



Women of Color Wilderness Retreat: Yosemite 4-day Yoga and Empowerment Trek

With Chelsea Griffie and Miho Aida
Yosemite Creek, Yosemite National Park
August 4-7, 2016



*A woman in harmony with her spirit is like a river flowing.
She goes where she will without pretense and arrives at her destination to be herself and
only herself.*
–Maya Angelou

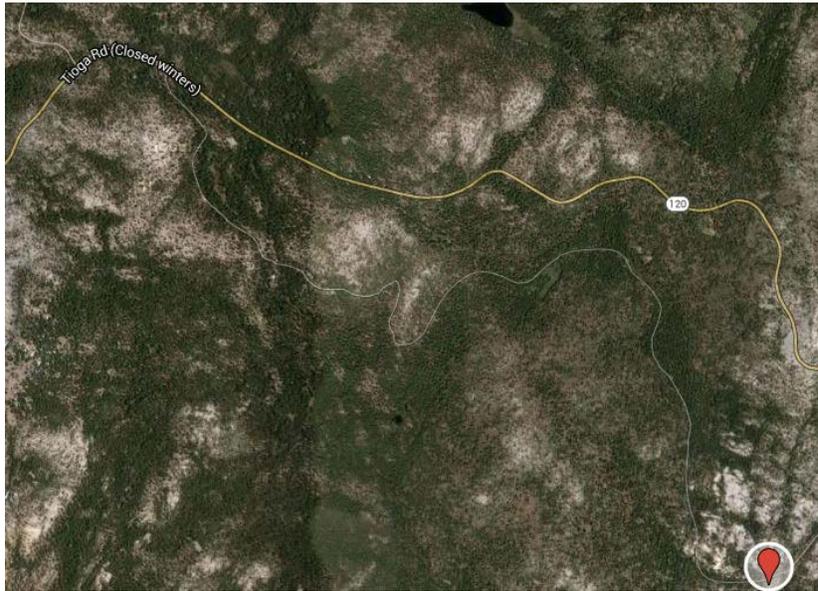
Welcome to Balanced Rock!

Join an incredible community of inspired women on the backcountry trip of a lifetime! Learn the skills of backpacking accompanied by yoga practice and creative writing exercises to help explore our inner and outer landscapes. We've found that women, and specifically women of color, are highly under-represented in the backcountry. On this four-day course, we hope to share our love for the Yosemite wilderness by joining women of color to the beauty of its backcountry in a supportive environment. Our amazing, experienced instructors create a safe space for learning, while inspiring participants to gently stretch their comfort zones for an empowering and rewarding experience.

Balanced Rock's core curriculum of yoga and reflection is incorporated on this trip as much as weather and time allow. Outdoor yoga classes on glacially polished granite allow us to unwind after a day of hiking. Our annual Women of Color Backpacking Retreat began in 2004 and to our knowledge, remains the only program of its kind in the country. Tuition assistance is available for this course and all multi-day Balanced Rock courses.

Directions

On the first day of the course, we will be meeting at the **Yosemite Creek Campground at 12pm**. This campground is located off Tioga Road in the high country of the park. Below are written directions to our meeting spot. You can also click on this [link](#) to access a Google Map of our meeting location. Please allow yourself more driving time than you think as often there are traffic or natural delays in the summer.



To get to Yosemite Creek Campground from the Bay Area: Take HWY 120 east heading toward Yosemite. Enter the park through the Big Oak Flat entrance station (be prepared to pay the park entrance fee of \$30 per vehicle here). Continue about 10 miles to Crane Flat (this is the first major intersection you will encounter in the park). Turn left here, onto Tioga Road/Highway 120. Continue up this road for another 14.8 miles to Yosemite Creek Campground turn-off on the right. This is the old, historic Tioga Road. You will follow on this rough road for 4.6 miles to the Yosemite Creek Campground. Look on bulletin board for Balanced Rock sign with campsite location.

From the HWY 140 entrance: Head into the park, past El Portal. Be prepared to pay the park entrance fee of \$30 per vehicle at the park entrance. Before you drive in to Yosemite Valley turn left towards HWY 120, heading west. Go through three tunnels and continue up the road past Crane Flat, towards the Big Oak Flat entrance station and San Francisco/Manteca. Turn right here, onto Tioga Road/Highway 120. Continue up this road for another 14.8 miles to Yosemite Creek Campground turn off on the right. You will follow on this rough road for 4.6 miles to the Yosemite Creek Campground. Look on bulletin board for Balanced Rock sign with campsite location.

From Southern California and HWY 41: Enter the park at the Wawona station (be prepared to pay park fee of \$30/vehicle) and continue about 15 miles to Yosemite Valley. Turn right on the Valley Loop road, soon turning left at a signed intersection towards HWY 120. After another quick left, follow this road west about 5 miles to a right turn uphill towards HWY 120. Follow this uphill for 10 miles to Crane Flat. Turn right here and follow Tioga Road/HWY 120 for 14.8 miles to Yosemite Creek Campground. You will follow on this rough road for 4.6 miles to the Yosemite Creek Campground. Look on bulletin board for Balanced Rock sign with campsite location.

From Tioga Pass (from the Eastern Sierra): Be prepared to pay the entrance fee of \$30 per vehicle at the park entrance. Yosemite Creek Campground/trailhead is located 31.7 miles west of Tioga Pass Entrance Station. Turn Left on Old Tioga Rd/Yosemite Creek Campground. You will follow on this rough road for 4.6 miles to the Yosemite Creek Campground. Look on bulletin board for Balanced Rock sign with campsite location.

Itinerary

Thursday, August 4 (Trip orientation and introductions)

Meeting Place: Yosemite Creek Campground. Meeting Time: 12pm. The first day and night is spent at the Yosemite Creek Campground, which is 4.6 miles down a very rough road from Tioga Rd. We recommend carpooling from the road. All cars will eventually need to be shuttled back to Tioga Rd.

This first day and night will be in a remote campground setting, which gives us time to acclimatize to the altitude, our new surroundings, and our group before hitting the trail.

Friday, August 5 (Introduction to backpacking, yoga, camp craft)

After a morning yoga class and breakfast, we will break camp and move our camp approximately 5 miles toward the flanks of North Dome. We will take time on how to pack our backpacks. Evenings are set aside for intentional discussion, wilderness education, creative journaling, music-making, or quiet contemplation around the campfire.

Saturday, August 6 (Day-hike, explorations, yoga and rest)

We will enjoy a long summer day with a lovely hike, yoga session and/or meditation session. We may choose to summit a nearby alpine dome and enjoy a lovely evening under the stars. We will continue to cover topics such as: instruction in backcountry travel skills, Leave No Trace, hiking and camp-craft, and instructor area of specialty. Possible destinations: Mt. Watkins, Indian Rock, Snow Creek swim holes.

Sunday, August 7 (Closing and final hike to trailhead)

Our last morning, we will enjoy a final yoga class and meditation before sharing our final breakfast together in the field. We will pack our backpacks and begin our hike back to the Tioga Road. After putting closure on our journey together, we will facilitate car shuttles and aim to conclude by 2 p.m.

Note on Itinerary: *This schedule is an outline. It is subject to change depending on the needs of the group and allowing for spontaneous inspiration. This program operates rain or shine.*

Our Instructors

Chelsea Griffie

As a young woman, Chelsea Griffie dreamed of the mountains and camping. Unfortunately, she lived in suburban Chicago and her family just did not do that sort of thing. Chelsea began rock climbing in 1993 and backpacking as a means of getting to backcountry rock. She was soon hiking and climbing every weekend. A yogini for over 14 years, Chelsea has practiced regularly with Rusty Wells and Bryan Kest, and studied Acro Yoga. She has completed 200 hours of Yoga Teacher Training with Rusty Wells. She is also proud to be included in *Black & Brown Faces in America's Wild Places*, Dudley Edmondson's book by about Afro American outdoors enthusiasts.



After finishing six years as the program director at BAWT, Bay Area Wilderness Training, Chelsea moved to Los Angeles to found Los Angeles Wilderness Training program. She has co-led the Women of Color backpacking trip since 2004, and it remains the only trip of its kind in the country. Chelsea is medically trained to the level of Wilderness First Responder.



Miho Aida

Miho, originally from Tokyo, Japan, is an environmental media artist, educator and outdoor adventurer in California. She is recognized for her inspirational project called “If She Can Do It, You Can Too: Empowering Women Through Outdoor Role Models.” This project is dedicated to promoting media representation of diverse women who pursue outdoor adventures and who develop powerful social, environmental and human rights movements within the backdrop of nature. With this project, Miho hopes for all girls to have outdoor and environmental role models who look, sound and live like them so that they know what careers, adventures and leadership opportunities are possible. Her first short film: *The Sacred Place Where Life Begins – Gwich’in Women Speak* was

produced as a part of this project. The film received Audience Choice Award at the 2014 Earth Port Film Festival and was nominated for Best Documentary Short at the 2013 American Indian Film Festival. This film was selected for 2015-2016 Wild & Scenic On Tour which travels to more than 100 communities around the country to build a grassroots network connected by a common goal—to inspire people and unite communities to heal the earth.

Odds & Ends

- Check your gear list to make sure you have what you need, don't be shy about calling and asking gear questions.
- Please empty your car of any scented items such as food, drinks, sunscreen, deodorant, etc., when we leave vehicles at the trailhead or base camp. Bears will break into cars with food (or items with odor) in them or items that remind them of food, like empty ice chests or grocery bags.
- Your instructors will contact you in the weeks prior to the trip to discuss hiking information, confirm meeting times, and answer any specific questions or concerns. Feel free to call or email our administrative staff with any questions at any time.
- For more Yosemite National Park information and updated weather forecasts call (209) 372-0209 or visit the website at <http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/conditions.htm> (this includes road condition information as well).

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Peace and Learning,

Heather Sullivan and Paula Wild
Balanced Rock Directors