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Yosemite half dome hike guide

The walk to the Half Dome is one of Yosemite's most challenging and memorable. On this walk, you can walk Yosemite's most popular hiking trails, watch the Vernal and Nevada waterfalls, and walk through the shady forests of the Sequoia trees. But the best part of the trail is the final climb to the Half Dome cables and your top prize, one of Yosemite's best views. We walked to the Half Dome as a family in July 2017. Kara was 12 and Tyler was 14 when we went on this march. If you're planning a walk to the Half Dome, here's what to expect from start to start. What is a Half Dome? Half Dome is one of Yosemite's most recognizable landmarks. The top of this granite dome sits 4,800 meters from the valley floor at a total height of 8,844 feet (2,695 meters). There are several ways to get to the top of the Half Dome. Most people get here by hiking the 17-year round trip route from the valley floor and up the cable route to the top. Rock climbers scale the vertical face of the Half Dome to the top. You must get permission to climb under the dome and the Half Dome cables. Permits are granted in the pre-season draw for the all-summer walking season. A top 300 are allowed per day, 225 for day-to-day hikers and 75 for backpackers. The sign was posted before the subdome climbed. As the popularity of the Half Dome hike increases, the chances of becoming one of the lucky lottery winners decrease. Read our article to learn more about the permit process and how to increase your chances of winning the lottery. You can also get more information on the National Park Service website. This post covers the one-day walking itinerary we took to half dome. We walked up the Mist Trail and down one of the most popular hiking routes to Muir Trail, Half Dome. Facts About The Half Dome Hike Distance: 17 miles round trip Height Gain: 5,457 Feet Difficulty: Extremely Tiring Duration: 10 to 14 hours Permits: You should have a permit to climb the subdome and Half Dome cables. When to go: Cables are from Memorial Day to Columbus Day (permitted conditions). These cables are possible to climb down the Half Dome, but this is outside the scope of the post. Please note: If you read other blogs and information provided by the National Park Service website, you will see the distance of this walk ranging from 14 to 18 miles. Preferring Muir to the Mist Trail can affect these variations. We walk with a Garmin GPS and use the exits statistics for these walking messages. Height profile The photo below is taken from Washburn Point, very close to Glacier Point. In this photo you can see most of the walking path for the Half Dome (yellow dot). The trail begins at the valley floor (not visible in this photo) and climbs next to Vernal Fall and Nevada Fall. It passes behind the Freedom Hat, through the Redoya forests, and then to the far side of the lower dome and the Half Dome. The march begins on the Fog Road. The nearest parking lot, Yosemite Valley Trailhead Car Park, just behind Half Dome Village. This car park is 2,650 feet from the service road leading to happy isles bridge. You should consider starting the walk as early as possible, sunrise or earlier. If you are staying in Yosemite and are going to use shuttle buses for transportation, it will not start working until 7 a.m. Our day started very early. We stayed in Mariposa, an hour west of Yosemite. We got out of bed at 04:00 and started walking at 6 a.m. The first part of the Mist Trail is a paved, asphalt track that gains constant height. Sometimes it's steep. The area from the footpath head to the top of Vernal Falls is 1.5 miles away. There is a water fountain just 20-30 minutes before the day, passing right next to the Vernal Fall footbridge. This is your last chance to drink water on this walk unless you plan to purify water from the Merced River. This is also your last chance for flushing toilets. Without crossing the footbridge, the footpath climbs the Vernal Fall upright and steadily. And this is where you can see how fog road got its name. Long, slippery stairs uphill wind along the river and waterfall. In this part of the walk, you can get drenched by fog. In July, this fog was refreshing and kept us pleasantly cool. In the cooler months, you may want to bring a poncho with you to keep you dry. Once at the top of the waterfall, a spectacular perspective and a photo op. Nevada has a great place for autumn climbing Nevada continues until autumn. The path passes through shady forests and more stairs made of rocks and rocks. You'll take a two-mile walk from Vernal Fall to Fall Nevada. The trail splits in two near the top of the Nevada Fall. Go left to continue to the Half Dome. You can take a 0.2-mile (One way) walk to the right for an optional deer to the top of the Nevada Fall. However, if you choose to walk down the Muir Trail at the end of this walk, this will pass the same point of view. We chose to walk a short distance from the Nevada Fall. It was a beautiful morning with almost no one on the footpath, so we wanted to see the waterfall before the crowds arrived. After the Nevada Fall, the trail goes out for a while. Enjoy... Soon the climbing will begin again. After crossing the small Yosemite Valley, the path passes through a forest of Sequoia trees. It's not a difficult climb, it's just a steady, steady uphill walk. Sometimes, through the trees, you get a glimpse of the Half Dome. If you look closely, it may even be possible to see climbers on the cables. It's hard to climb into the lower dome. We called this part of the walk the Ass-Kicker Stairs because they are. So far, it's been 8,000+ feet. We only walked uphill for three and a half hours. These steps look big and so far it hasn't taken long to get us out of breath. We'd walk a short walk, get a short rest and go on again. It's slow, but it's the view that awaits you. Great. From the top of the dome, get the first close-up view of the Half Dome cables. Now the real fun begins! It took 4 hours to hike from the beginning of the Half Dome Cables Fog Road to the top of the lower dome. Even for the kids, it's a fast pace. We're not stop-and-smell-rose hikers. When we hear that it takes 10 hours to finish a walk, we see it as a time to beat it. That's the way we are. Our climb was very fast as there were so few people ahead of us. I knew how to expect a steep slope and slippery surfaces, but still, I was a little surprised by the difficulty of this climb. This climb is so hard! Don't take this lightly. The granite surface is smoothly worn out by the shoes of thousands of people before us. The climb is so steep that we pulled ourselves up with our upper body strength enough to walk with our feet. It took us about 20 minutes to climb the Half Dome cables. With so few people ahead of us, we only had to take a few short breaks as the other hikers landed next to us. I'm relieved to finally reach the top. We did it! Now we can take the view and enjoy our success. For more information about climbing Half Dome Cables, read our post full of photos and wait for what to expect on the cables. Initially, we planned to stay here longer than we actually did. But the rain clouds were in the area, and now knowing how steep and slippery half a dome is, we didn't want to be on those wires if it started raining. After a few photos, we went down the wires. During our short rest above the Half Dome, many more people reached the wires. It took longer as we had to wait to jump around other climbers. But this gave us more time to enjoy the view and take pictures. For us, it was exciting to be on the wires and we loved every minute of it. Now that there are more people in the wires, our descent took a total of 45 minutes. When we were under the dome, it rained, just enough to justify our decision to try a little too soon. To return to Yosemite Valley, you must follow back steps back towards the fog road. Muir Trail or Mist Trail? You can walk on Fog Road or Muir Road. If you go down Fog Road, you can follow your steps to the valley floor by climbing the steep and wet stairs next to the vernal fall. Also, as the trail is now early or afternoon, it will be filled with many more hikers. Or you could jump on Muir Road. The Muir Trail adds an extra mile and a half for a walk, but the Mist Trail is less steep. Plus, the Muir Trail gives you the back of the Half Dome and the Nevada Fall with a spectacular look. If you don't mind seeing a different view of Yosemite and landing longer but less steeply, consider the Muir Trail. We walked on Muir Road. First mile Great. We loved the view of Half Dome, Nevada Fall, Liberty Cap and Yosemite Valley. Because of these views, we were happy to choose the Muir Trail. But it adds extra distance to the walk, and most of the trails are long, steady turns for four miles, until vernal returns to the autumn footbridge. Most of Muir Road is monotonous, and if you're like us, at this point, you just want to get the job done. We ran down the path because we wanted to get it done faster. Until now, it was the afternoon and the temperature in Yosemite was in the 90s. By the time we got to the end of the road, we had once again taken an 8 hour and 50 minute walk on the Happy Isles Bridge, including time for stops. Some some way, Kara managed to walk 17 miles with her young legs, a huge success. Tyler did even better, carrying extra weight on the trail and adjusting our fast pace. Walking Half Dome is an achievement for pride at any age. And when you do this walk, you'll never look at the Half Dome the same way again. Want to see more? Browse our Half Dome video: Don't underestimate this hike! More than twenty people died walking half a dome (either cables falling, heart attacks, lightning strikes, or failed base horses). If you have a fear of heights, you should not do this walk. Half a dome as steep and too slippery. This is no place to face your fears. Physical fitness must be at a very good level. It will climb to 5,500 feet (and then you will be going down). Most of this climb comes before under the dome. If you are tired when you get to this point, just walking will make it more dangerous. Once on the wires, this top is a very tiring climb. You need to be able to pull up your body using upper body strength. That's not taken lightly. If you don't think it's appropriate enough or have enough upper body strength, go further than the subdome. And remember, there's at least another four hours of walking to the top of the Half Dome to return to Yosemite valley. Little kids shouldn't do this walk. Again, this walk is dangerous and not a place to bring young children. In our opinion, the youngest age you would recommend is 12 years old and only if there is a lot of walking experience. If you are travelling with children, it is safe to walk them to the subdome. If one of your group wants to turn on the Half Dome cables, they can wait here with an adult. If the rain clouds are in the area, do not climb the cables. Half Dome is not a place you want to be with rain, wind or lightning. People died from lightning strikes at the Half Dome. For more information about climbing, watch this video on the National Park Service website. Bring The Walking Shoes To What. You need hiking shoes for this walk. No tennis shoes, no running shoes. You need to wear shoes with good traction slipping while climbing cables. Water. The National Park Service recommends 4 liters of water per person for this walk. Gloves. Gloves are a must to climb and lower the cables to protect your hands. Your half-dome permit. Make sure to pack this in your backpack. You also need to bring a government-issued identity document that fits your name on your leave. Solar. There's a shadow on the trail, but the wires and the Half Dome are completely exposed, and you'll probably be here by noon. Hares and Clips. This is the best way to stay safe while climbing and descending cables. If you plan to do this, you need a hare, carabina and a Y-shaped cord. We didn't use hares and clips on the cables, but if we did it again, we would use it. Walking poles (optional). Walking poles take about 30% of the weight of your legs when you land, relieve knee pain and other symptoms. I use Black Diamond Distance Z poles and love them. They easily collapse down to fit the luggage and walking backpack, plus extremely light. The poles come in various sizes, so be sure to get the right length according to the height. Do you have any questions about hiking the Half Dome? The comment is below! You Might Also Like: Note: This post contains links to the affiliate. When you make a purchase using one of these linked links, you are paid a small commission at no extra cost. All rights reserved © Earth Trekkers. It is strictly forbidden to re-publish this article and/or its content (text, photographs, etc.) in all or in part. Forbidden.

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