

Natural Firefall at Yosemite

Tips and Guidelines for Success

1. **Short Time Frame.** The Natural Firefall occurs only during a two week period of the year, generally from February 15 to 25. The sunlight striking the waterfall and rocks only lasts about 10 minutes. The time of day this happens is around 5 pm.
2. **Week Days.** Weekends are crowded with photographers. Many California locals.
3. **Avoid** President's Day & Washington's Birthday holidays as lodging rates jump for those four nights and there are tourist and school field trips.
4. **Bucket List.** Photographers come from all over the US and the world for the chance to capture a great photograph. It's fun to talk to everyone.
5. **Elusive.** Must have clear sky to the west. Skies can either clear up or cloud over at the last minute. Waterfall water flow is necessary, can be drought or ice dam blocked. You must be in place and set up your tripod well in advance of the sunset as people coming later will set up right in your space. Good humored "assertiveness" is the best way to protect your space.
6. **Northside Drive Picnic area location.** (Kemper's book, page 91) Limited parking, need to be there very early, perhaps by 1 :30 pm. **Advantage** = restrooms available, dark background on El Capitan face for contrast.

Frye recommends hiking 200 yards east of the parking area for a great location and not as many people ... so more fun . Disadvantage = hundreds of photographers show up so it is wall to wall tripods.

7. **Southside Drive on Merced River.** Parking zoo, NPS rangers set up both parking and no parking areas. May have to park 1+ miles away near Swinging Bridge and hike back.
Advantage = not as crowded and people are in a good mood, can get great reflections from the river, parking doesn't fill up as early.

Disadvantage = no rest rooms, can be a problem for some. You will have to trudge through the snow for a short distance to the river, maybe 200 yards.

8. **Other locations** are available in unexpected locations such as Four Mile Trail on the south side of the Valley or meadows further east towards the Lodge.

The two noted above in items 6 & 7 are just the most popular...as creative photographers we are usually looking for something unusual or different. Scout out other locations during the day and if found , tell our other club members.

9. **Cold weather.** Even if it's 45 degrees at 3 p.m., you will be waiting for hours or for even a short time and you will get very cold. Temps drop at sunset time. Wear a heavy coat, thermal under layers (long johns), neck gaiters, ski type knit hats or ear muffs, chemical hand warmers, etc. Bring snacks & beverages. Dress in layers. Bring a camp chair. Consider cardboard to stand on to provide insulation under your boots while standing. Bring a trash bag to set your camera bag on in the snow or wet ground or hang it from your tripod. Test your camera before the Firefall as it may get too cold to operate properly. Cold weather is very hard on batteries, bring extras and consider keeping them in your pocket until needed, this includes batteries for your remote shutter release.
10. **Challenge.** If this shot were easy, it would be common and not in anyone's "bucket list." Sometimes we need to be uncomfortable and creative to capture the unusual.

Thus our field trip mantra is: **"Remember it's an Adventure!"**