



Volunteer Art Instructor: Frequently Asked Questions

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Art Instructors teach daily art classes from 9am to 1pm Monday through Friday for a maximum of two weeks. The information below will give you an idea of what it is like to live and work in Yosemite Valley for one to two weeks.

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APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

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1. WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT QUALITIES OF AN ART INSTRUCTOR WORKING AT HAPPY ISLES ART & NATURE CENTER?

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 the 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.

Art Instructors should have experience teaching fine arts and extensive knowledge of their medium. They must have a passion and interest in connecting students to Yosemite's landscape and ecology through art. Artists should know how to teach beginner-level students, some of whom have not used a paint brush since grade school.

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 an opportunity for 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.

3. WHAT IS THE AGE REQUIREMENT?

Our volunteer art instructors must be a minimum of 18 years old. Anyone under the age of 19 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian who also volunteers.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

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4. WHAT IS THE SCHEDULE OF DATES AND LOCATIONS FOR THE SEASON?

Dates are determined based on artist's availability and preference. Please indicate your availability and preference in the online application. Please note that the minimum requirement is a one-week commitment, a maximum of two weeks. Available dates range from beginning of April to end of October each season. Please see the Application Form for more details.

Once on the schedule to instruct classes with us, please make sure to put that on your calendar as a commitment. We rely on your commitment of one or two weeks to have a full schedule and it is very difficult to get substitute instructors last minute.

5. IS THERE A JOB DESCRIPTION FOR THIS POSITION?

The job description can be found on the [Volunteer Art Instructor page](#).

6. HOW DO I APPLY?

The application can be found on the [Volunteer Art Instructor page](#) during the application period

7. WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

We typically recruit volunteers one year in advance (e.g. we recruit in 2024 for 2025). Please see timeline below for details:

February: Application period begins

May: Application period ends

June: Applications are reviewed; candidates are interviewed

August: Candidates are selected and season schedule is finalized

Once candidates are selected and the following year's schedule is finalized, we begin developing web content (with the instructor's help) for individual registration pages. Web content is developed in August and undergoes several rounds of review before the registration pages go live in October/November.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

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8. CAN I VOLUNTEER FOR LESS OR MORE THAN TWO WEEKS?

To provide visitors with unique experiences and diversity, as well as to provide fairness and opportunity for artists applying, artists in residence will only instruct classes for a minimum of one week and maximum of two weeks.

9. IS THERE A FEE?

There is no registration fee, however any donation to further our projects and programs in the park are welcomed.

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

While your work as a volunteer is a wonderful contribution to Yosemite, the administration of this award-winning volunteer program is funded by donations. Yosemite Conservancy relies on the generosity of our donors to support projects and programs that protect Yosemite's grandeur through the ages. We will encourage all participants to make a monetary donation to the Conservancy.

11. HOW DO I MAKE A DONATION?

Please visit yosemite.org/giving for details.

VOLUNTEER LOCATIONS

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12. WHERE IN THE PARK DOES THE VOLUNTEER ART INSTRUCTOR TEACH THEIR ART CLASSES?

The art instructor teaches primarily in Yosemite Valley at the Happy Isles Art & Nature Center and surrounding vicinity. Yosemite Valley sits at about 4,000 feet in elevation. Generally, in spring and fall the park is not as busy or crowded as the summer months.

13. WHAT IS THE WEATHER LIKE IN YOSEMITE VALLEY?

The weather can shift suddenly. In May, days can be warm and sunny one day and cold, wet, or stormy the next. May temperatures range in the 70s. June temperatures are in the 80s. July and August are in the 90s and occasionally reach the 100s. In September the temperature returns to the 70s and 80s.

DUTIES AND TRAINING

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14. WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF VOLUNTEER ART INSTRUCTOR?

The Art Instructor is responsible for teaching daily art classes (usually to participants ages 12 and up) outdoors in Yosemite Valley. This includes preparing for and cleaning up after classes. The focus is to connect visitors to the park through art classes and projects that relate to or incorporate Yosemite-specific interpretive information. Duties include both engaging visitors in conversation and sharing Yosemite Conservancy messaging in group situations.

15. WHAT ARE THE SKILLS AND ABILITIES REQUIRED FOR THIS POSITION?

Experience as an artist and experience teaching art classes to all ages is preferred. Taking an active role in creating and presenting engaging art material is required. Strong communication skills and an understanding of different age-appropriate art media are also needed.

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

16. WHAT DOES AN AVERAGE DAY LOOK LIKE AS AN ART INSTRUCTOR?

The Art Instructor teaches art classes Monday through Friday from 9am to 1pm, with set-up and clean-up duties before and after. Art Instructors teach for a minimum of one week and a maximum of two weeks.

DUTIES AND TRAINING

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17. WILL I RECEIVE TRAINING?

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 followed by training and orientation after arrival is provided by the Conservancy and the National Park Service.

A detailed manual is provided to each volunteer for reference while in service. Ongoing assistance and support are available as needed.

Orientation to the Art Center, its materials, and supplies are provided by the Art Programs staff. Review of appropriate art projects and outdoor locations will occur, as well as interpretive training with Yosemite-specific information to enrich each project.

CAMPING

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18. WHAT KIND OF ACCOMMODATIONS ARE PROVIDED?

We provide Volunteer Art Instructors a private campsite with a tent, sleeping cot, cook stove, dishes, camp chairs, and lighting. Instructors are expected to provide their own linens, food, coolers to store perishables, and anything else they may need to be comfortable. Storing food and scented items in the provided bear-proof locker is mandatory. There are no hookups or showers in campgrounds and restrooms have cold water only. Showers are available nearby. Previous camping experience is recommended. No pets are allowed.

Campground quiet hours for our volunteers are from 10pm to 6am. Volunteers are expected to be respectful and courteous to the public and other volunteers 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. Volunteers must adhere to a code of conduct while staying in park provided camp sites.

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. Protective wildlife and tree regulations must be followed. For example, ropes for clotheslines or hammocks cannot be tied directly around trees without placing cardboard or other protective material under ropes.

19. CAN I BRING MY RV OR CAMPER?

RV and camper space is limited. Prior approval from the Conservancy is required in order to bring these and the maximum length is 24 feet. In Yosemite Valley, it is mandatory that RV tow vehicles and/or a second vehicle are parked in the Curry Village parking area rather than in camp.

20. CAN I USE A GENERATOR?

Campgrounds have specific hours when generators can be used. For the most up-to-date information, please review the [Yosemite Campgrounds Regulations page](#).

CAMPING

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21. HOW DO I KNOW WHAT TO BRING?

A packing list is provided.

22. CAN I ARRIVE EARLY OR EXTEND MY STAY IN THE PARK?

If you wish to arrive early or extend your stay, you must make your own camping/lodging arrangements.

23. CAN I PARK MY CAR IN THE CAMPGROUND?

The NPS requirement is two vehicles per campsite in all campground locations. Any additional vehicles must be parked at the overflow parking — either at Curry Village or the Yosemite Valley Trailhead parking lot nearby. This is strictly regulated by the Conservancy as well as NPS.

24. HOW WILL I STORE MY FOOD AND SCENTED ITEMS?

All items with a scent — including canned goods, drinks, cleaning supplies, and toiletries — must be stored in bear-proof food lockers (available at all campsites). These lockers must be closed and latched at all times — even while at your campsite. Following these regulations and precautions decreases personal injury/property damage and keeps Yosemite's bears wild. As a Yosemite Conservancy volunteer, you are expected to practice proper storage as a means of ensuring that wildlife stays wild. Please visit the NPS page for extensive details on properly storing scented items (including food).

25. 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.

26. WHAT BEAR PRECAUTIONS SHOULD I TAKE?

Please visit the [Yosemite National Park bear information page](#) for complete details.

27. 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. Therefore, we require that pets be left at home at all times.

BENEFITS

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28. 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, as well as use of select swimming pools and a Wellness Center.

An added benefit is the opportunity to participate in one educational Outdoor Adventure course and any Naturalist Walks within a year after volunteer service at no cost. Volunteers can also participate in other art classes and retreats with a discount or at no cost (please ask Art Programs staff for details). This benefit is based on space availability with the possibility of being bumped by a paying customer. Participation in these classes should not conflict with volunteer duties while in the park.

29. WHAT ARE THE DISCOUNTS?

The Conservancy provides a 30% discount at all its retail stores. Volunteers also enjoy free admission to the Yosemite Village Theater when space is available. The park concessioner, Yosemite Hospitality, provides discount cards (subject to change at their discretion).

UNIFORMS, MEALS AND HYGIENE

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30. WILL I WEAR A UNIFORM?

Complimentary Yosemite Conservancy name tags and hats will be provided for the artists to wear while teaching. As volunteers of Yosemite Conservancy, instructors are expected to maintain a professional appearance. Volunteers must wear:

- Plain t-shirt or collared shirt in solid color with nametag
- No sleeveless shirts or tank tops
- Solid color pants or shorts:
 - No NPS green
 - No tight leggings
 - Shorts are OK, length to be no shorter than 5" above the knee
- Closed-toed flat shoes.

31. WHAT ARE THE MEAL/GROCERY ARRANGEMENTS?

Artists are responsible for their own meals. They store their own food in bear-proof food lockers. Ice chests must fit in these lockers. Volunteers can store their ice packs in the Happy Isles freezer during the day.

Yosemite Hospitality has [various restaurants](#) and a [grocery store](#) to purchase food inside the park.

32. ARE THERE ALCOHOL 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 on duty. The Conservancy expects those who drink alcohol to act responsibly, not drink and drive, and be able to do required work each day.

33. WILL I BE ABLE TO DO LAUNDRY?

There are coin-operated laundry facilities located in Yosemite Valley

34. WILL I HAVE ACCESS TO SHOWERS?

There are no showers in any of Yosemite's campgrounds. However, there are showers nearby for volunteer use free of charge.

TIME OFF

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35. 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.

Afternoons and evenings, after teaching, many volunteers simply relax and enjoy the camping experience. Some utilize their free time to continue painting at different locations in the park. Volunteers may enjoy free [Naturalist Walks](#) and should coordinate with Art Programs Staff to make sure they are properly registered.

Volunteers should also check the [Yosemite Guide](#) for current activities and programs offered. Some may opt to get dinner out at one of the in-park restaurants or enjoy lounges at the Ahwahnee and Curry Village. Volunteers can also catch sunset at different park locations and take an opportunity to stargaze!

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

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36. CAN MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS STAY WITH ME WHILE I VOLUNTEER?

Artists can bring family and/or friends with them. Artists are provided with a private campsite and may bring others to join them. Though friends and family are welcome, they must not interfere with the artist arriving at work on time and performing their duties as a volunteer. Please note:

- Volunteers are responsible for arranging extra gear (tents, sleeping bags, etc.) for their guests.
- Volunteers must ensure that their guests understand and abide by all Yosemite National Park regulations. Guests may be asked to leave if they are not.

A maximum of six people are allowed in the campsite, per [NPS regulations](#).

37. HOW LONG CAN FAMILY AND FRIENDS STAY WITH ME?

Family and friends staying with the artist may stay the duration of the time the artist is volunteering for Yosemite Conservancy; volunteers cannot loan their site and leave.

COMMUNICATION AND BANKING

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38. HOW WILL MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS BE ABLE TO CONTACT ME?

Generally, volunteers will be able to call and text their friends and family while in Yosemite. Most AT&T and Verizon customers will find service in various parts of Yosemite Valley, though Yosemite Village tends to have the most reliable service. Volunteers can also connect to the Wi-Fi network at Happy Isles Art & Nature Center outside of business hours to catch up and correspond with friends and family.

39. WHAT IS THE EMERGENCY CONTACT PROCEDURE?

In the case of an emergency involving you, we will contact — if you are unable to do so — the person you designated as your emergency contact in the online registration form. Emergency contact information is treated as protected information that is available as needed and maintained by the Conservancy and 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, your family can reach you by calling the 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.

40. WILL I BE ABLE TO USE A CELL PHONE?

Service is available in and near Yosemite Village for AT&T, Tmobile, and Verizon customers. Verizon has limited service in Big Oak Flat and Tuolumne Meadows.

41. WILL I BE ABLE TO CHARGE BATTERIES AND MY CELL PHONE?

You may charge any devices and batteries at Happy Isles Art & Nature Center at the designated charging station.

42. WILL I HAVE WIRELESS INTERNET ACCESS?

Internet access is available outside of business hours to the Volunteer Art Instructor at Happy Isles Art & Nature Center. There are also other locations throughout Yosemite Valley with public Wi-Fi.

COMMUNICATION AND BANKING

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43. WILL I BE ABLE TO CASH A CHECK OR WITHDRAW MONEY FROM MY BANK ACCOUNT?

There is an ATM in Yosemite Valley at the Village Store.

44. HOW CAN I REACH YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY'S PROGRAM MANAGERS??

Emily Brosk, Director of Volunteer Programs

209 379-2317; ebrosk@yosemite.org

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

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

Lora Spielman-Dell Isola, Director of Art Programs

209-372-0631; lspielman@yosemite.org

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

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

TRANSPORTATION

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45. HOW DO I GET TO YOSEMITE USING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION??

For information visit [Yosemite Public Transportation](#).

46. WHAT DO I DO ABOUT CAMP GEAR IF I'M TRAVELING BY AIR?

Gear can be shipped (at the volunteer's expense) to Yosemite Conservancy's El Portal Office if you do not want to travel with your camping gear. Because we are located in a rural area, please allow two weeks for delivery in time for your week of instruction.

Yosemite Conservancy
5020 El Portal Road
El Portal, CA, 95318
Attn: Art Program

47. WHAT TRANSPORTATION IS AVAILABLE IN THE PARK?

Bikes (free bike share and paid rentals) or the free shuttle are used in Yosemite Valley. In Wawona, volunteers drive their cars to the Wawona store parking area to catch a shuttle to the grove. In Big Oak Flat, they drive their cars to the Big Oak Flat Visitor Center and the groves. In Tuolumne Meadows, volunteers drive and use the shuttle.

48. HOW DO I GET FROM ONE PART OF THE PARK TO ANOTHER USING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION?

The seasonal Tuolumne Meadows hiker bus connects Yosemite Valley to Tuolumne Meadows and stops at various trailheads on Tioga Road.

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](#).

TRANSPORTATION

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49. 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 the [Yosemite National Park website](#) for details.