



Work Week Crews: Frequently Asked Questions

This program gives volunteers the opportunity to work alongside National Park Service crews to help maintain and restore public lands. Participants work four days, at elevations ranging from 4,000 to 10,000 feet, and have one day off to experience the park. Participation for work weeks is limited to 12 to 20 people based on the technicality of each project. Volunteers are required to provide their own camping equipment, including a tent, sleeping bag and pad, and appropriate outdoor clothing and gear.

Work tools, equipment, and PPE are provided by the National Park Service and Yosemite Conservancy. Food is provided by the Conservancy and prepared by our camp cooks. Volunteers will camp in group campsites that do not accommodate trailers. Read below for more valuable information about joining a Work Week Crew.

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REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

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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 are flexible, follow directions, work diligently, and happily share camp life and chores. These hard working people 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. Anyone under the age of 19 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian who also volunteers.

4. DO I HAVE TO BE A DONOR TO APPLY?

The work of our volunteers is an invaluable contribution to Yosemite, but the program itself is funded and ensured by your donations. Yosemite Conservancy relies on the generosity of our donors to support the volunteer program and dozens of major park improvement projects every 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/giving
- **Mail:** Send a check to Yosemite Conservancy, 101 Montgomery Street, Suite 2450, San Francisco, CA 94104.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

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6. WHAT IS THE SCHEDULE OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SEASON?

Each year's work week schedule and descriptions can be found on Yosemite Conservancy [Volunteer webpage](#) by the end of January of that volunteer season.

7. HOW DO I APPLY?

Applications will open by the end of January. Applicants will create a volunteer profile and register through our online portal yosemite.volunteermatters.org. Review the WW Scheule and Project Descriptions and indicate your preferences in your profile. Placements are not first come, first served.

8. HOW DOES THE APPLICATION PROCESS WORK?

Applications will be sorted by volunteer interest, availability, and suitability. A lottery system will determine each work week's roster. The initial placement lottery will take place in late February; later applications will be considered on a rolling basis for the remainder of the season.

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 must be made in a timely manner. Delaying payment will jeopardize participation. Once the fee is paid, placement is confirmed and follow up emails will be sent one month before your program begins.

10. ARE THERE WAITING LISTS?

Yes. Applicants will be placed on a waiting list and notified if their choices are full. You may request to be removed from this list, however, it is very common to have late openings throughout the year.

11. CAN I PARTICIPATE IN MORE THAN ONE WORK WEEK?

Due to popularity, applicants will only be placed in one work week. Exceptions may occur if a cancellation cannot be filled by a new volunteer. Participants seeking to join a second program will initially be placed on a waiting list for the additional week.

PAYMENT

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12. WHAT IS THE FEE?

A \$365 fee covers the cost of 3 catered meals per day, camping in the park, entrance fee, and program supplies. This is a participation fee, not a donation, and is ***not tax deductible***. **Fees for our backcountry program and off-season week, which offers lodging, will be varied. Prices and information can be found in the descriptions when applications open.**

13. IS THERE ANY SORT OF FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE?

A select number of scholarships will be available for ***most*** work weeks, covering 50% of the participation fee. There will be an added option in the general application to apply for the scholarship and explain your need. Please contact volunteers@yosemite.org with any questions.

14. WHEN DO I PAY THE FEE?

Fees are to be paid after notification of placement in a work week. If fees are not paid within two weeks of placement, their reservation will be lost and opened to other applicants.

15. 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. Credit cards are the only accepted form of payment.

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 by us, in which case a full refund is provided. The Conservancy is not responsible for lost travel costs or related expenses. We strongly recommend acquiring travel insurance for this purpose. 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

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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, vegetation restoration, and fire mitigation. 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, hauling 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 description, please refer to Work Week Schedule and Project Descriptions found at our volunteer web 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?

While very satisfying and inspirational, days of manual labor can take a toll. Coupled with hiking to and from work at high elevations and in widely varying temperatures, each volunteer must join with the self-assurance that they can safely complete this program. ***It is important to choose a project that matches your fitness level.*** In general, participants should be in strong physical condition, able to lift 30 pounds and hike an average of 4 miles a day. Each year, the fitness level for our work projects will change with the needs of NPS. The schedule and descriptions page will provide the information needed to choose a safe and suitable project.

19. WHAT ARE THE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS?

Volunteers are required to perform all tasks in a safe and conscious manner, using appropriate tools and wearing the required protective gear. They should carry a day pack with minimum two liters of water. Work tools and gloves are provided, as well as safety vests and hard hats when appropriate. Volunteers should dress appropriately for outdoor work with long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and sturdy shoes/boots. Each day involves hiking on uneven, potentially rocky and/or wet, slippery terrain. Potential hazards include exposure to biting or stinging insects, allergens, snakes and other wildlife, irritating vegetation, and other hazards typical of outdoor work environments.

WEEKLY ROUTINE

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20. WHAT IS THE ROUTINE DURING THE WEEK?

For most projects, participants arrive at their assigned campground on Sunday afternoon and set up their tents at a group campsite. All meals are provided from Sunday night through Saturday morning. Unless otherwise specified, volunteers 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 get 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?

We have a limited number of seats available in our Conservancy vehicle. Most volunteers must drive their personal vehicle to and from the work site. We will keep these distances as short as possible, carpooling is encouraged, and we are not able to reimburse for mileage.

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. The Conservancy is not responsible for any wear and tear on personal belongings during your stay.

23. WHAT TYPICALLY HAPPENS ON THE DAY OFF?

Volunteers are free to explore other areas of the park, go hiking, climbing, or simply relax. Often we are able to offer an enrichment program this day, free of charge.

CAMPING

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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 volunteers@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 6:00 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 group and in designated areas only. All smoking materials are to be 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. DO YOU OFFER GEAR RENTALS?

No. Please check with your local REI or other outdoor gear supplier to inquire about renting camping equipment.

28. WHEN DO I ARRIVE AND DEPART THE CAMPSITE?

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

29. 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

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30. WHAT MEALS ARE PROVIDED DURING THE WEEK?

Unless otherwise specified, three meals a day are provided, starting with a Sunday arrival dinner and concluding with breakfast before departure the following Saturday.

31. 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.

MEALS AND HYGIENE

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32. 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

33. 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

34. 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. Volunteers that camp in Yosemite Valley or other developed areas will have access to showers relatively near their campground.

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

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

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35. CAN MY FAMILY COME WITH ME WHILE I VOLUNTEER?

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. Visitors will not be allowed in the volunteer campsite unless otherwise specified.

COMMUNICATION

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36. 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, and required forms.

37. 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.

38. HOW CAN I REACH YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY'S VOLUNTEER PROGRAM?

Email volunteers@yosemite.org for general inquiries or Emily Brosk, Director of Volunteer Programs at ebrosk@yosemite.org

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

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

TRANSPORTATION

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39. HOW DO I GET TO YOSEMITE?

Volunteers will need to drive themselves. Public transportation (YARTS) or the park shuttle system cannot reliably deliver volunteers to their remote camp or work site.

40. 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/yose)