



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Restoring Holiday Spirits

The Bracebridge Dinner at Yosemite Begins 82nd Season

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif., December 3, 2008 — The holidays can be a time of great joy. But for many, balancing the demands of shopping, parties, family obligations and house guests may bring feelings of stress, disappointment or depression.

Not so for thousands each year who choose to celebrate the magic of the season attending The Bracebridge Dinner at Yosemite, which marks its 82nd season at The Ahwahnee in Yosemite National Park with eight performances from December 15-26.

Bracebridge is a unique American tradition that blends world-class musical theater and cuisine with Washington Irving's tales about a 17th-century Old English Yuletide, all set in the majestic natural beauty of Yosemite in winter.

Throughout decades, guests consistently describe Bracebridge as an unforgettable experience that reconnects each guest with the spirit and enchantment of the holidays.

"I can't imagine a more magical experience," says John Erreca, a longtime Yosemite visitor who regularly attends the Bracebridge Dinner. "The joy it brings rivals the excitement I felt about the holidays as a child. It's an amazing evening of song and music, food and fun in a setting that's beyond compare."

The Bracebridge Dinner at Yosemite is recognized as one of the most sought-after holiday events in the U.S. In 2006, *The Wall Street Journal* reported, "Bracebridge is, without much doubt, the country's, if not the world's, premier Christmas dinner." Decades earlier, Bracebridge was featured in 1938 on the cover of *Life Magazine* and acknowledged as an impressive and extravagant American holiday tradition.

This three-and-a-half hour celebration transports guests to Old England, where more than 80 singers, court characters and other performers tell the story of a Christmas feast with Lord Merrick of Bracebridge and his household.

The essence of Bracebridge is the music and singing, which includes a variety of original and classic carols performed by the rich operatic voices of The Andrea Fulton Chorale. In 2008, Andrea, who also plays the role of The Housekeeper, marks her 59th year as a performer and 30th year as director and producer.

A major player in The Bracebridge Dinner at Yosemite is the food. Each year, Ahwahnee Executive Chef Percy Whatley and his world-class staff create a new seven-course banquet tuned to discriminating modern tastes.

Planning the menu takes months of preparation. During the eight performances, more than 2,000 guests dine on 14,000 courses of sumptuous food prepared by a 75-person culinary team and presented by a meticulously choreographed wait staff of 60.

The Ahwahnee Dining Room, with its 50-foot ceiling topped by massive log beams, serves as the Great Hall at Squire Bracebridge's manor. The entire room is a stage, crowned by an elaborate Squire's table and bejeweled with original holiday decorations created by Ahwahnee interior designer Jeanette Dyer Spencer.

The first Bracebridge Dinner pageant was performed 81 years ago in 1927, shortly after The Ahwahnee opened. Dr. Donald B. Tresidder, president of the Yosemite Park and Curry Co., and later president of Stanford University, conceived the idea with his wife, Mary Curry Tresidder.

Famed Yosemite photographer Ansel Adams was among the Yosemite locals who originally played the chief characters, performing as the Lord of Misrule in 1927 and 1928. He later served as director of The Bracebridge Dinner from 1929-1973.

Yosemite provides the perfect backdrop for Bracebridge with its snow-clad mountains and ice-laden waterfalls. Winter visitors also enjoy unparalleled access to breathtaking seasonal vistas and a wide variety of recreational activities.

It's easier than ever to attend Bracebridge. In 2002, the lottery system, used for decades by the National Park Service to manage demand for tickets, was eliminated. Since that time, the number of performances was increased to eight, and guests now can reserve their seats and accommodations a year-and-a-day in advance.

The 2008 performances of The Bracebridge Dinner at Yosemite take place December 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24 and 26. One- and two-night lodging packages for two at The Ahwahnee, Yosemite Lodge at the Falls and the Wawona Hotel are still available for most dates. The 2008 package rates range from \$925 to \$1654 plus tax, and include gratuity. Tickets to just the performance and seven-course dinner are \$375 per person, including tax and gratuity.

The Bracebridge Dinner at Yosemite is the perfect antidote for holiday anxiety. For more information or to make reservations visit <http://www.yosemitepark.com/bracebridge> or call (801) 559-4949.

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