In 1984, Congress provided special designation for Yosemite backcountry to secure for the American public an enduring resource of wilderness, a place where nature and its community of life are unchanged by humans, which retains its primeval character and is managed to preserve its natural condition.

Protection of this land, however, will never be gained simply by wilderness managers issuing a set of rules and regulations to be enforced. It must come with the visitor’s love and understanding of Wilderness. This information is provided to help you understand what you must do to help protect this priceless landscape for present and future generations. You will find nature on its own in Yosemite’s Wilderness—natural fires may be encountered, and hazards such as falling rock, high water stream crossings, and sudden stormy weather can occur at any time. These are all a part of a wilderness experience. You may also encounter some human-influenced hazards, such as contaminated water and animals trying to get your dinner. With your help and care, we can reduce these human changes and preserve our wild heritage.

Keep Bears Wild

Only black bears live in Yosemite, though they vary in color from black to blonde. Information below does not apply to grizzly bears.

1. A black bear’s intelligence, curiosity, astonishing sense of smell, and their intense need for calories combined with backpackers who are careless about food storage, can equal human habituated and food conditioned bears. In other words, once bears discover human food is available, they may abandon natural foraging habits and become comfortable frequenting campsites in search of human food.

2. The National Park Service requires the use of bear resistant food canisters in Yosemite Wilderness. Please ensure you:
   • Before departure determine that food, trash, toiletries and all other scented items can fit into the bear resistant food canisters.
   • Upon arriving at your wilderness destination, store your locked canisters and cookware 100 feet from your site (away from cliffs and rivers where a bear may roll it).
   • Treat the canister like a refrigerator: opening it only to retrieve food for immediate consumption. Never leave a canister open and unattended.
   • Remember to check the pockets of backpacks and clothes for overlooked scented items and place them in the bear resistant food canisters.
   • All trash must be stored like food.

3. If a black bear approaches your campsite, act immediately to scare it away. Maintain a safe distance while making as much noise as possible. Throw small stones or pine cones toward the bear, being careful not to strike the bear on the head. If the bear returns, repeat. Do not attempt to retrieve food or gear from a bear until it abandons the items.

4. If food or other items happen to be taken by bears, clean up any trash from the incident and please report the situation to a park ranger.

More information can be found at sierrawildbear.gov and sierrawilderness.gov.
You Determine the Quality of Yosemite Wilderness

Keeping Wilderness wild and pristine depends on you. By adopting Leave No Trace ethics and abiding by park regulations you preserve the Yosemite Wilderness experience. Please do your part to protect these wildlands.

Before Your Journey Begins
• Pick up your wilderness permit at a Wilderness Center. Permits are required for all overnight Wilderness use.
• Plan your trip to allow plenty of time for campsite selection.
• Keep group size to 15 people or less; 8 people maximum for any cross–country hiking more than ¼ mile off any trail. Stock is limited to 25 head and may not go cross–country.
• Choose a destination four trail miles from Tuolumne Meadows, Yosemite Valley, Glacier Point, Hetch Hetchy, or Wawona or one trail mile from any road (the Dana Fork of the Tuolumne River is closed to camping).

Preserve Water Quality for Yourself and Others
• Water quality is not only important to the Wilderness and its visitors, but also to those down stream who are depending on Wilderness to provide them clean water. Help preserve water quality.
• Camp in a well established site at least 100 feet from any water source in an area screened from trails. Camp away from fragile vegetation.
• Bury human waste in a 6 inch deep cathole at least 100 feet from water, camp areas, or trails. Pack out all toilet paper and hygiene products.
• Minimize trips to water sources by using a collapsible bucket or other container.
• Do all washing 200 feet from water. Do not use soap in lakes and streams as even biodegradeable soaps pollute. Scatter strained dishwater.
• Purify drinking water by boiling 3–5 minutes, or use a giardia–rated filter or iodine based chemical purifier.

Common Courtesy and Trail Safety
• Hike in single file on trails. Walking next to one another widens trails and increases erosion.
• Help maintain the trail system. Do not cut switchbacks or walk outside wet trails. These activities cause trail destruction. Socks dry quickly, trails heal slowly.
• Give the right of way to stock. Stand quietly on one side of the trail to allow them to pass. Follow the wrangler’s instructions.

Campsite Care
• Be aware of snags and leaning trees when selecting campsites or break spots. Avoid camping under or near dead trees.
• Limit your use of wood fires. Campfires are not allowed above 9,600 feet due to wood scarcity and potential resource damage. Below 9600 feet fires may be built in existing fire rings. Burn only dead and down wood.
• Minimize human impacts by not building new fire rings, trenches, campsites, or rock walls.
• Pack out everything you pack in. Do not burn or bury trash.

Respect Wildness
• Mechanized travel is not allowed in Wilderness. Leave bicycles and strollers at the trailhead.
• Yosemite is a wildlife preserve. Leave your pets and weapons at home. Observe wildlife from a distance and never feed them.
• Enhance your experience. Keep a low profile and let nature’s sights and sounds prevail. Doing so allows everyone to experience the nature they came to enjoy.
• Be sure not to leave food, trash, toiletries, or other scented items in your vehicle at trailheads. Store these items in bear–proof food lockers.