Yosemite

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

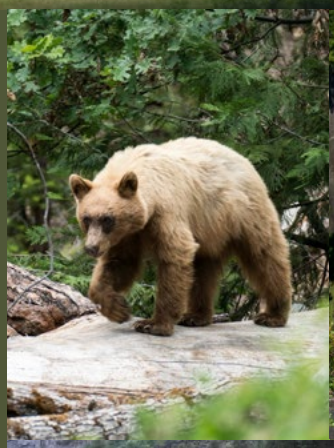
Yosemite National Park
California



Yosemite National Park

Peak Season Report

May – August 2026







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Each Year, Yosemite National Park Welcomes Millions of Visitors

Protecting this national treasure while providing a top-tier visitor experience has been a priority for park management for decades.

2026 has been as busy as ever, yet traffic is flowing, wait times are down, and visitors are spending more time enjoying the park.

Creative solutions are helping to improve the visitor experience. **The park has:**

- introduced a new traffic circulation pattern in Yosemite Valley, eliminating the gridlock seen in previous years.
- added more shuttles to the Yosemite Valley transportation system, improving service and reducing wait times.
- maximized parking in Yosemite Valley, adding more spaces while continuing to protect park resources.
- upgraded entrance station processing with digital passes and fast lanes, helping visitors spend more time in the park and less time in line.
- launched real-time entrance wait times to help visitors plan their arrival.

Over 1.8 million people total visited in June, July, and August 2026,

an increase of 3.1%
over the same period last year.

Visitors in June, July, & August

thousands





Preliminary results from an **August 2026 survey** of over 1,200 park visitors showed

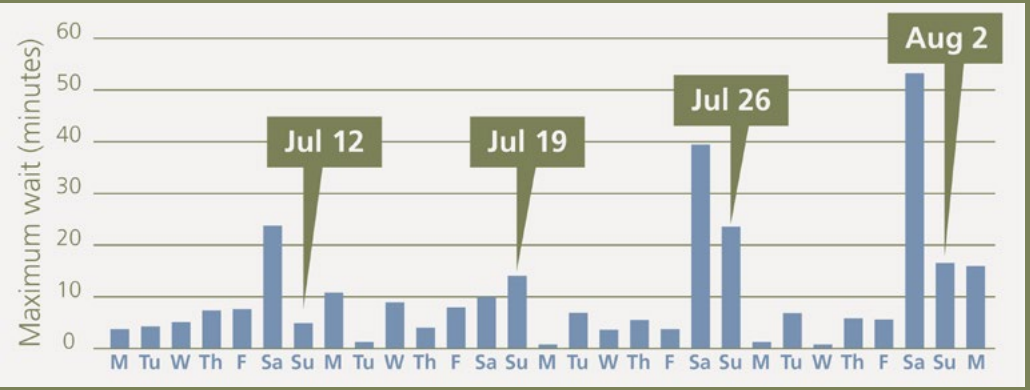
96%

rated their recreational experience as good or excellent.

67% rated their experience as excellent!

Visitors Are Spending Less Time in Line

Despite higher overall visitation, wait times at park entrances have decreased significantly. Wait times on the busiest days are typically under an hour—and often much shorter.



2026 Maximum Wait Times (Big Oak Flat Entrance)

2010 – 2019

Park staff routinely observed approximately **2 hour** waits at entrance stations, with waits of **up to 4 hours** on the busiest days.

2020 – 2025

Entrances continued to have long lines during reservation years as staff performed additional verification and turn-aways. Weekend and holiday waits **often exceeded 2 hours**.

2026

Wait times decreased from previous years with digital passes, increased staffing, and fast lanes. Weekday waits are typically **under 15 minutes**. Saturday waits have **reduced to 30 minutes, with a maximum of 1 hour**.



Current Wait Times

Arch Rock	Big Oak Flat	South Entrance
Hwy 140 El Portal to Arch Rock Entrance (2.2 miles)	Hwy 120 Harden Flat to Big Oak Flat Entrance (2.0 miles)	Hwy 41 Sugar Pine to South Entrance (4.2 miles)
Current wait: Less than 1 min	Current wait: Less than 1 min	Current wait: Less than 1 min
NO DELAY Updated 2:35 p.m. PT	NO DELAY Updated 2:40 p.m. PT	NO DELAY Updated 2:35 p.m. PT

In 2026, the park launched live wait times for the three busiest entrances. Providing real-time information on the park website helps visitors to plan their arrival.

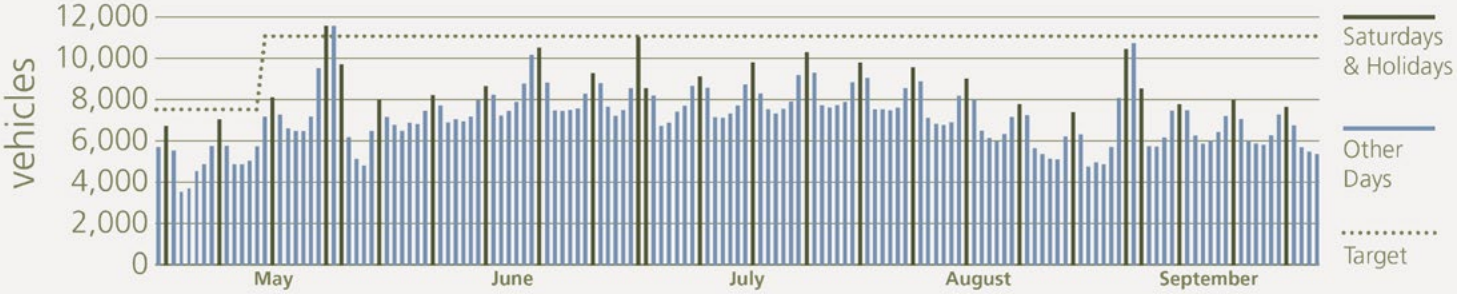
Less Traffic, Easier Parking

The park expanded visitor parking by using previously-disturbed administrative areas, **creating additional spaces** without impacting natural resources.

Parking filled in Yosemite Valley only on the busiest days (typically Saturdays), and parking never filled completely in the park as a whole.



Total Parkwide Vehicle Entries (May – September 2026)



Gridlock—defined as standstill traffic with long delays—tends to occur when there are over 11,000 vehicles in the park. There were only two days during the summer of 2026 that experienced this level of traffic.

Traffic had to be diverted from Yosemite Valley

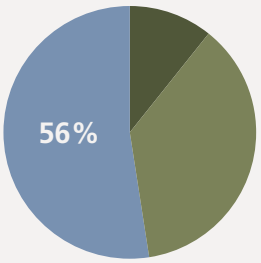
only **2 times** in 2026

Memorial Day Weekend:
Saturday, May 23 for 1 hr 7 min
Sunday, May 24 for 3 hrs 43 min

Days in 2026 that **Yosemite Valley parking filled**

20

13 of these were Saturdays



In an August 2026 survey of over 1,200 visitors, **56%** of respondents said they spent **less time looking for parking** than they expected.

Only 11% said that parking took too long to find.



Improved Shuttle Service

The park put more shuttles into operation in 2026, decreasing wait times at stops and reducing overcrowding onboard.

Most visitors are able to board the first shuttle that arrives at their stop. Improved visitor satisfaction with shuttles encourages use, helping to reduce congestion on park roads.

The park also reintroduced shuttle service in Tuolumne Meadows for the first time since 2019.

6 **shuttle buses added to the fleet** (short-term rentals)

13 **buses are operating each day in Yosemite Valley** for the first time in years, decreasing the wait for a ride.

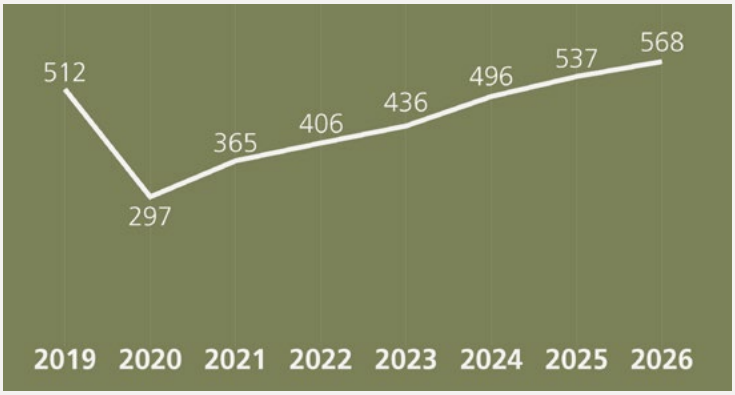


Visitor Safety

Search and Rescue incidents and general medical incidents have been steadily increasing since 2023. Increased phone connectivity (via satellite) and more widespread use of emergency beacon devices may be contributing to the number of 911 calls, allowing visitors to request help from places where they previously would have needed to self-rescue. In addition, higher average temperatures and more frequent heat-related illness may account for a significant portion of the increase. Despite an increase in overall incidents, fatalities are at their lowest since 2020.

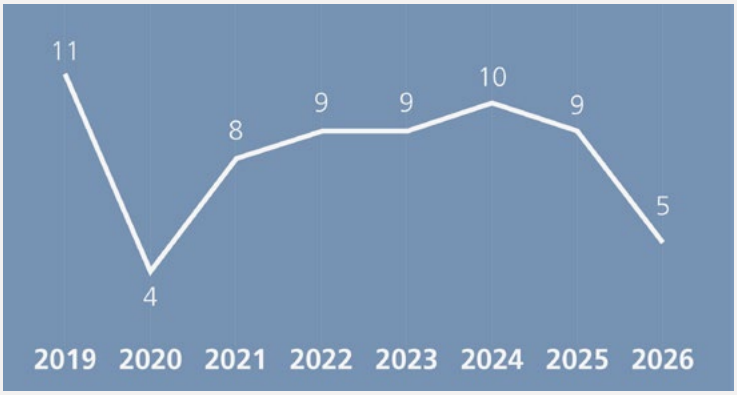
Number of Medical Incidents

January 1 – August 31

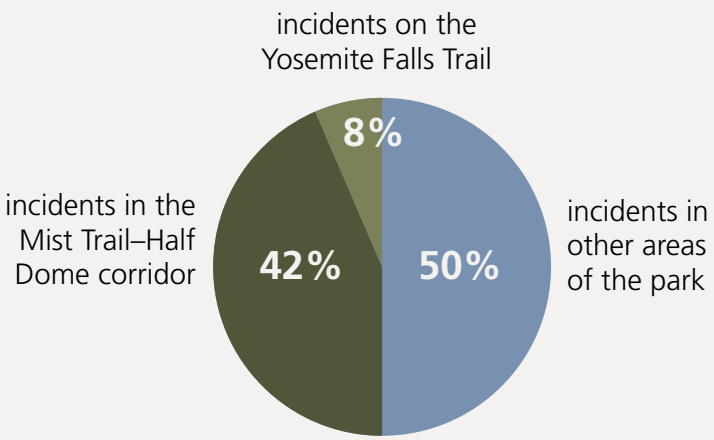


Fatalities

January 1 – August 31

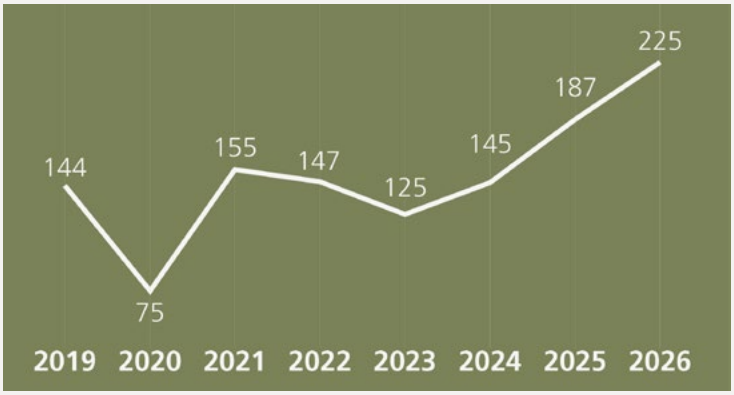


2026 SAR Incidents by Location



Number of SAR incidents

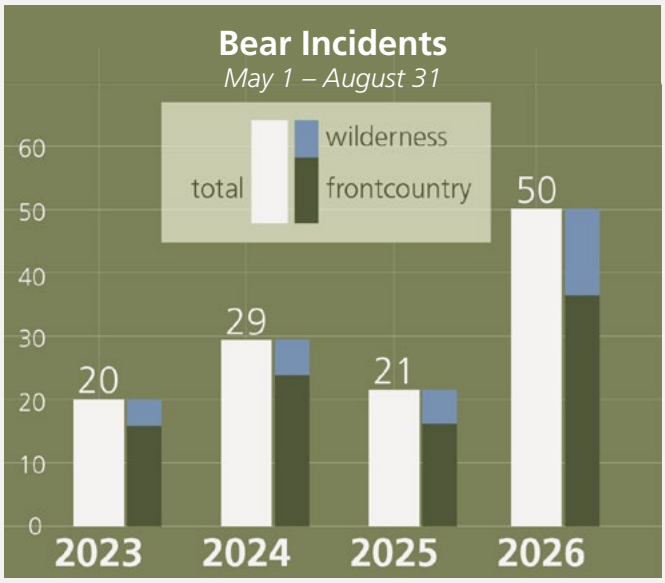
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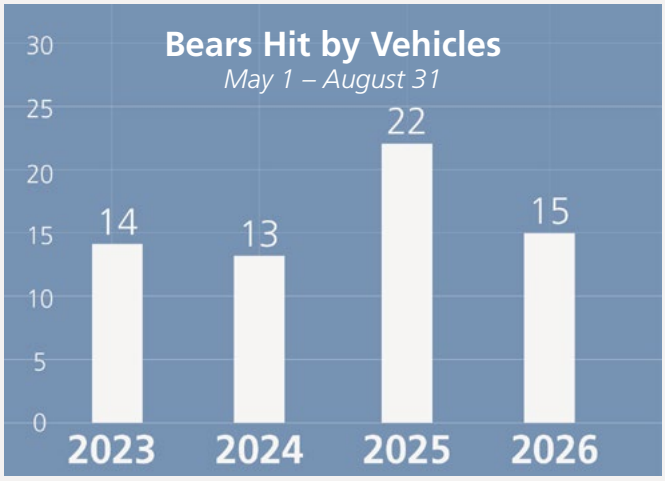


Resource Health

Bears

Between May and August 2026, there were 50 bear incidents in Yosemite. During the same period, 15 bears were hit by vehicles, with two confirmed bear fatalities.





Several factors may have contributed to increased bear–human conflict in 2026, including a mild winter followed by an early spring that boosted both human and bear activity, higher visitation paired with more open campgrounds and parking areas, and a likely high survival rate among young bears, creating increased competition for food resources.

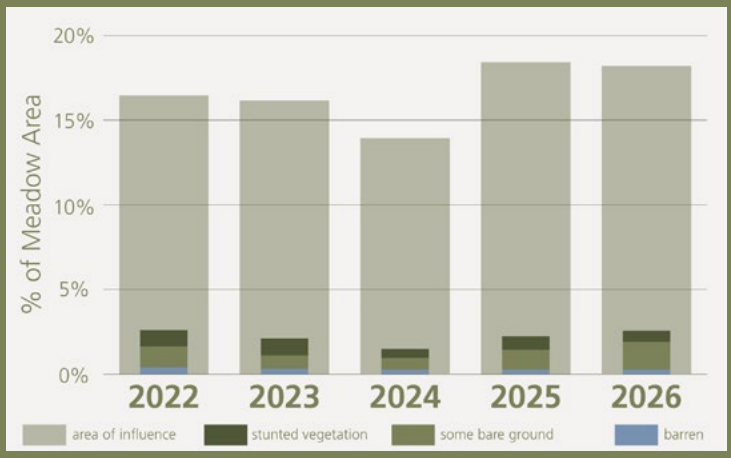
In addition, two bears who entered the park from state-managed lands arrived with advanced food conditioning behaviors and caused **14 incidents.**

The proportion of incidents in the frontcountry versus wilderness areas is similar to previous years. Wilderness permit quotas have not increased in 2026.

Meadows

In Yosemite Valley and other river corridors, the park monitors meadow fragmentation caused by informal, visitor-created "social" trails. Informal trails are monitored because they can fragment habitat, compact soils, alter surface hydrology, damage vegetation, and reduce the integrity of sensitive meadow systems. **The total percentage of meadow area influenced by informal trails did not vary drastically between 2022 and 2026**.

% of Yosemite Valley Meadow Area Disturbed by Informal Trails & Patches



Water

Yosemite National Park has been monitoring water quality indicators for the Merced River since 2004. **Overall, *E. Coli* levels for summer 2026 are similar to previous years.** All values in the full dataset are well below the EPA recommended limit of 126 MPN/100mL for recreational waters.

E. coli in the Merced River at Happy Isles

