

Sierra National Forest

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A Hidden Gem in the Valley

Many people focus only on the main attraction of the Central Valley: Yosemite National Park – and even consider the forest a part of it – but Sierra National Forest actually neighbors YNP. Sierra NF is home to several giant Sequoias. These “giants” can live up to 3,000 years. The tallest among them can be the same size as a 26-story building. There is such a biologically diverse population that resides within the grounds of the forest. These beautiful giants only grow on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada mountain range in California between 1219–2438 meters in elevation. [Learn more by clicking here!](#)



Traveling Details

Driving Distance from UC Merced:

69.7 Miles (1 hr 23 mins)

Lodging:

Cabins and Camp Grounds (13 recreational areas, 30+ camping sites, cabins ~\$300 per night on Airbnb)

Must See Attractions (click for links):

[John Muir trail](#), [Bass Lake](#), [John Muir Wilderness](#), [Ansel Adams Wilderness](#), [Devils Postpile National Monument](#)

Weather:

Expect Spring highs in the mid–50s, lows in the mid–20s in Fahrenheit



Mercey Hot Springs

Who would've thought that amongst this agriculturally-based setting you would find hidden gems tucked away in the middle of mountainous national forests like Mercey Hot Springs! Imagine sitting in the tubs at these hot springs looking out into the vast wilderness, taking in the fresh air of the countryside on a Sunday... You can have all of this just by driving an hour and a half from UC Merced. Sounds like one of the most relaxing and healing experiences you could have!



Why Would I Go?

The real answer to this question would be: Why wouldn't you? The drive itself to the forest is short, so short that you won't get tired of your carpool asking, "are we there yet" every 30 seconds. The drive itself is filled with scenic backdrops of nature. The expansiveness of the open space will mesmerize you, and perhaps even give you a different perspective on a project or task at school/work that you've been stuck on. When you finally arrive in the mountains and stand amongst the giant sequoias, you will finally realize how tiny we are. This perspective and experience can act as a reset button and a catalyst for stagnation. Just one of the many perks of a trip to Sierra National Forest. Unplug and get tuned in with nature!