



Encouraging Adventure And Defining Relaxation.

Winter Driving Conditions

(October through May)

A season of snow & solitude

Yosemite National Park is wonderful in winter. The biggest challenge for many visitors is how to get to the Park to experience the beauty and wonder.

The good news is that once you have arrived in Yosemite Valley, you can park your car or get off the bus and use the free Valley shuttle to get around. If Badger Pass is open, you can ride the free bus up to this ski resort for snow sports or snow play.

But first you have to get there! Here are some possible ways to get into Yosemite National Park for your winter visit.

DRIVING

If you choose to drive, a good route to take is through Oakhurst CA, on highway 41. This is because Oakhurst is the best (largest) town to not only purchase groceries and gas, but has a couple of good automotive stores to purchase tire chains (mandatory in the park during snow), freeze proof windshield washer fluid, window snow/scrappers and more.

Either way you enter the park, Hwy 120 via the Big Oak Flat Entrance or highway 41 you will be driving at different altitudes during your travel which may or may not have snow or ice. The north entrance, highway 120 starts out gently and may not have snow until you leave the Yosemite Valley which is at 4000 feet.

We often get snow at our lodge when the valley is raining. Our lodge is at 6000 feet in elevation and gets much more snow than the valley. If you come into the park at the south entrance which is about 6000 feet as well you may experience snow on entering the park then slush or rain at Wawona which is at 4000 feet (the same as the valley floor). Then you will ascend to 6000 feet where our community is located and have deep snow or ice again.

If you have the new snap on type snow tire devices then you may want to remove them when or if you drop below the snow level. This is to avoid traveling for miles on the dry road with tire chains which is a very slow, loud and noisy way to travel.

You can check road conditions to Yosemite from CalTrans and road conditions inside Yosemite by calling 209-372-0200 and selecting '1' from each of the first two phone menus.

If you have your own car, buy chains at an entrance town. (Oakdale – Hwy 120, & Mariposa – Hwy 140, Oakhurst – Hwy 41.) *Please see where to rent or buy chains on the last page.*

If you're renting a car, you might want to pay for an upgrade to an All Wheel Drive (AWD) or Four Wheel Drive (4WD) vehicle. Note that SUV means Sport Utility Vehicle, it does not mean AWD or 4WD. There are plenty of 2 Wheel Drive SUVs rented from local agencies. If you want AWD or 4WD, you must specify.

Whatever type of car you are driving, you still need to carry chains in your vehicle. You will probably be asked at the entrance station if you are carrying chains as they may be made mandatory on any park road at any time. If you are driving an AWD or 4WD vehicle, you may be allowed to drive on the park roads when folks with 2WD must chain up. Read the chain restriction descriptions here.

In the past, some rental car companies allowed chains to be put on the vehicle. Unfortunately, this policy appears to have been changed. (If you find a company that allows chains, please post that information on the Yosemite National Park forum page.) As a driver of a rental car, you need to know that you are not supposed to put chains on the tires. As a visitor to the National Park, you must carry chains in your vehicle. As a responsible driver, you have to figure out what to do.

The fines are very large in the park if you are caught without chains. If you get stuck the park rangers will tow you outside the park and then write you a citation for every sign you passed coming in that stated chains are required, cha-ching!

ROAD CLOSURES

While Yosemite Valley and Wawona remain accessible by car all year, the Tioga Road is closed (usually by sometime in November).

Once closed for the season, vehicles are not permitted between Crane Flat and Tioga Pass, including in the Tuolumne Meadows area. The road to Glacier Point is also closed (usually sometime in November). However from mid-December through early April, the Glacier Point/Badger Pass Road is plowed to the Badger Pass Ski Area, where both downhill and cross-country skiing are popular.

WEATHER

Winter in Yosemite is snowy and cold, though sunny and chilly days are not uncommon. Yosemite Valley & Wawona (4,000 ft / 1,200 m): 53°F (12°C) / 28°F (-2°C)

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

It's vitally important that you stay in your vehicle, warm and dry, protected from the weather. Trying to dig your way out of a ditch, or attempting to walk back to town can be fatal. Instead, call 911 to let them know your location and predicament then sit tight.

Ventilate the car by opening a downwind window (on the side away from the wind and blowing snow) approximately 1/2 inch. Fire up your candle lantern -- the candles burn for 8 hours and will raise the temperature in the car 8 to 10 degrees F.

Break out your snacks -- roasted nuts, dried fruit, chocolate, Cliff Bars, etc. sure taste good in a situation like this -- and will provide the protein and fat you'll need to keep warm. Use your water sparingly (you should keep 2 large Nalgene bottles in your kit) but don't let yourself get dehydrated. In the rare event that you're trapped for more than 24 hours, things get a little trickier, but you'll do just fine.

When you run out water and dry food, you'll have to do some cooking. If the snow and wind have stopped blowing hard, gear up and head outside. Dig out a shelf in the snow, line it with your floor mats and set up

the stove. If the storm is still raging clear out an area in the car, protect it with the floor mats and set up a galley. Fill the coffee can, pot or pan with snow and fire up the stove -- carefully! Pour the first pot of melted snow in your bottle.

If you're hungry, you'll have to melt more snow and heat the water to near boiling. Open one of the backpack meals (buy the kind that you cook in it's package -- all you do is add hot water) and enjoy. Help should be just around the corner -- severe storms don't usually last much longer than a day -- you can survive 4 or 5 more if you're prepared.

Do not leave the engine running. If it's extremely cold (-5 to -30 F) you can idle the motor for a few minutes at a time -- but only after making sure the exhaust system is not damaged and the tail pipe is clear of snow and debris. Carbon monoxide can sneak up on you without warning. One minute you're feeling normal and the next you're unconscious. Almost 60% of the unintentional deaths caused by carbon monoxide are from motor vehicle exhaust. So don't use the engine for heat -- use your head -- and your winter survival kit.

Everyone should carry a Winter Survival Kit in their car. In an emergency, it could save your life and the lives of your passengers.

HERE ARE SOME RECOMMENDED THINGS TO HAVE

- A snow shovel (There are shovels designed specifically for autos)
- Windshield scraper and small broom, windshield wiper fluid rated to avoid freezing (can be found in the local towns. Good luck finding it in southern California!)
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Battery powered radio
- Multi purpose tool or knife
- First aid kit
- Colored ribbon (to tie to antenna)
- Nylon cord to tie around yourself should you leave your car in a white out you can find your way back. Tie off one end to the car and other to yourself.
- Tow straps. Tow strap can get your car out of a shallow ditch and save a bundle in tow-truck charges.
- Water
- Snack food including energy bars
- Raisins and mini candy bars
- Matches and small candles
- Extra hats, socks and mittens
- First aid kit with pocket knife
- Necessary medications
- Blankets or sleeping bag

- Winter clothes or gear that are accessible, not in a trunk or a bag on top of the vehicle.
- Road salt, sand, or cat litter for traction
- Booster cables
- Emergency flares and reflectors
- Fluorescent distress flag and whistle to attract attention
- Cell phone adapter/charger to plug into lighter
- Entertainment: It may sound trivial, but you could end up sitting for hours while waiting for a tow truck. Have a paperback book or a deck of cards to pass the time. If children are in the mix, double up on the entertainment supplies to keep kids occupied in the idle winter time.

KIT TIPS

- Reverse batteries in flashlight to avoid accidental switching and burnout.
- Store items in the passenger compartment in case the trunk is jammed or frozen shut.
- Choose small packages of food that you can eat hot or cold.

911 TIPS

- 1.) If possible, call 911 on your cell phone. Provide your location, condition of everyone in the vehicle and the problem you're experiencing.
- 2.) Follow instructions: you may be told to stay where you are until help arrives.
- 3.) Do not hang up until you know who you have spoken with and what will happen next.
- 4.) If you must leave the vehicle, write down your name, address, phone number and destination. Place the piece of paper inside the front windshield for someone to see.

SURVIVAL TIPS

- 1.) Prepare your vehicle: Make sure you keep your gas tank at least half full.
- 2.) Be easy to find: Tell someone where you are going and the route you will take.
- 3.) If stuck: Tie a florescent flag (from your kit) on your antenna or hang it out the window. At night, keep your dome light on. Rescue crews can see a small glow at a distance. To reduce battery drain, use emergency flashers only if you hear approaching vehicles. If you're with someone else, make sure at least one person is awake and keeping watch for help at all times.
- 4.) Stay in your vehicle: Walking in a storm can be very dangerous. You might become lost or exhausted. Your vehicle is a good shelter.
- 5.) Avoid Overexertion: Shoveling snow or pushing your car takes a lot of effort in storm conditions. Don't risk a heart attack or injury. That work can also make you hot and sweaty. Wet clothing loses insulation value, making you susceptible to hypothermia.
- 6.) Fresh Air: It's better to be cold and awake than comfortably warm and sleepy. Snow can plug your vehicle's exhaust system and cause deadly carbon monoxide gas to enter your car. Only run the engine for 10 minutes an hour and make sure the exhaust pipe is free of snow. Keeping a window

open a crack while running the engine is also a good idea.

7.) Don't expect to be comfortable: You want to survive until you're found.

WHERE TO RENT OR BUY CHAINS

All information is accurate as of November 2010. Some updates made in 2013.

Weather and road conditions: 209-372-0200 Call before entering the National Park for the most up to date conditions.

IF YOU ARE COMING VIA HWY 120 / BIG OAK FLAT ENTRANCE

O'Reilly Auto Parts

1190 E. "F" St # 1

Oakdale, CA 95361

(209) 848-0310

7:30 AM - 8:00 PM, Mon - Sat

8:00 AM - 7:00 PM Sun

\$35.99 - \$75.99, actual price depends on tire size, no returns

Napa Auto Parts

300 East "C" Street

Oakdale, CA 95361

(209) 847-0316

8:00 AM - 5:30 PM, Mon - Sat

Closed on Sun

Average \$35.00 - \$45.00, actual price depends on tire size, no returns

A&E Auto Parts

11241 Wards Ferry Road

Groveland-Big Oak Flat, CA 95305

(209) 962-4877

8:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Mon - Sat

Closed on Sun

Average \$50.00, actual price depends on tire size, no returns

IF YOU ARE COMING VIA HWY 140 / ARCH ROCK ENTRANCE:

Napa Auto Parts

4907 Joe Howard Street

Mariposa, CA 95338

(209) 966-3697

7:00 AM - 7:00 PM, Mon - Sat

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM, Sun

\$15 rental fee + \$40 deposit passenger cars

\$40 rental fee + \$140 deposit SUV or truck

Stage Stop Mini Mart

5099 California 140

Mariposa, CA 95338

(209) 742-6634

6 AM - 10 PM, Mon - Sun

Only rents, doesn't sell. Deposit refunded if returned unused

\$25 rent, \$25 deposit for standard cars

\$50 rent, \$100 deposit for SUVs and trucks

IF YOU ARE COMING VIA HWY 41 / SOUTH ENTRANCE

Best Deal Tire & Wheel

41011 CA Hwy 41

Oakhurst, CA 93644

(559) 683-4454

Golden Oak Auto Parts

41400 CA Hwy 41

Oakhurst, CA

(559) 683-6250 (CarQuest)

Napa Auto Parts

40120 CA Hwy 41, Oakhurst, CA

(559) 683-7440

O'Reilly Auto Parts

40088 CA Hwy 49, Oakhurst, CA

(559) 642-4644

Sullivan's Tire Pros

40126 CA Hwy 49, Oakhurst, CA

(559) 683-5900