

Kid-Friendly Activities in Southern Yosemite



The Fossil Discovery Center

Kids love dirt. Kids love old bones. What better place than for them to explore Chowchilla's Fossil Discovery Center of Madera County? From Columbian Mammoths to Short-Faced Bears to Saber-Toothed Cats and even Camels, kids can get up close and personal with the skeletons of the creatures who walked the very earth where the Fossil Discovery Center sits during the Pleistocene Era (over 780,000 years ago). Budding scientists can even crawl into a mock dig where they experience first-hand what it means to be a paleontologist.

MaderaMammoths.org



Historic Museums

Imagine going back in time to many fine museums representing the history of Eastern Madera County, from the First Inhabitants (Sierra Mono Museum in North Fork) to the colorful Gold Rush era at the Coarsegold Historic Museum, history is waiting for you. Fresno Flats Historic Village and Park honors the origins of Oakhurst, which was founded in 1873, and serves as another site where children of all ages can explore and expand their knowledge of a part of California's history.

SierraMonoMuseum.org

CoarsegoldHistoricSociety.org

FresnoFlatsMuseum.org



The Talking Bear and His Carved Friends

Oakhurst's unofficial mascot resides at the corner of Road 426 and Highway 41 – the World Famous Talking Bear. It was originally constructed in 1923 to attract the interest of the International Olympic Site Committee, and received a major refresh in 2013. Kids can have fun getting the bear to growl and talk. It's a great place to take a souvenir picture. Discover the carved bears around Oakhurst, CA, The Carved Bear Capital of the World™.

YosemiteThisYear.com/CarvedBear

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Nelder Grove of Giant Sequoias

Wrap your arms around a giant sequoia, one of the largest living things on earth, in the Nelder Grove of Giant Sequoias. The grove is located a few miles northeast of Oakhurst, and there are both easy and moderate trails that take visitors past several large specimens of the gentle giants. There are nearly 100 mature Giant Sequoias here as well as a number of smaller trees along the trails, as well. The best part is that Nelder Grove is less visited than the Giant Sequoia groves in the national parks. Kids and their folks can take their time and often enjoy a bit of solitude. If kids travel with their favorite canines, dogs can enjoy Nelder Grove as well, as long as they're leashed.

NelderGrove.org



Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad

Since the beginning of rail travel, trains have fascinated young and old alike. The Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad, located in Fish Camp just before the southern gate of Yosemite, satisfies that craving for all ages with its three Shay Locomotives, built in 1927, 1926, and 1913. Ride the Logger and step back to a time when workers harvested lumber from these forests to fuel the Industrial Revolution. In the Thornberry Museum, see the very tools used by loggers more than 100 years ago along the mountain. Kids can learn to pan for gold and discover the efforts the '49ers made to eke out a living for themselves and their families. While kids explore the trains and other activities, parents can browse the lovely on-site gift shop and bookstore. Dogs are welcome, too.

YosemiteSteamTrains.com



Beautiful Bass Lake

Sparkling blue waters surrounded by the Sierra National Forest make Bass Lake a beautiful vacation spot year-round, and it is only 19 miles from Yosemite National Park's south entrance. Bass Lake offers plenty of activities for the family, including swimming, water sports, boating, fishing, mountain bike trails, and hiking. Bring or rent boats and fishing gear from one of the three marinas on the lake. There are many lodging options in and around Bass Lake, including three full-service resorts that bring you back to the retro-summer-camp vibe.

BassLakeChamber.com

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Daring Adventures at Tenaya at Yosemite

Tenaya at Yosemite's newest kid-friendly feature is the Kids Adventure Course, a fun aerial trekking park comprised of a collection of challenge courses. The course has six different elements, including bridges, swinging logs, and rope challenges. At approximately five feet off the ground, it's perfect for little ones who want a thrill without being too scary! In addition, younger guests can get their first taste of rock climbing at Tenaya's 18-foot climbing wall or train to become the Robin Hood of Sierra National Forest with archery lessons for children ages 5 and up. Then, after a day of active adventuring, kids can kick back in Tenaya's newly enhanced game room or take a dip in one of their indoor and outdoor pools.

[VisitTenaya.com](https://www.visittenaya.com)



Become a Junior Ranger

All kids can become Yosemite Junior Rangers or Little Cubs by purchasing a self-guided booklet published by the Yosemite Conservancy. This booklet is sold for \$3.50 plus tax at Oakhurst's visitor center at 40343 Highway 41, Oakhurst, CA, 93644, and many locations throughout Yosemite. In order to earn a Junior Ranger patch, a candidate must complete the booklet, collect a bag of trash, and attend a guided program. The Junior Ranger & Little Cub programs encourage our young visitors and their families to discover Yosemite's wonders and natural resources.

nps.gov/yose/learn/kidsyouth/junior-ranger.htm



Fossils to Falls Road Trip

Explore the best of Madera County on The Fossils to Falls Road Trip, which is part itinerary, part choose-your-own-adventure, and part scavenger hunt, thanks to our Welcoming Committee trading cards found at each location along the way. Begin at the largest Middle-Pleistocene-era dig in the US, continue through historic Gold Country, splash and play at Bass Lake, ride the historic Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad, and discover local artists and historic sites throughout the region before exploring Yosemite National Park. This self-guided road trip itinerary is perfect for families seeking more than just a beautiful hike; it's for those seeking adventure, excitement, and discovery to last a lifetime.

YosemiteThisYear.com/the-fossils-to-falls-road-trip