



Work Week Crews

FAQ

Frequently Asked
Questions

This program involves working with National Park Service work leaders to help maintain, improve, and restore Yosemite. Typically, work is at elevations ranging from 4,000 to 10,000 feet. Participation for each work week is limited to 8-10 people. Volunteers are required to provide their own camping equipment, including a tent, sleeping bag, and pad, as well as appropriate outdoor gear. Work tools, equipment, and materials are provided by the National Park Service. Food is provided by Yosemite Conservancy and prepared by our cooks. Volunteers camp in group campsites that do not accommodate trailers. Participants work four days and have one day off to experience the park. The information below will help you envision what it would be like to be part of a work crew.



REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

1. What are the important qualities of work week volunteers?

Serving as a volunteer in Yosemite National Park, a World Heritage Site, is an honor and a privilege. Our volunteers recognize this and are passionate about preserving and protecting this extraordinary place. They enjoy working and camping with each other. They work as a team and are flexible. They are excited about the work they are doing, follow directions cheerfully, work diligently, and share campground chores. These hard working men and women are in good health with strong stamina. They take their role in the park seriously, support the mission of the National Park Service and Yosemite Conservancy, and abide by the rules and regulations of both agencies.

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. How old do I have to be to participate?

Participants need to be a minimum of 18 years of age. 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 [Yosemite.org/give](https://www.yosemite.org/give)

Phone: Call (415)434-1782 to donate with a credit card.

Mail: Send a check to Yosemite Conservancy, 101 Montgomery Street, Suite 1700, San Francisco, CA 94104.

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

The Work Week Crews Schedule and Descriptions provides this season's opportunities and can be found on Yosemite Conservancy Volunteer webpage.

7. How do I apply?

Participation in 2021 work weeks has been reserved for those whose program was canceled in 2020; this year's application will be sent to those eligible volunteers via email.

8. How does the application process work?

Applications will be sorted by volunteer interest and availability. A lottery system will determine each work week's roster.

9. What happens after I am accepted?

The email acceptance notification will include an online payment link, requiring a credit card. Because of the popularity of the program, work weeks fill up fast, so payment should be made in a timely manner. Delaying payment could jeopardize participation. Once the fee is paid, placement is confirmed. Emails are sent at later dates with all the information needed to volunteer.

10. Are there waiting lists?

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

11. Can I participate in more than one work week?

Because the program is so popular, applicants are only assigned to one work week in order to provide opportunities for others. Exceptions occasionally occur if a work week does not fill up or a cancellation cannot be filled from a waiting list. Those applicants who are accepted for one week and would like to do an additional week will be placed on a waiting list for their additional week.

PAYMENT

12. What is the fee?

A \$375 fee covers administrative and logistical costs, covers the salaries of the cook and assistant cook, the cost of the food, and a commemorative t-shirt and ball cap. With needing to keep group sizes small, due to COVID-19 gathering recommendations, we had to increase our participation fees from \$325 to \$375. This was a necessary increase to cover our costs.

13. When do I pay the fee?

Fees should be paid after notification of placement in a work week. If fees are not paid within 2 weeks of placement, an applicant's placement will no longer be reserved and they may lose their placement to other applicants.

14. How do I pay the fee?

When applicants are notified of a placement they are provided with a link to pay for the work week with a credit card on a secure website in the same way that products are purchased online. Credit card payments only are accepted.

15. Can I pay anytime up until the work week?

Accepted applicants should pay within two weeks of being placed in a work week. Failure to pay within this deadline may result in the loss of a guaranteed spot in the assigned work week.

16. What is your cancellation policy?

Significant events such as pandemic, fire, flood, park emergencies, or government shutdowns can cancel a work week. Volunteers are notified by the Conservancy if a trip has to be canceled and full refunds are provided. The Conservancy is not responsible for travel costs or expenses if participants do not receive notification of a canceled project prior to their arrival.

If after paying for a work week, an applicant is unable to participate and it is greater than 30 days before the assigned program, all but \$25 (processing fee) will be refunded. If placement is canceled within 30 days, a refund is not offered.

WEEKLY ROUTINE

17. What kind of work will I do?

Our volunteers work with National Park Service staff on projects involving trail maintenance, climber access route rehabilitation, and vegetation restoration. Trail work involves a variety of tasks including, but not limited to, digging and shaping drains for water erosion control, clearing brush and branches from trails using loppers and hand saws, using rock bars to move and reposition rocks, crushing and reshaping rocks with hammers, sawing fallen trees with crosscut saws, and using a grip hoist to move heavy logs and rocks. Restoration projects may include plant identification, seed collection, planting, carrying equipment and containers of water for short distances, invasive species and conifer removal, and fence repair. Many of our projects involve hiking short distances to and from the work sight; some may involve continuous hiking as we work. Approximate distances of hikes will be listed in each specific Work Week description. Please refer to Work Week Schedule and Project Descriptions found at our Work Week Volunteer Page. In addition to working in the field, everyone takes turns helping with meal preparation and cleanup at the group campsite.

18. What kind of physical condition should I be in to participate?

Most participants find this kind of work very satisfying and the surroundings inspirational. Days of manual labor as well as hiking to and from a work site, especially at high elevations in widely varying temperatures, can be very challenging. It is important to choose a project that matches your fitness level. In general, participants should be in strong physical condition and able to lift 40 pounds or 1/3 of their body weight (whichever is less). Each year the fitness level for our work projects changes, depending on the type of work the Park Service needs done. Work Week Crew Schedule and Project Descriptions found at our Work Week Volunteer Page provide the information needed to choose a work project tailored to your ability.

19. What are the safety precautions?

Volunteers are required to perform their tasks in a safe manner, use appropriate tools, and wear required protective gear. They should carry a day pack with two liters of water. Work tools and gloves are provided by National Park Service work leaders. Safety vests are provided when appropriate. Care must be exercised when working on and off-trail and/or near rivers and streams. Work takes place outdoors and working conditions are variable. Volunteers should dress appropriately for the work and weather with long pants, long sleeved shirts, and sturdy shoes/boots. Work typically involves hiking on uneven, potentially rocky and/or wet, slippery terrain. Potential hazards include exposure to biting or stinging insects, allergens, snake and other wildlife, irritating vegetation, and other hazards typical of outdoor work environments. Moderate to strenuous physical exertion may be required. Volunteers must abide all COVID-19 safety precautions, including wearing a mask when 6ft social distancing is not possible.

20. What is the routine during the week?

Participants arrive at their assigned campground on Sunday after noon and set up their tents in a group campsite. Dinner is provided Sunday night and every night through Friday. Breakfasts and bagged lunches are provided each morning Monday through Friday. Volunteers check out after breakfast on Saturday. To best follow the schedules of our National Park Service leaders, volunteers will work a Monday-Thursday schedule, with Friday as their day off. The work day is 6 to 7 hours, with appropriate rest and lunch breaks. After work, participants may want to go for a swim or take a short walk in the area. Volunteers will need to drive themselves back to camp in time for dinner. Work Weeks that camp in remote areas will have solar showers provided. Weather dependent, there may be a campfire in the evenings.

21. How does the crew get to the work site?

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, volunteers must drive their personal vehicle to and from the work site. No carpooling allowed.

22. Do I need to bring my own tools?

Tools are provided by the National Park Service. Some participants like to bring their own work gloves and personal protective equipment.

23. What typically happens on the day off?

Volunteers are free to explore other areas of the park, go hiking, climbing or simply relax.

CAMPING

24. Can I bring an RV or camper?

The campsites do not accommodate trailers or RVs. Participants may sleep in their vans or pickups with a camper shell at some of our campgrounds. Please reach out to us at ebrosk@yosemite.org to verify if we can accommodate your setup.

25. What lodging is provided?

Volunteers provide their own camping equipment, including a sleeping bag, and pad. Campgrounds are equipped with bear-proof food lockers and restrooms. Previous camping experience is recommended. Pets and additional people are not allowed.

Quiet hours are from 10:00 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. Everyone is expected to be respectful of those in their group as well as campers in other 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 is expected that participants adhere to a code of conduct that mirrors the standards of the National Park Service, as well as cooperate with the cooks, NPS, Aramark, and Conservancy staff.

26. How do I know what to bring?

A suggested packing list is provided prior to arrival. You may contact us by email with any further questions after having read the provided list.

27. When do I arrive and depart the campsite?

Check in is after noon on Sunday and departure is by noon the following Saturday. Planning to help with camp set up as needed is appreciated. You will be greeted by our camp cooks upon arrival, and by YC and NPS work leaders on Monday mornings.

28. Can I arrive early or leave later to extend my stay in the park?

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

MEALS AND HYGIENE

29. What meals are provided during the week?

Three hearty meals a day are provided, starting with a Sunday arrival dinner and concluding with breakfast before departure the following Saturday.

30. What sort of menu can I expect?

Meals are hearty, healthy and delicious. Breakfast usually includes the choice of a hot dish or cold cereal, along with fruit and meat. Bagged lunches are provided to volunteers to take to the work site. Typical dinners include appetizers, carbohydrates, meat, vegetables, salad, and dessert. Nonalcoholic drinks such as milk, juice, coffee, and hot teas are

included. Accommodations are made for vegetarian and other diets. Participants with dietary restrictions can also bring their own necessary food items.

31. Are there alcohol or marijuana restrictions?

Alcoholic beverages are not provided, however some adults bring beer or wine to share with the group in the evenings. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted for those under 21 years of age. Responsible, polite behavior is expected of



everyone when alcohol is consumed. 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

32. What bear precautions should I take?

All items with a scent, including canned goods, drinks, and toiletries, must be stored in bear-proof food lockers. These lockers must be closed and latched at all times, even while in the campsite. Following these regulations and precautions decreases personal injury and property damage and keeps Yosemite's bears wild.

For more information visit:

www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/bears

www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/scarebears

33. Will I have access to showers, toilets, and running water?

There are no showers in Yosemite campgrounds. Campgrounds have either vault or flush toilets and potable running water, or a portable water tank. Work projects which camp at primitive campgrounds will have solar showers available to participants.

Participants bring their own towels, toiletries, and a tote bag to pack what they need for showering after work.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

34. Can my family come with me while I volunteer?

Volunteer campsites are provided by the National Park Service free of charge. In order to stay in the site family members must also be part of the work week volunteer team, and have gone through the application process. Due to COVID-19, no visitors will be allowed in the Volunteer campsite.

COMMUNICATION

35. Will more information be provided to help prepare for the work week?

Prior to arrival, participants are emailed a gate pass, map, campground directions and rules, a packing list, bear information, COVID-19 operations plan, and required forms.

36. 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 maintained by the Conservancy and NPS.

Depending on your service provider, there is limited cell phone coverage in the park. In case of a serious, life-threatening family emergency, your family can reach you by calling the National Park Service dispatch 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 as dispatch services more than one national park.

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

EBrosk@yosemite.org

Emily Brosk, Volunteer Program Manager

Best form of contact is via email: EBrosk@yosemite.org

Phone: 315 276 6744 (personal cell phone)

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

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

TRANSPORTATION

38. How do I get to Yosemite?

Volunteers will need to drive themselves and if coming out of state Volunteers must self-quarantine for 10 days before joining the crew. Find more information at <https://covid19.ca.gov/travel/>

39. 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)

There can be vehicle restrictions to enter the park.

Please see this NPS website: [Yosemite National Park](https://www.nps.gov/yosemi/)

