



# Waterfalls and Waterways on the Majestic Mountain Loop

Sparkling Granite. Roaring Cascades. Iconic scenery. There's a reason why moving water is so timeless and magnetizing. It awakens your senses and energizes your soul. And when it comes to seeing waterfalls and taking in roaring rapids, the Majestic Mountain Loop is arguably one of the best places to do it.

## When To Visit

To see the Majestic Mountain Loop's waterfalls in all their glory, late winter through early spring (December through April) is the time to visit. We can't stress this enough. Most of these cascades are fed by snowmelt or at least energized by it which means to see them at their peak, you need snow to be melting.

## Yosemite National Park

Up first is the "King" of Cascades. Yosemite has always been a mecca for waterfall enthusiasts. Within its boundaries, you'll find 25 named ones ranging from a hundred-feet tall to the Big Kahuna, Yosemite Falls, cranking in at a hefty 2,425 feet tall.

*Tip: Slow your roll. While bee-lining to the attractions is fine, you're going to miss A LOT of the subtle beauty in Yosemite. During the spring snow melt, there are HUNDREDS of unnamed falls to see. Don't rush. Stop often and take it all in.*



### Bridalveil Fall & Its Compatriots

Once you do make it into Yosemite Valley, besides the "legend" we listed above, we recommend taking in Bridalveil Fall. And from the same lookout, all you need to do is turn around to see another one – Ribbon Falls. Don't forget to also look on the south canyon wall at Sentinel Fall which is just roughly across from Yosemite Falls.

### Hidden Gem: Cascades (Cascade Falls)

A good example of following this tip are the Cascades. Located two miles west of Yosemite Valley at the confluence of the Tamarack and Cascade Creeks, this is one of the lesser-known waterfalls. Why? Because of its location in the rugged Merced River Canyon. Most visitors focus on getting TO Yosemite Valley instead. At a hefty 600 feet tall starting near the Big Oak Flat Road and ending just above Highway 140, it's the largest within the Merced River Canyon.

Bridalveil Fall

## The Mighty Merced & Wawona Swinging Bridge

Within Yosemite Valley, you'll find the calm and weaving Merced River. But as soon as it leaves the valley, it quickly begins to froth and bounce excitedly. Meandering its way to empty into the San Joaquin River, a great place to see the lively river is from the Wawona Swinging Bridge. Not to be mistaken for the Yosemite Swinging Bridge within Yosemite Valley. And as the name suggests, it's located near Wawona AND it swings. It won't take much imagination for you to do your best Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom impersonation crossing this river.

*Tip: Set aside time to explore the Yosemite History Center. Here you'll find a historic village filled with buildings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.*

## Kings Canyon National Park

Although Kings Canyon is more famous for having the largest remaining Giant Sequoia grove in the world and being the deepest canyon in North America, it still has a few noteworthy waterfalls and cascades you should see as well.



Roaring River Falls

*Tip: If you're fortunate enough to visit Kings Canyon National Park when the road opens, be sure to keep your eyes peeled for seasonal stars such as the Windy Gulch Cascade.*

### Grizzly Falls

On the Kings Canyon Scenic Byway, there are two main waterfalls that you should seek out. The first is Grizzly Falls. With just a short stroll, you can take in this eighty-foot beauty that bounces its way down a steep rock face. Amongst the neon green canopy surrounding it, you'll feel as if you've been transported to some exotic island.

### Roaring River Falls

The second one is a bit different in height and volume. What it lacks in height, it more than makes up in volume. The mighty torrent literally chutes its way between two sharp granite boulders creating a "roar" hence the name "Roaring River."

## Sequoia National Park

Sharing a border with Kings Canyon, these two parks are typically mentioned together like siblings. At a whopping 13,000 feet of elevation gain within its boundaries, Sequoia's vast climate zones include everything from foothill vegetation like Black Oak to steep granite peaks and groves of Giant Sequoias in the middle. Compared to the Kings Canyon stars we highlighted above; Sequoia National Park's waterfalls require a bit of hiking to see them.



Tokopah Falls photo by Daniel Chui

## Tokopah Falls

The four-mile round-trip hike that ascends a bit less than 700 feet gives you access to the tallest waterfall in Sequoia National Park. The route follows a quintessential Sierra canyon along the Marble Fork of the Kaweah River. Throughout most of the journey, you're under a pine forest canopy until you almost reach the 1,200-foot-tall series of falls. While not free-falling like the major ones in Yosemite, this one tumbles impressively over rocks and cliffs all within a HUGE granite amphitheater. To the south, keep your eyes open for the bald granite "pointy" peak. Rising 1,600 feet above the valley floor below, its view of the falls as well as its shape are perfectly named the Watchtower.

## Marble Falls

At just shy of 7.5 miles out-and-back and climbing nearly 1,600 feet, it's no wonder this hike is less crowded than the more accessible Tokopah Falls. What you do get is a bounty of wildflowers that paint the foothills in colors that would make any artist envious. An opportunity to get up close to California's only protected foothills ecosystem. As you continue the climb, it quickly transitions into a more alpine environment. Once you reach the falls, you'll find not one but a series of cascades both upstream AND downstream of the main ones.

*Tip: Due to its low elevation, we recommend doing this hike in April or May when the temps are cooler, and wildflowers are in full bloom.*

TLC's song may croon that you shouldn't go chase waterfalls, but we disagree when you're visiting California. From the mighty Yosemite Falls to the ephemeral stalwarts, waterfalls should be on your itinerary when driving on the Majestic Mountain Loop.

**For more information go to [www.MajesticMountainLoop.com](http://www.MajesticMountainLoop.com)**

Article written by:



Alex Silgalis

Alex founded [localfreshies.com](http://localfreshies.com)® in 2014 to be the #1 website providing the “local scoop” on where to eat, drink & play in mountain towns throughout North America. When he’s not writing and executing marketing strategies for small businesses & agencies, he’s in search of the deepest snow in the winter and tackiest dirt in the summer.