

Yosemite's Ahwahnee Hotel

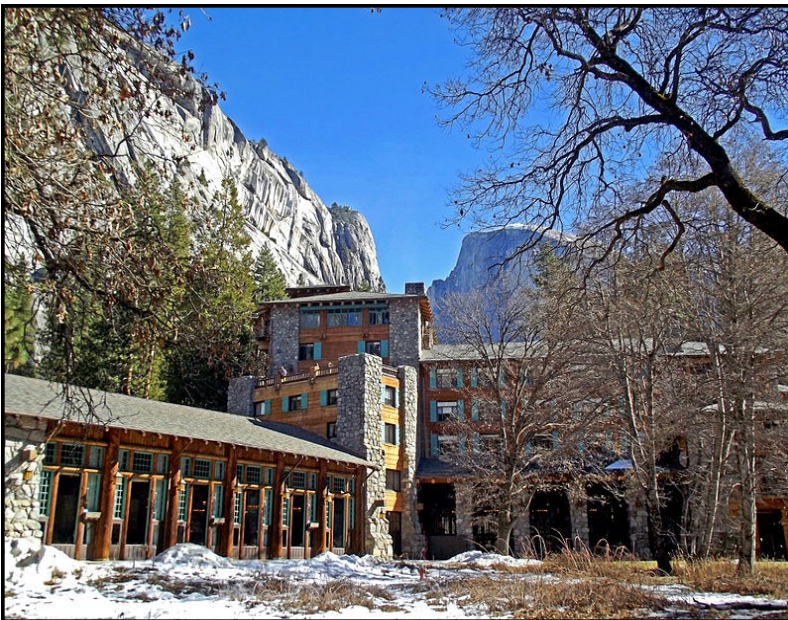
Well, I, for one, am very familiar with the accommodations at Yosemite, as I used to take Honor Society students there for a 3-day field trip every other year....only *we* slept in the tent cabins, bombarded by raucous noise from other tents and listening to the nightly onslaught of all those “cute,” but voracious raccoons! More than once, I must admit, my mind, at least, strayed to the luxury offered by the park’s formidable Ahwahnee Hotel....ah! I could but dream!

The Ahwahnee is a luxurious hotel within Yosemite National Park in California. It opened in 1927 and has provided every urban comfort in a rugged Sierra mountain niche. Yosemite Miwok woven cooking baskets, linguistic symbols and decorative patterns have been used throughout the Ahwahnee's rooms and halls. These have become its trademark.

In the central lobby, six great figures, set in multiple mosaic borders add color and interest to the massive floor area. Walking through the downstairs corridor toward the Great Dining Room, Indian motifs can be seen etched in the stone floor.

Rising some 23 feet above the floor in the Great Lounge are elaborate stained glass window works refracting early morning and late afternoon sunlight. They, too, are cast from Indian figures. Deeply carved wood panels and Colonial Shaker furniture are gathered around a massive eight-foot fireplace. The enormous mantel serves to connect and integrate the ceiling and the Oriental rug covered floor. The native American art, together with the American Colonial style of the furniture, the fabrics, textures, colors, and flower arrangement are blended together to give the Ahwahnee its character and color.

The distinctive structure has also served as the artistic and cultural backdrop for the Ansel Adams' annual production of Washington Irving's *Christmas at Bracebridge Hall*. Ironically, The Ahwahnee was built with an eye toward attracting American wealth in support of expanding the National Park idea. However, as The Ahwahnee threw open its massive doors to herald the opening night of Ansel Adams' *Bracebridge* in the Ahwahnee Great Dining Room, it was also the eve of the fateful year of 1929, and a Wall-Street financial panic was about to upstage the planned program in Yosemite.



Open since 1927, The Ahwahnee is one of America's most distinctive Registered National Landmarks, “unparalleled in magnificence and charm.” The hotel was designated a National Historic Landmark on June 2, 1987.

The Ahwahnee Accommodations include 123 guest rooms (99 in the main building and 24 cottage rooms) and 4 parlor rooms. These rooms are the top-of-the-line in-park accommodations. Ahwahnee rooms feature comfortable

Ahwahnee

furnishings including upholstered chairs, televisions, refrigerators, bathrobes, hair dryers and bath amenities. Some rooms have king-size beds. Each room is accented with original Native American designs and is ideal for those guests who desire more service. An Ahwahnee Parlor is a sitting room (without a bathroom) adjoining a hotel room. Guests may book a parlor in conjunction with the adjoining room to create a suite, however, parlor rooms may not be booked separately. Each parlor has its own unique decor. Ahwahnee Cottage Rooms are located in a wooded setting on The Ahwahnee grounds. Guests enjoy all the services and facilities of the Ahwahnee.

The Ahwahnee As a Military Hospital?

[In our May/June issue, we first touched upon this issue with a match safe/match holder in the possession of Jack McKittrick, CA. Here's a bit more information on the topic...]

Between June 23, 1943 through December 15, 1945 the Ahwahnee Hotel was mobilized by the U.S. Navy for the war effort. It became the foremost rehabilitation hospital for the 7th Fleet. A large Naval staff including officers, occupational psychologists, Chaplains, the Veteran's Administration, and the American Red Cross were housed here during that time period.

The Ahwahnee Rehabilitation Hospital operated a complete program of physical retraining and occupational therapy that extended year round, including a skiing program at Badger Pass. Some of the hospital's former patients actually returned to Yosemite Valley after the close of WWII to work as National Park Service Rangers.

