yosemite Valley's volunteer schedule to ensure that everyone has a balanced experience. Volunteers are welcome to exchange days off with each other by following a set protocol. In other park locations, creating the monthly schedule is a collaborative effort between team leaders and volunteers.

20. What kind of work schedule will I have?

Work schedules, including the number of days off, vary with each location. Yosemite Conservancy tries to provide three days off in a row at least once in the month of service. However, flexibility is required and volunteers are expected to step up and work for each other in extenuating circumstances. Yosemite Conservancy recognizes that giving volunteers plenty of time off makes for happy, productive volunteers and strives to keep from having anyone feel overworked.

21. What is the work routine?

A work day is usually 6 hours with breaks and lunch. Some days accommodate purchasing a lunch while other days require packing one. Participants typically work a 32 hour week. Yosemite Valley volunteers may change duty locations during the day or may stay at the same station all day. Tuolumne Meadows volunteers work the same duty location all day. Wawona volunteers usually change locations as staffing allows. Shifts may include walking, hiking, sitting, and standing both indoors and outdoors. Some locations require hiking up to a mile on flat to steep terrain.

22. Will I receive training?

Online and onsite training is mandatory for working in this position. We make every effort to provide our volunteers with the resources needed to perform professionally. All participants complete a mandatory, comprehensive orientation and training program. Online training prior to arrival is followed by training and orientation after arrival by Conservancy and NPS staff. Those who do not complete all of the trainings are not eligible to volunteer.

A detailed orientation manual is available for everyone as a resource while serving in the park. Policies and procedures are included in the online training. Ongoing assistance and support is available as needed. The Park Service provides current information in convenient flip charts for use at various volunteer stations. Mentors are available to help new volunteers transition as smoothly as possible.

Becoming a volunteer means joining a team of dedicated and conscientious individuals who are committed to providing accurate assistance to park visitors and promoting the work of Yosemite Conservancy.

CAMPING

23. What kind of accommodations will I have?

Participants share group campsites in all locations except Tuolumne Meadows. Most volunteers camp in tents, and everyone brings their own camping gear. They also bring their own food and do their own cooking, storing food and scented items in shared bear-proof food lockers. At Wawona and Yosemite Valley there is large dining canopy with picnic tables set up for group dining. At Tuolumne there is a screened tent available for meetings and dining. There are no hookups or showers in campgrounds and restrooms have cold water only. Free hot showers are available nearby. Previous camping experience is recommended and no pets are allowed.

Campground quiet hours for our volunteers are from 10:00 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. Volunteers are expected to be respectful and courteous to teammates as well as the public camping adjacent to their sites. Music must not be

played loudly. Smoking should occur away from the camping area with smoking materials collected to prevent litter and fires. Valuables should not be left in the campground during the day. It's expected that volunteers adhere to a code of conduct that mirrors the stature of the National Park Service and cooperate with team leaders, NPS, Aramark, and Conservancy employees.

Camping in Yosemite includes the possibility of bear activity, which requires diligent adherence to bear-proof food locker regulations. There are occasions when a late night bear patrol may come through camp, which can disrupt sleep.

24. Can I bring my RV or camper?

RV and camper space is limited. Prior approval from Yosemite Conservancy management is required in order to bring these and the maximum length is 25 feet. In Yosemite Valley, it is mandatory that RV tow vehicles and/or a second vehicle are parked in the Half Dome Village parking area rather than in camp.

25. Can I use a generator?

The vast majority of Conservancy participants are tent campers. A month of frequent generator noise can obstruct the peaceful experience these participants desire and adversely affect morale. Generator owners must be present during operation and run the unit for no more than one hour at a time. It is expected that owners contribute to a peaceful atmosphere by using a generator when it impacts as few team members as possible. Use of solar panels is encouraged.

26. How do I know what to bring?

A packing list is provided prior to arrival.

27. Can I arrive early or extend my stay in the park?

Yes, but you must make your own camping/lodging arrangements.

28. Can I park my car in the campground?

The NPS allowance is a maximum of two vehicles per campsite in all campground locations. This is strictly regulated by Yosemite Conservancy as well as NPS.

Yosemite Valley: Due to the number of volunteers sharing campsites, RV tow vehicles and/or second vehicles must be parked in the Half Dome Village parking area. Tent campers have priority vehicle parking. Everyone takes turns parking their vehicles in Lower Pines Campground and the Half Dome Village parking area.

29. How will I store my food and scented items?

Food and all scented items are stored in bear-proof food lockers. Each locker is expected to accommodate two volunteers or one couple and another volunteer. Every effort is made for shared lockers to be adjacent to each volunteer's tent. All volunteers are expected to have equal space in shared lockers. Additionally, stored items should be inside plastic bins with snap on lids to prevent access by small wildlife.

30. What bear precautions should I take?

All items with a scent, including canned goods, drinks, cleaning supplies and toiletries must be stored in bear-proof food lockers. These lockers must be closed and latched at all times, even while at your campsite. Following these regulations and precautions decrease personal injury/property damage, and keeps Yosemite's bears wild. For more information visit:

<http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/bears.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/scarebears.htm>

31. What size are the bear-proof food lockers?

Lockers vary in size with the smallest 47" wide x 22" high x 38" deep. Ice chests must be able to fit in these containers which are shared by two volunteers.

32. Can I bring my pet or have my pet visit me?

Pets are not allowed at volunteer stations, or to be left in tents, RV/campers, or tied up unattended in camp. Because of this we do not allow our volunteers to bring their pets

BENEFITS

33. What free benefits will I receive as a Conservancy volunteer?

Participants in the program gain work experience in one of the world's most beautiful places. They receive free park entrance passes, campsites, shower passes, uniform shirts, ball caps, nametags, theater attendance, as well as use of select swimming pools and a Wellness Center. Discounts at Yosemite Conservancy retail locations and select Aramark food concessions are also provided.

An added benefit is the opportunity to participate in one educational Outdoor Adventure course within a year after volunteer service at no cost. This benefit is based on space availability with the possibility of being bumped by a paying customer. Participation in these classes should not be scheduled while volunteering in the park.

34. What are the discounts?

Yosemite Conservancy provides a 30 percent discount at its retail stores at Big Oak Flat, Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows, Wawona Visitor Centers, and Mariposa Grove Depot as well as at the museum store adjacent to the Museum Gallery in Yosemite Village. The concessioner, Aramark, provides a 50 percent discount at Yosemite Valley Lodge Food Court, Half Dome Village Pavilion, and the Tuolumne Grill. Rush Creek Lodge provides a 10 percent locals' discount at its restaurant.

UNIFORMS, MEALS AND HYGIENE

35. Will I wear a uniform?

Two complimentary uniform shirts, a ball cap and nametag are provided to each new participant. They supply their own solid-colored long pants, shorts that reach the knee area, or capris. Professionalism and comfort are the expectation for work attire.

36. What are the meal/grocery arrangements?

Participants are responsible for their own meals and occasionally enjoy potlucks together. They store their own food in shared bear-proof food lockers. Ice chests must fit in these lockers. At Tuolumne and Yosemite Valley freezers are available for volunteers to recharge their ice packs. A free ice machine is available for volunteers camping at Wawona.

Yosemite Valley: Dining at a fifty percent discount is available at Yosemite Valley Lodge Food Court and the Half Dome Village Pavilion. Groceries are available in the valley as well as Mariposa (1½ hours away) via highway 140.

Tuolumne Meadows: A fifty percent discount is available at the Tuolumne Grill. The closest grocery store is in Lee Vining (30 minutes away) via Tioga Pass and highway 395.

Wawona: There is a neighborhood market and a convenience store in Wawona as well as a variety of large grocery stores in Oakhurst (30 miles away) via highway 41.

37. Are there alcohol or marijuana restrictions?

Alcoholic beverages are not allowed for volunteers under 21 years of age. Responsible, polite behavior is expected of everyone where alcohol is consumed anywhere in the park. Drinking is not allowed while in uniform. The Conservancy expects those who drink alcohol to act responsibly, not drink and drive, and be able to do required work each day.

Although marijuana is legal in California as of January 1, 2018, it is still illegal to use or possess in Yosemite National Park due to the park's federal jurisdiction. 36CFR 2.35

38. Will I be able to do laundry?

There are coin operated laundry facilities located in Yosemite Valley, Wawona, and Tuolumne Meadows.

39. Will I have access to showers?

There are no showers in any of Yosemite's campgrounds; however, free showers are provided nearby for each area.

TIME OFF

40. What do volunteers do in the evenings?

Many volunteers simply relax and enjoy the camping experience. They may spend time together around a campfire or picnic table visiting or playing cards and games. Spontaneous "happy hours" seem to be a regular occurrence. The following free activities are also offered in each park location:

Yosemite Valley: Amphitheater, theater (when seats are available), and Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center (formerly Le Conte) programs, a Wellness Center with DVD checkout, exercise classes and equipment, the Majestic and Half Dome Village lounges to read and play games.

Tuolumne Meadows: Amphitheater programs, music walks, and occasional cultural events at Parsons Lodge.

Wawona: There are square dances at the Pioneer History Center during the summer from July 4-Labor Day, nightly music at the Big Trees Lodge, and weekend evening programs at the campground amphitheater.

41. What do volunteers do on their time off?

Free time is used to relax, meet friends, catch up on personal chores or make the most of park activities. Activities include hiking, backpacking, fishing, scrambling, rock climbing, rafting, swimming, horseback riding, playing golf, making art, and visiting locations in the park or nearby towns. Many volunteers with the same days off do activities together.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

42. Can my children accompany me, and my family stay with me while I volunteer?

Volunteer campsites are provided by the National Park Service free of charge. For this reason, the sites are for volunteers only. A spouse or family member must also volunteer in order to camp with you. A visitor policy provides for family/friends on a very limited basis.

43. How long can family and friends stay with me?

Volunteering is not a means of providing a campsite for family and friends. Requests for visitors must be submitted to the team leader in the campground prior to visitor arrival. Volunteers must be present during a visit; they cannot loan their site and leave. Approval is subject to campsite impact. Violation of this policy results in an immediate vacating of the campsite by visitors and jeopardizes a volunteer's eligibility to participate in the program.

If scheduling allows, each volunteer can have up to 6 person nights of guests per month. 1 person for 1 night = 1 person night. Examples: 2 guests for 3 nights each = 6 person nights. 1 guest for 4 nights+2 guests for 1 night = 6 person nights. Additionally, no more than 3 guests at one time and no guest can stay more than 4 nights in a row. This limit does not apply to people visiting you if they are staying in their own campsite or lodging.

Visitors must place their tent adjacent to their host and share the host's bear locker space as well. In addition, in Yosemite Valley visitors must park their vehicles in the Half Dome Village parking lot at all times.

COMMUNICATION AND BANKING

44. How will my family and friends be able to contact me?

Mail can be sent to the following general delivery addresses:

Yosemite Valley: General Delivery, Yosemite Valley, CA, 95389

Tuolumne Meadows: General Delivery, Tuolumne Meadows, CA, 95389

Wawona: General Delivery, Fish Camp, CA, 93623

FedEx and UPS delivery: These carriers do not deliver to General Delivery. Packages should be delivered to the following address and management will provide delivery:

Yosemite Conservancy

5020 El Portal Road, El Portal, CA 95318

Attn: Volunteer Program

45. How can I reach Yosemite Conservancy's volunteer program?

Mark Marschall, Volunteer Program Manager

209 379-2317, extension 14; fax: 209 379-2486; MMarschall@yosemiteconservancy.org

P.O. Box 230, El Portal, CA 95318

FedEx or UPS: 5020 El Portal Road, El Portal, CA 95318

46. What is the emergency contact procedure?

If an emergency situation happens to you, the person you provided as the emergency contact in your online registration form will be contacted if you are unable to do so. Emergency contact information is treated as

protected information that is available as needed and maintained by Yosemite Conservancy and the National Park Service.

Depending on your service provider, there is limited cell phone coverage in the park. In case of a serious, life-threatening family emergency and if you can't be reached by cell phone, your family can reach you by calling the Park Service Emergency Communications Center at (209) 379-1992. Callers should state the emergency, provide your name and campsite location, and request a relay of a message to you. Please use this procedure for emergencies only.

47. Will I be able to use a cell phone?

Service is available in and near Yosemite Village for AT&T and Verizon customers. Verizon has limited areas of coverage in Wawona and Tuolumne Meadows.

48. Will I be able to charge batteries and my cell phone?

There are locations in Yosemite Valley, Wawona, and Tuolumne Meadows where volunteers can charge batteries and cell phones while they work.

49. Will I have wireless Internet access?

Wireless access is available for Conservancy's volunteers at various locations in Yosemite Valley, including the Volunteer Field Office which is available 24 hours per day. At Tuolumne Visitor Center there is wireless access, but with limited data and only appropriate for checking email. Wawona's public library is open 6 days a week and has wireless internet access – which is also available 24 hours by sitting outside the library

50. Will I be able to cash a check or withdraw money from my bank account?

There are ATMs in Yosemite Valley, Evergreen Lodge, Crane Flat, and Tuolumne Meadows.

TRANSPORTATION

51. How do I get to Yosemite using public transportation?

For information visit Yosemite Public Transportation.

52. What do I do about camping gear if I'm traveling by air?

Gear can be shipped to Yosemite Conservancy's El Portal Office. If delivery is to Wawona or Tuolumne Meadows, it must arrive two weeks in advance to ensure delivery from the El Portal office to the campground in a timely manner. Send to Yosemite Conservancy, 5020 El Portal Road, El Portal, CA, 95318; Attn: Volunteer Program

53. What transportation is available in the park?

In Yosemite Valley bikes are the best way to get around locally– volunteers either bring their own or free loaners are provided. The free shuttle bus may also be used, but can be crowded at peak times. In Wawona volunteers drive their cars to the Wawona store parking area to catch a shuttle to the grove. In Tuolumne Meadows they hike or drive personal vehicles. Most years in Tuolumne there is trailhead shuttle that runs throughout the day to many of the trailheads along Tioga road - it did not operate in 2018 and is uncertain for 2019.

54. How do I get from one part of the park to another using public transportation?

The Tuolumne Meadows hiker bus makes one trip a day, starting in Yosemite Valley and traveling to Tuolumne Meadows with stops at various trailheads on Tioga Road. It returns to Yosemite Valley in the afternoon, making the same stops.

Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) provides service between Yosemite Valley, Wawona, and Tuolumne Meadows for a fee. For more information visit [Yosemite Public Transportation](#).

55. How do I get to the park?

From San Francisco/Bay Area

Distance: 195 mi/314 km; time: 4-5 hours

Take I-580 east to I-205 east to Highway 120 east (Manteca) or Highway 140 east (Merced)

From Sacramento Area

Distance: 176 mi/283 km; time: 4 hours

Take Highway 99 south to Highway 120 east (Manteca) or Highway 140 east (Merced)

From Los Angeles

Distance: 313 mi/504 km; time: 6 hours

Take I-5 north (or I-405 north to I-5) to Highway 99 north to Highway 41 north (Fresno)

Please see this NPS website: [Yosemite National Park](#).

