

## Best Fall Backpacking in California

### **General Tips:**

- If you're looking for places to car-camp for the night before or after you go backpacking, check out <https://freecampsites.net/>
- Fires are an issue everywhere this year. The later you plan your trip for, the better chance you have of there being no fires. However, it will also mean it will be too cold (snowing) in a lot of the places listed below. Check the weather history from the last few years to help you figure out what month to plan your trip for.
- For permitting, a common mistake is looking for "campsites" for backpacking. Usually, "campsites" in a park will be car-camping, rather than backpacking. If you're trying to figure out whether backpacking requires permits in the place you're looking for (and how to get them), the phrasing I would use to try searching would be:
  - "Backpacking Permits \_\_ (location) \_\_" or
  - "Wilderness Permits \_\_ (location) \_\_" or
  - "Dispersed Camping \_\_ (location) \_\_" or
  - "Backcountry Permits \_\_ (location) \_\_"
- <https://www.recreation.gov/> is the most common place to get permits for trails that require them (Yosemite has a different system so check for that below). You can also use recreation.gov to search for what trails are still available for the weekends you're thinking of going, then you can look up the trails on alltrails to see which are the coolest)

### **We know it's a bit overwhelming to pick where to go, so here is a short-list of our recommendations!**

\*This is not a complete list of good CA spots, just a place to start looking if you need it.\*

1. Emigrant Wilderness / Stanislaus National Forest (in the Sierra Nevadas)  
<https://www.alltrails.com/explore/parks/us/california/emigrant-wilderness>
  - a. Pros:
    - i. No permits required!
    - ii. Gorgeous!!! Comparable beauty to Yosemite, but far less busy and much easier to access (because no permits).
    - iii. Great weather in the Fall
    - iv. Lots of water sources and lakes to camp at (though you should, of course, check where those sources are before you go)
  - b. Cons:
    - i. Fires are an issue this year. Check the AQI before you go!
    - ii. Need a car to get there
2. East Bay Regional Parks
  - a. Pros:
    - i. Convenient, accessible by foot!
    - ii. Views of the Bay for most of your hikes

- iii. Super sick Redwood trees in Redwood regional park, one of the only places in the world you can see them
  - b. Cons:
    - i. Would have to stealth camp in most of the regional parks since they are primarily day-use only. The exception to this is EBMUD land, for which you can get a permit for \$2 at <https://www.ebmud.com/recreation/buy-trail-permit/>
- 3. Big Sur State Park
  - <https://www.alltrails.com/explore/parks/us/california/ventana-wilderness>
  - a. Pros:
    - i. No permits required! Free dispersed camping as long as you've hiked away from highway 1
    - ii. Ocean views
    - iii. Might have a better chance of better air quality
  - b. Cons
    - i. Need a car to get there
- 4. Yosemite National Park
  - [https://www.alltrails.com/explore?b\\_tl\\_lat=37.88840230008821&b\\_tl\\_lng=-119.62257385253906&b\\_br\\_lat=37.77152889115204&b\\_br\\_lng=-119.37744140625](https://www.alltrails.com/explore?b_tl_lat=37.88840230008821&b_tl_lng=-119.62257385253906&b_br_lat=37.77152889115204&b_br_lng=-119.37744140625)
  - a. Pros:
    - i. Incredibly beautiful and diverse landscape ( granite + forest + meadows )
    - ii. Could theoretically get there via public transit (YARTs)
  - b. Cons:
    - i. Crowded
    - ii. A bit more complicated to get permits (go to <https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/wildpermits.htm>)
    - iii. Potentially impacted by wildfires, check the AQI before you go
- 5. Death Valley National Park
  - a. Pros:
    - i. Diverse desert landscape (more sand dunes than Great Sand Dunes National Park, more joshua trees than Joshua Tree National Park, canyons deeper than the Grand Canyon... seriously it's so cool)
    - ii. Free dispersed camping, you just have to be at least 1 mile from any paved road
    - iii. Weather could be perfect by late November (Check the weather though! It's getting hotter every year.)
  - b. Cons
    - i. No water (You'll have to carry it all in)
    - ii. Need a car to get there