

Yosemite Tioga Pass “Bike Only” Annual Opening Ride : Nuts and Bolts of this Special Ride!

Tioga Pass is the entrance to Yosemite Park on the Northwest side, and usually opens in late spring or early summer after the road has been plowed of snow. After plowing is complete, for 1-2 wonderful days, the Tioga Pass allows “Bike Only” riding on Highway 120 (Tioga Road). No cars are allowed during this time. Highway 120 extends from the west side entrance at Crane Flats to the east side portal which ends around Lee Vining, about 58 miles each way.

Gleaning information from friends (Megan Brinkmeyer, Dr. John Anicetti) who have done this ride in the past, we’d like to publish what we know about doing the ride:

1. Entrance: For several years during the COVID pandemic, Yosemite required advance reservations to enter the park from 6 am through 4 pm. You could enter either before or after that time without a reservation. In 2023, reservations were not required. We will see if that changes as apparently the lack of reservations caused a tremendous backup at the entrance to the park, sometimes 3-4 hours. Driving from Benicia takes about 3.5 hours to the Crane Flat Entrance if you wanted to leave extremely early and avoid overnight stay.
2. Housing: Due to the possible need for early entry to the park, our friends decided to stay overnight at a hotel in Groveland near the west park entrance. The Groveland Hotel was used by one friend, @ \$140/night. <http://groveland.com>
3. Water: There is often no access to potable water along the route; this past year all of the facilities along the road had been damaged including restrooms. The park does put up Porta-Potties in the event the bathrooms are damaged. There are several options for water purification including a “Lifestraw” or bottles that filter water. Friends that did the ride said that there is access to water in small streams and waterfalls along the side of the road, but it needs to be purified. One friend brought just 2 bottles of water and a Camelbak (water bladder inside small backpack). She had plenty of water with this setup. Here are a few water purification options for treating roadside stream water:
 - A. Water to Go: https://watertogousa.com/products/active-25oz-75cl-water-purifier-bottle?gclid=CjwKCAjw38SoBhB6EiwA8EQVLjMfQ1iCjNinl7H6Uhgnpqv7s3pK8s55hDKkllaTNU35D1grGIXsUBoC9JIQAvD_BwE
 - B. Lifestraw: https://lifestraw.com/?gad=1&gclid=CjwKCAjw38SoBhB6EiwA8EQVLsxT5ASylvxVIYSFF_e mPdUvcswkdu6cjrmdCaOWNidrogDwd5_ChBoC9xgQAvD_BwE
4. Distance: Starting from the west side Crane’s Flat entrance there are several options:
 - a. Ride from Cranes Flat to Lee Vining: 58 miles one way. Would need to stay overnight at Lee Vining.
 - b. ***Ride to Lake Tenaya and back (31 miles each way) *** (Planned ride for BBC riders. <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/44567062>

***Note that this ride is 63 miles and 6300 feet of climbing at altitude!

- c. Ride to Tuolumne Meadows and back (38 miles each way)
 - d. Ride to Olmsted Point and back: (29 miles each way)
5. Parking: There is parking at a gas station near the Crane Flat entrance but it filled up quickly this past year almost by dawn. Other options are either before or after the entrance on turnouts. Due to the paucity of parking **we should plan to carpool to the start of the ride.**
 6. Weather: Depending on the month that the Tioga pass opens, it can be quite cold or hot. In 2023, the ride was **extremely hot** due to the late (July) opening, and riders wished that they had started before dawn to get out when it was still cool. In a more usual season, the pass opens in May or June, when it could be quite cool. You'll need to bring layers.
 7. Food: You will need to bring snacks/food sufficient for an **unsupported** 60-mile ride. It may be prudent to bring a fanny pack or similar as there are no other venues for food along the way.
 8. Timing: Plowing usually starts April 15th each year. National Park Plan is usually to open late May or early June. We need to check the website daily to get updates. NOTE: The announcement of the opening of the Tioga Pass is usually last minute, 1-2 days before the opening itself. It seems that the opening is not something they like to publicize. This year I found out about the opening 12 hours before the event!

***NOTE: This means that you need to be ready well in advance with the gear above. There won't be a chance to prepare or go shopping when the announcement has been made. **You literally will need a "Go Bag" with all of your gear ready for this ride.**

Critical Websites to Monitor:

Status of the Tioga Pass/road: <https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/tioga.htm>

Park Information: <https://www.nps.gov/yose/index.htm>

Plowing update: <https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/tioga.htm>

If they institute a timed Entry: <https://www.recreation.gov/timed-entry/10086745>

NOTE: Special thanks to Ms. Megan Brinkmeyer and Mr. John Anicetti for their insider information as both did this ride successfully! Megan did the entire route to Lee Vining, John did the Lake Tenaya option.