

100 THINGS TO DO IN MARIPOSA COUNTY | OUTSIDE YOSEMITE

From historic Gold Rush towns and scenic backroads to lake adventures, local flavors, and outdoor recreation, you'll find memorable experiences around every corner. This collection highlights just a few of the many things to do throughout Mariposa County. Scan the QR code to discover the complete list of 100 ways to explore, play, relax, and connect with the people, places, and landscapes that make this destination unforgettable.



Central Mariposa County (Mariposa, El Portal, Midpines, Bootjack)

Relax at Mariposa Town Park 🌳🌻🌻🌻

In the heart of Mariposa, this community park offers shaded picnic areas, a playground, open lawn space, and an amphitheater, perfect for a laid-back afternoon outdoors. You will also find a tennis court and skate park!

Merced River Recreation Area 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Hike, raft, float, swim, camp, or simply unwind along the Merced River at the [Merced River Recreation Area](#). With dog-friendly trails and beaches, it's one of the best outdoor destinations near Yosemite for adventure and relaxation alike.



Take a Hike 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Discover scenic trails, including the wildflower-lined Hite Cove Trail in spring and the pet-friendly paths of Stockton Creek Preserve. Enjoy easy nature walks to more challenging adventures.

Spend a Day at Happy Goat Yosemite 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Slow down and reconnect with nature at [Happy Goat Yosemite](#). Wander the property on a self-guided tour, meet playful baby goats and friendly farm animals. Then unwind at The Field House with games, arts and crafts, live music, and curated picnic lunches featuring fresh local flavors.

Take the Triangle Tasting Tour 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Take to the scenic backroads of the [Mariposa Triangle](#) for a laid-back self-guided beverage tour where great flavors meet big views. This roughly 30-mile loop along Highway 140, Triangle Road, and Highway 49 connects charming downtown Mariposa with local stops for wine, cider, coffee, and more.

Explore Artisan Shops & Local Handmade Goods 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Discover the creativity of Mariposa's local makers at [Made in Mariposa](#), a nonprofit artisan co-op featuring handmade pottery, jewelry, textiles, woodwork, and home goods. Nearby, browse nature-inspired art and Mostly Sweet jewelry at [The Approach Trading Post](#), then visit [Nativearth](#), a local artisan shoe company known for both contemporary and historical footwear.

Catch a Show | Live Music in Mariposa 🌳🌻🌻🌻

The music scene in Mariposa is on the rise. Venues like [The Grove House](#), [The Alley](#) and the [Hideout Saloon](#) have their own lineup of events. If you time your visit right, you might catch Music on the Green, a relaxed free outdoor concert at the [Mariposa Art Park](#) every Friday and Saturday evening during the summer.



Visit a Museum 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Discover the stories that shaped Yosemite Mariposa County at Mariposa's unique museums. Explore Yosemite's climbing legacy through historic gear and photographs at the [Yosemite Climbing Museum & Gallery](#), step into Gold Rush history at the [Mariposa Museum & History Center](#), and marvel at California's mining heritage at the [California State Mining & Mineral Museum](#).

Go Bird Watching 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Grab your binoculars and explore a mighty range of Sierra topography and biodiversity. Alpine peaks transition to rolling foothills that flatten to grassy plains enabling nearly 300 species of birds to thrive here. Where to go bird watching: [Merced River Canyon](#), [Sierra National Forest](#) or [Stockton Creek Preserve Trails](#).

Locate Historic Buildings in Mariposa 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Grab a [downtown Mariposa map](#) at the [Mariposa Visitors Center](#) and take a self-guided tour of the town's historic treasures. See landmarks listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including the old Mariposa Jail House, the historic Mariposa County Courthouse, and the St. Joseph's Catholic Church, along with charming 1800s-era buildings now home to shops, cafés, and local eateries.

Southern Yosemite/ Mariposa (Fish Camp)

Skate the Sierra (season winter) 🌳🌻🌻

Glide across the open-air [ice skating](#) rink at Tenaya at Yosemite, whether you're learning to skate for the first time or perfecting your triple axel. After your time on the ice, gather around the nearby fire pit to roast marshmallows and make s'mores.

Explore the Tenaya Loop Trail 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Explore the scenic [Tenaya Loop](#), a 1.3-mile, family- and dog-friendly trail right behind Tenaya Lodge. With just 246 feet of elevation gain, this easy loop winds through seasonal wildflowers and follows the gentle babble of Big Creek. Benches along the way invite you to pause and enjoy the scenery.

Horseback Riding 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Enjoy a classic Sierra experience with [Yosemite Trails Horseback Adventures](#) in Fish Camp, just outside Yosemite National Park. Guided rides explore the surrounding forest with scenic views, fresh mountain air, and a taste of the Old West, with options ranging from short introductory outings to longer trail adventures.

Bicycle in the Sierra National Forest 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Explore the scenic trails of the Sierra National Forest by bike, from family-friendly fire roads to challenging single-track routes. Ride Tenmile Grade or pedal to Signal Peak Lookout Tower for panoramic views. For easy bike or e-bike rental visit Tenaya at Yosemite.

Fishing in the Sierra National Forest (Big Creek & Streams) 🌳🌻🌻🌻

The Sierra National Forest included several smaller [fishable streams and creeks](#) such as Big Creek near Fish Camp. These spots are great for dry and wet fly techniques and a more forested back-country setting outside the main Merced River corridor.



Climb Aboard a Historic Steam Train 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Step back in time with a ride on the [Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad](#), where historic steam trains wind through the scenic Sierra National Forest. Open April–October.

Try Your Luck at Gold Panning! 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Get hands-on with a classic Sierra Nevada experience at the [Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad](#)! Take a gold panning lesson and learn the techniques miners

used during the Gold Rush. The best part? You get to keep any gold you discover, making this a fun and memorable activity for the whole family.

Step into Sierra History at the Thornberry Museum 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Discover the rich logging and railroad heritage of the Sierra Nevada at the [Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad](#) Museum. Explore vintage artifacts, historic locomotives, and hands-on exhibits that tell the story of the region's logging industry, the railroad that helped build it, and life in the mountains during the Gold Rush era.

Stargazing Near Fish Camp & Sierra National Forest 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Head into the high country around Fish Camp and [Sierra National Forest](#) for some of the Sierra's best night sky views outside Yosemite's park boundaries. With minimal nearby town lights and plenty of open forest roads and clearings, you'll find wide, dark skies ideal for spotting constellations, the Milky Way, and shooting stars.

Forest Bathing in Sierra National Forest 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Wander through fragrant groves and along quiet streams in [Sierra National Forest](#) near Fish Camp. Pause to touch the trees, listen to birdsong, and feel the soft forest floor beneath your feet. Forest bathing here encourages a deep connection with the natural world, helping you relax and recharge.

Northern Mariposa County (Coulterville, Buck Meadows)

Coulterville Town Park 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Located in historic downtown Coulterville, this community park is a great stop. With shaded picnic areas, a playground, tennis courts, and plenty of open green space, it's a perfect place to relax, stretch your legs, or enjoy a snack from the nearby café after exploring the town.

Smith Peak Mountain Bike Trail 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Propel yourself to a beautiful local summit on a fun 11.3-mile (18.2 km) mountain bike trail.

Take a Swim | Diana Falls and Diana Pools 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Take a short, easy walk to the peaceful pool at [Diana Falls/Diana Pools](#) and enjoy a refreshing swim or simply take in the view. Leashed dogs are welcome.

Dine in the Mountains at Lucky Buck Cafe 🌳🌻🌻🌻

Further east along Highway 120 near Buck Meadows, [Lucky Buck Cafe](#) offers a completely different Sierra experience. With outdoor seating, forest views, and a laid-back rustic vibe, it is a peaceful stop surrounded by nature where travelers can truly feel the transition into the High Sierra.

Visit the Museum in Coulterville 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Step back in time at the [Northern Mariposa County History Center](#) in Coulterville, located in a town that’s a registered historic district. Explore exhibits on Gold Rush history, early pioneer life, and local culture. Enjoy the charming historic surroundings as you wander the streets. Hours are limited, so be sure to check ahead before your visit.

Take a Self-Guided Walking Tour of Historic Coulterville 🌻🌻🌻🌻🌻

Step back in time in Coulterville, a historic Gold Rush town and an official historic district. Pick up a historic walking tour map from the [Northern Mariposa County History Center](#) and explore the town at your own pace. From preserved storefronts and historic buildings, nearly every corner of town offers a glimpse into the past.



Take Photos with Whistling Billy 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

This eight-ton wood-burning locomotive was once a tool of the Gold Rush Pioneers of Yosemite Mariposa County’s Mary Harrison Mine. Today, it’s a great photo-op in front of the [Northern Mariposa County Museum and History Center](#).

Discover Chinese American History 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Explore an often-overlooked chapter of Sierra history by learning about the Chinese American communities who helped shape the Yosemite region during the Gold Rush and early tourism era. Stop by the former [Sun Wah \(Sun Woo\) merchant store](#) in Coulterville.

El Camino del Oro | Scenic Drive through Coulterville 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Take a leisurely drive along a section of Visit California’s recommended [Highway 49 route](#), weaving through historic Gold Rush towns like Coulterville. Enjoy charming 1850s streets, scenic foothill views, and a taste of authentic Gold Country life.

Star Gaze - Stanislaus National Forest Dark Skies 🌻🌻🌻🌻🌻

Just around the Buck Meadows area lies [Stanislaus National Forest](#), known for its [dark skies](#) and excellent stargazing potential, especially if you find a clear, open spot away from highway lights. You can often see plenty of stars, the Milky Way, and other celestial wonders on clear nights.

Northwestern Mariposa County

(Lake McClure & Lake McSwain)

Hike to 360° Views at William’s Peak ❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Hike to the top of [William’s Peak](#) for 360-degree views of California’s Central Valley, the Merced River, and the Sierra Nevada foothills. The trail is approximately 2.6 miles round-trip (about 1.3 miles each way) with roughly 721 feet of elevation gain, making it a rewarding half-day adventure for most hikers. The route is largely exposed with little to no shade, so plan to hike January through April when temperatures are cooler.



Inflatable Water Obstacle Course at Lake McSwain 🏠🌻

[Splash-n-Dash Aqua Park](#) is an inflatable, on-water obstacle course located at Lake McSwain. Find the impressive array of inflatable challenges and on-water acrobatics by the lake’s day-use picnic area.

Motor Powered Watersports at Lake McClure & Lake McSwain 🏠🌻

Spend a fun-filled day on the water at [Lake McClure](#) or [Lake McSwain](#), where boat rentals make it easy to enjoy waterskiing, tubing, or a leisurely cruise. Cast a line for trout, soak up the sun, and make the most of scenic lakeside camping.

Dine On or Near the Water 🏠🌻

The [Reel Deal Market & Café](#) has two convenient lakeside locations to keep your day on the water fueled and fun. At [Lake McSwain](#) Marina, grab a casual bite, cold drinks, and picnic staples. Over at Barrett Cove Marina on [Lake McClure](#), enjoy your meal right on the floating dock, taking in stunning lake views as you eat. Both locations also offer rentals, boating supplies, and snacks, making it easy to grab what you need for a full day of lakeside adventure.



Ride Exchequer Mountain Bike Park ❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Take on 700 acres of rolling trails at [Exchequer Mountain Bike Park](#), where scenic views of Lake

McClure and routes for all skill levels make for an unforgettable ride.

Hang Glide at Lake McClure 🌻🌻🌻

Keeping the local birds of prey company, the non-profit [Mother Lode Sky Riders Association](#) (MLSRA) promotes and stages hang gliding at Lake McClure.

Spot the Water Ruins at Bagby 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

When water levels at Lake McClure drop in late summer and fall, remnants of the historic Gold Rush [town of Bagby](#) reappear along the shoreline. Look for old foundations and stonework revealed only during these low-water periods.

Sunset Paddles | Lake McClure & Lake McSwain 🏠🌻

For a relaxed pace, glide across [Lake McClure](#) or [Lake McSwain](#) on a kayak or stand-up paddleboard. Calm waters, colorful sunsets, and reflections of the Sierra Nevada foothills make this a peaceful way to connect with the region’s natural beauty.

Float & Unwind 🏠🌻

Grab a blow-up raft and a good book for a relaxing day on the water. [Lake McSwain](#) is perfect for a calm, peaceful float. [Lake McClure](#) allows motorsports, head for a secluded cove for quiet reading and soaking up the scenery.

Reel in the Fish Stories 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Reel in finned fighters at [Lake McClure and Lake McSwain](#), Mariposa County’s twin fishing holes fed by the Wild & Scenic Merced River. Trout, bass, catfish, and more.

Southern Mariposa County
(Hornitos, Catheys Valley)

Play at Catheys Valley Park 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Let the kids run off some energy at Catheys Valley Park, which features a fun playground and a baseball or softball field. It’s the perfect spot for a family outing in a relaxed, small-town setting.

Plaza Bar | Historic Hornitos Hangout ❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Step into Hornitos history at the [Plaza Bar](#), once a mid-1800s butcher shop and now a classic local watering hole that’s been run by the same family since 1948. Stop by on weekends for a cold drink, a game of pool, and stories from locals, all set in a tiny Gold Rush town that feels like a movie set.

Discover Local History at Catheys Valley 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Explore the historic side of Catheys Valley Park, home to a charming one-room schoolhouse and an elegant stone monument made of Mariposite, a green-flecked rock first identified in Mariposa in 1868. Often found near gold, this unique stone sometimes even contains tiny gold inclusions.

Taste of History | Ghirardelli’s Hornitos Roots 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Visit the remains of Domingo Ghirardelli’s original [Hornitos](#) general store, where the famed chocolatier got his start during the Gold Rush. Wander the historic site and imagine miners shopping for supplies and maybe enjoying a sweet treat over 150 years ago.

Historic Highlights | Catheys Valley 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Visit the [Catheys Valley historical marker](#) to uncover stories of the Miwuk people, the pioneering Cathey family, and the Chinese laborers who helped shape the valley in the 1850s.



Visit Historic Hornitos Church 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Step back into the 1860s at [St. Catherine Catholic Church](#) in [Hornitos](#), a charming reminder of the region’s early Gold Rush faith and architecture. The church is still used for special occasions, including a Mass near St. Catherine’s feast day in April and a candlelight Dia de los Muertos service in November. Check ahead for open hours if you hope to step inside.

Indian Gulch Historic Settlement Site 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Visit the site of [Indian Gulch](#), a Gold Rush settlement that once buzzed with miners and frontier life. Today, all that remains is the historic cemetery and a marker, surrounded by peaceful hills where legends of bandit Joaquin Murrieta and Three Fingered Jack still echo.

Remains of Agua Fria Mining Town 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Once a bustling town center, in 1850 Agua Fria boasted a hotel, pool hall, bowling alley, two banks, and about a dozen stores and several houses of ill repute. Now, little remains to be seen of the mining town that became the first Seat of Justice of Mariposa County except a [Historic Marker](#) and scattered foundations.

Scenic Backroad Drive or Ride Through Rolling Foothills 🏠❄️🌻🌻🌻🌻

Take a scenic drive through Catheys Valley and experience the beauty of California’s Sierra foothills. Rolling green hills and wildflowers in spring give way to golden landscapes in summer. Follow Catheys Valley Road through ranchlands, past grazing cattle and historic farmhouses.

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Yosemite Mariposa County Tourism Bureau

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