



The Sequoia

Yosemite Asks for 2nd Round of Public Input on Improving Park Visitor Experience

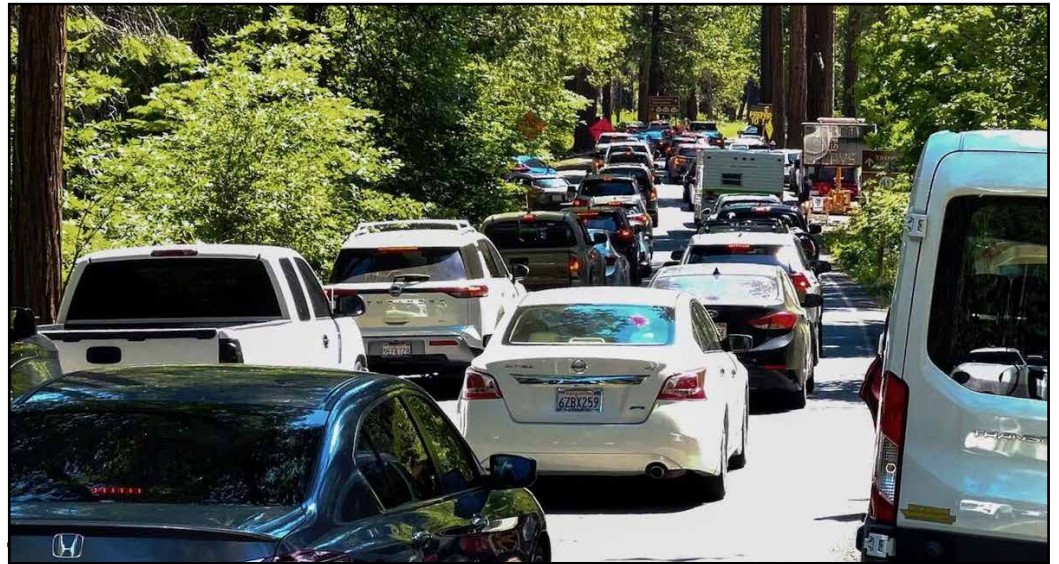
INSIDE

A TRIP TO LAUTERBRUNNEN VALLEY IN SWITZERLAND

HOW THE SWISS MANAGE THEIR HEAVILY VISITED TOURISM SITES

This 2nd round of public comments ends SEPT. 6TH and comes on the heels of a disastrous no-reservations required spring and early summer season in the park.

For a link to NPS public comments page visit: sierratuolumne.org



Visitors this year to Yosemite National Park are dealing with extremely overcrowded conditions with 3-4 hour waits at entrance stations, traffic gridlock, and limited parking inside the park.

From 2020-2022 Yosemite tried out a reservation system to help manage visitor access to the park during its busiest months. It worked. This year that system was paused, partly as a result of pressure from businesses located near Yosemite who were financially impacted by the smaller number of visitors to the region while the reservations system was in place.

2023 has been a no-win situation both for the park, and for those who come to visit. No one comes to Yosemite to wait 3-4 hours at an entrance station or be stuck in traffic gridlock. In the end, this too will negatively affect Yosemite area businesses as the news is shared.

During the first round of public input on the planning process Dec. 9, 2022 through Feb. 3, 2023 the park received almost 7,000 comments. Now the Park Service is reaching out to all of us who care about Yosemite's future.

This new round of public engagement addresses improving the visitor experience and access to Yosemite during peak season. The park is seeking input on several key concepts to address improving visitors' access to the park's most significant resources and features while ensuring that those resources are protected. **The period for public input ends September 6th.**

TAKE ACTION

To read more about **Yosemite's Visitor Access Plan**, and for a **link to the public comments page** where you can add your own input on this issue, visit our group's home page at www.sierratuolumne.org.

Planes, Trains and Cable Cars: A Trip to Lauterbrunnen, “The Swiss Yosemite”

Keith Martin

OUR TRIP BEGAN with traveling from Paris to Basel via high-speed train...up to 200 mph. From Basel we traveled to Interlaken and then to Lauterbrunnen via Swiss trains. In Lauterbrunnen, next to the train station, we took the cable car to Grutschalp and the cog wheel train to Murren. A brief walk took us to our rental. For the next week we traveled using our Berner Oberland Passes, getting on and off cable cars, regional trains and cog wheel trains to travel all over the Lauterbrunnen region and hiking on high mountain trails. The cost was \$250 per person for an 8-day pass.

While traveling in Switzerland we were hearing about the multi-hour waits getting into Yosemite and continued automobile congestion throughout the park. No parking available in the valley after 8am. Cars being diverted at the El Capitan crossover and sent back out. What a mess.

On our first day we walked on the floor of the Lauterbrunnen Valley, next to the Lutschine River, to the village of Stechelberg where we caught cable cars back to Murren. Along the way we passed numerous waterfalls cascading over 2000 feet from the top of the vertical walls of the valley. Breithorn campground, accessible by car from Lauterbrunnen, reminded us of Curry Village. Once past Breithorn, we nearly had the trail to ourselves.

The Lauterbrunnen Valley is an order of magnitude even grander than Yosemite. There are more waterfalls. Peaks, rising to 13,000 feet above sea level, climb above the top of the valley walls and are capped with glaciers. The trains bring in a constant stream of visitors. But we experienced markedly less congestion than what people are currently experiencing in Yosemite. In fact there are many aspects that differentiate Yosemite and Lauterbrunnen.

Only locals can drive cars in Murren and local traffic is virtually nonexistent. The Lauterbrunnen area charges a tourist tax of about \$6 per person per day. We had to go to the tourist office in Murren to pay our tax. The Swiss do not like to pay for other people's vacations. The tourist office was a nice place with a pool, jacuzzi, skate board park and children's playground.

Yosemite does have something that Lauterbrunnen does not, wildlife: bears, deer, coyotes, mountain lions, bobcats, etc. Bern means “Bear” in Swiss. The only bears we saw were in an enclosure in a park in Bern and they came from zoos. At our home in Groveland, we wake up to deer coming through our back yard. In Murren we woke up to cows with cow bells being herded through town. The term “alps” does not refer to the mountains, it refers to dairy farms in mountainous regions.

Does Yosemite need to build railroads and cable cars? In the days of John Muir, Yosemite Valley was accessible by railroad. Today the railroad is gone, but three state highways give access to the valley. Developing a fleet of electric busses significantly larger than the current YARTS system, restricting car access to the park to only visitors who are car camping, and coordinating the buses with local communities, Sequoia National Park, and local state parks would bring an end to traffic jams, and return Yosemite to its grandeur and create a generation of visitors applauding the vision of state and local officials.

Perhaps our local officials, state and federal representatives and park managers could travel to the Lauterbrunnen region to see how the Swiss manage their mountain resort without traffic jams ruining the experience.

Encourage the Park Service to minimize private vehicle access to Yosemite and to implement an expanded transit system to bring visitors in from outside the park.

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Photos from our trip to the
Lauterbrunnen Valley.
by Keith and Beth Martin





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Due to COVID-19, the Tuolumne Group Executive Committee is currently only meeting by phone or with online sessions. For information on how to participate in the next ExCom meeting, contact Elaine Hagen at the email listed below.

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We welcome your input and feedback.

NOTES & UPDATES

CONNECT WITH YOUR SIERRA CLUB TUOLUMNE GROUP

Want to put your support for the environment into action? Consider joining our Executive Committee. **Have a great idea for a local Sierra Club presentation?** There are many ways to volunteer with our group. Interested members are invited to attend one of our ExCom meetings. Contact Membership Chair, Elaine Hagen at elainehagen@att.net.

GET INVOLVED • TAKE ACTION

Today, years of hard-fought environmental protections are under threat—and to influence governments and businesses, we need everyone to speak up and shout out. Explore how you can get involved: go to www.sierraclub.org/take-action

RATHER RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL?

If you would like to receive this newsletter via email either instead of, or in addition to our printed edition, email your request to mail@sierratuolumne.org.

The Sequoia Newsletter is designed to provide local Sierra Club members with a trusted source of information on people, events, and issues impacting our environment. Members can also find additional information on our updated web page: www.sierratuolumne.org.

