



Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite Review

By Katherine Rodeghier

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The addition of 50 high-end Explorer Cabins upped Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite’s game in the rustic-luxury market by attracting those who want upscale amenities but desire an outdoorsy mountain experience — “cabineering,” as Tenaya calls it, or roughing it in the woods without the rough part.

Tenaya's strong suit always has been its location. Perched at 5,288 feet and two miles from the southern border of Yosemite National Park, it sprawls across 75 acres amid Sierra National Forest.

The lodge opened in 1990 with one wing. It expanded to two wings and a total of 352 accommodations comprising guestrooms and suites renovated in 2016 in the main lodge, free-standing cottages renovated in 2017 and the Explorer Cabins opened in summer 2019. Delaware North, which took over the resort in 2001, has spent \$70 million on Tenaya in the last decade, including the most recent \$25 million in expansions, renovations and enhancements.

The Explorer Cabins are the centerpiece of that project. These two-bedroom, 650-square-foot cabins house a kitchen and living room with fireplace, sleeper sofa, wet bar, granite countertops, refrigerator and microwave. A 90-square-foot covered porch has forest views. Each cabin sleeps six. If you're bringing the kids, choose one of the family cabins with bunk beds in one bedroom. Cabins cluster around communal fire pits under sugar pines and cedars and connect to the main lodge by walking trail or shuttle. You check in not at the main lodge but in an 1,800-square-foot Explorer Clubhouse where you'll get grab-and-go breakfasts and complimentary beer and wine. Camp hosts see to your desires, whether it's kits to make s'mores or poles for fishing in the stocked pond nearby.

"Cabineers" have access to all the amenities of the resort: a kid's club as well as child and pet sitting, a rock-climbing wall, mountain bikes, archery, indoor and outdoor pools, including a separate pool for adults, guided hikes and a new Kids Adventure Center suspended five feet aboveground. Ascent Spa uses all-organic products in its 12 treatment rooms, organizes outdoor yoga sessions in summer and Good Night Yoga for kids with story time and poses to help launch your little ones into dreamland at bedtime. Summerdale, an evening of barbecue and entertainment outdoors, is offered in summer.

At Jackalopes Bar and Grill, renovated in 2019, you'll find casual pub fare and chef-inspired entrees, as well as a bar serving mountain-themed drinks including Tenaya Red IPA made just for the resort at a local brewery. The once-stuffy, fine-dining Embers recently refocused as casually elegant, the sort of place where you can be comfortable in jeans while ordering steaks and fine wines. Harvest and Grounds Deli switched to Starbucks coffee and sells grab-and-go breakfast and lunch items, ice cream, California food products, wine and craft beer. Forgot your picnic gear? Buy it here and ask the deli to prepare bag lunches for your excursions.

About those excursions: You are next to one of America's most popular national parks, right? Go explore on your own, or better yet, book a tour on Tenaya's Sprinter vans with retractable roofs and let someone else do the driving while you do the gawking. Three vans seat 19 passengers and one ADA van seats 13. Guides, often former park rangers, entertain you with running commentary while the vans cruise through Yosemite. Passengers disembark to walk around Glacier Point, Tunnel View, Bridalveil Fall, the Yosemite Valley, Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias and other scenic spots.

If that's not enough to keep you busy, you'll find horseback riding, river rafting, fly fishing and golf near Tenaya. The Sugar Pine Railroad down the road has daytime and dinner excursions into the forest on its steam train.

Named for a Native American chief, Tenaya's décor reflects the heritage of its namesake in colors and fabrics in the public areas, guestrooms and meeting rooms for 10 to 500 in the only full-service conference facility in the Yosemite area. In lodge rooms you see earth tones, rustic artwork, barn-style doors and plantation-style window shutters. Jaw-dropping scenes of Yosemite, the work of the in-house photographer with Tenaya for 30 years, hang in public areas.

Tenaya is 3.5 hours from the San Francisco Bay area, and 4.5 from greater Los Angeles. The closest international airport, in Fresno (FAT), lies about 60 miles south of Tenaya.

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