

How to Get a Free Spa Treatment for Picking up Trash in Yosemite

Conservation and relaxation in one of the most beautiful places in the world.



Photo courtesy of Rush Creek Lodge

Eager park rangers love to tell kids who visit their parks to “take nothing but memories, and leave nothing but footprints.” Visitors to Yosemite National Park, of which there are about 4 million per year, could maybe use a bit of a refresher on that concept—the massive crush of humanity leaves a ton of litter. Conservationists and climbers at the [Yosemite Climbing Association](#) have been locked in a decades-long battle with all that trash, and in recent years one local lodge has pitched in to help. [Rush Creek Lodge](#) is bringing back their “[Trade Trash for Spa Treatments](#)” campaign for a fourth year, from September 25-29.

Every fall since 2004, the Yosemite Climbing Association has put on their Yosemite Facelift event, in which they encourage visitors to clean up the park and pick up trash, and they pair it up with a little outdoor conservation education, stewardship, and community building. Last year, more than 1,000 participants helped gather some 10,400 pounds of trash from the park itself, a stunning volume of detritus. For Rush Creek Lodge’s part, they recruited 55 volunteers who picked up 899 pounds of trash in Groveland, the town just outside the northwest entrance to Yosemite. The lodge is about 40 minutes from the Yosemite Valley floor, and about half an hour into the park from the heart of Groveland.



Photo courtesy of Rush Creek Lodge

But the Rush Creek Lodge trash pickup isn’t purely altruistic—everyone who volunteers can trade in the trash they collect and their time served for complimentary spa services at the lodge. And that’s a significant perk: Rush Creek Lodge has an award-winning spa. There’s a mineral hot tub fed by a granite waterfall, an aromatherapy-focused steam room, magnesium foot soaks, and more; it is the perfect way to unwind after an afternoon wandering through a gorgeous national park and helping to restore and preserve its natural beauty.



Last year their massive contribution earned Rush Creek Lodge a [Poppy Award](#) from Visit California, in the category of Destination Stewardship & Sustainable Travel. This year the program returns, and they intend to clean up even more garbage. If you want to be a part of the action, all you have to do is book a room at Rush Creek and register to participate with the Yosemite Climbing Association. You'll get a complimentary Magnesium Foot Soak and full use of that award-winning Spa, and they provide coffee, pastries, and fruit in the morning and cool drinks in the afternoon. In the evening, there's live music, climbing-related movie screenings, prize drawings, and the chance to hang out and enjoy a like-minded group of nature friends from around the world.

In this case, you'll be taking more than memories out of the park—you'll be taking trash too. Somehow it seems like the park rangers won't mind.