The 33-mile-long Newfound Gap Road (U.S. 441) is the main automobile route through Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It crosses the crest of the Smoky Mountains at Newfound Gap (elevation 5,046’) to connect the towns of Gatlinburg, TN and Cherokee, NC. Driving time is typically one hour.

At Newfound Gap, where the road reaches its highest point, temperatures are frequently 10-15° F cooler than in Cherokee or Gatlinburg. In addition, the higher elevations of the park receive considerably more precipitation than the surrounding valleys. Annually, Newfound Gap records over five feet of snow.

This combination of low temperatures and high precipitation results in periods of hazardous driving conditions. For the safety of motorists, the Park Service imposes certain restrictions on winter driving. Typically, Newfound Gap Road is temporarily closed 15-20 times each winter. Even though driving conditions may seem fine near Gatlinburg or Cherokee, Newfound Gap Road contains very steep grades and is often coated with snow and ice in winter. Salt is not used to treat roads in the park because it damages the plant and stream life that the park was created to protect.

For current conditions call (865) 436-1200 or check Twitter at twitter.com/smokies-roadsnps.

Winter hikers should be prepared for cold and wet conditions, even if the day starts warm. Always bring rain gear, hat, and gloves. Dress in layers with wool or fleece. Avoid cotton clothing in winter because it loses insulation value when wet.

Q: If a kitten-sized spotted animal with very soft fur scrambles up to you on the trail, stamps its paws and then stands on its front legs, what should you do?

A: Be afraid. Be very afraid. Although tiny (only 20 inches long and weighing under a pound) spotted skunks have an unspeakably foul spray which they can direct with marksman-like accuracy at distances of up to 15 feet.

Experts on the subject say spotted skunk musk is significantly stronger than that of the striped skunk.

The unique “hand stand” is just one of the peculiar behaviors exhibited by spotted skunks. It is their final warning before unleashing their potent spray to deter predators or other threats. Premature warnings include the stamping of their front feet and “bluff charging.” From the handstand position they can look over their shoulder and take careful aim at humans or other threats.

Throughout their range, spotted skunks are something of a mystery. There are few places where they are truly common, and even in those areas, sightings are few and far between. In the Smokies, perhaps two or three sightings of spotted skunks are reported each year. One reason for this elusiveness is that spotted skunks are nocturnal. They are also gentle creatures that prefer to avoid conflicts with larger animals.

Spotted skunk burrows have surprisingly small entrances (3” wide) and are often found in rocky areas, hollow logs, and under stumps. The animals’ diet includes mice, insects, reptiles, bird eggs, fruit, and carrion. Their main enemies are bobcats, great horned owls (who don’t mind the smell) and motor vehicles.

Newfound Gap Road offers visitors a glimpse of the high country.

Enjoy This Winter in the Mountains Safely
indoor activities

There are also plenty of indoor options for exploring the national park.

When the weather calls for indoor activities, visitors to the Great Smoky Mountains still have a wide range of options for exploring the natural and cultural histories of the national park. Four quality museums with updated exhibits are located either inside the park or within five miles of its entrances. All are open year-round.

**Sugarlands Visitor Center and Museum**
Located on U.S. 441 in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2 miles south of Gatlinburg, TN.
Open 8-4:30, closed Christmas Day
Admission: Free
(865) 436-1291

Highlights include a free 20-minute film shown on the hour and half hour in a state-of-the-art surround sound theater. The film provides an overview of the park’s natural and cultural history. Exhibits in the museum area use intricate re-creations to spotlight the Smokies’ rich habitats and diverse plant and animal life. There is a well-staffed information desk and a bookstore inside as well. Outside, several short trails lead to natural and historic points of interest.

**Great Smoky Mountains Heritage Center**
Located on Hwy 73 in Townsend, TN.
Open 10-5, Closed most Sundays
Admission: $7 adults, $5 seniors, $5 kids 6-17, free for kids 5 and under
(865) 448-0044

The center is located on six acres and offers both indoor and outdoor exhibits. Subject matter includes east Tennessee American Indian history and the lives of Euro-American settlers from the early 1800s to the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Highlights are restored historic buildings, re-creations of log cabin interiors, and quilts and other artifacts from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park collection. Visit gsmheritagecenter.org for a list of special exhibits and events.

**Oconaluftee Visitor Center and Museum**
Located on U.S. 441 in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2 miles north of Cherokee, NC.
Open 8-4:30, closed Christmas Day
Admission: Free
(828) 497-1904

Exhibits include audio recordings of mountain folk, park artifacts, video clips, 3-D maps, historic photographs, and more. There is a well-staffed information desk and a bookstore inside as well. Outside the visitor center over a dozen historic log buildings are preserved on the Mountain Farm Museum. A brand new audio tour of the farm museum is now available. In addition, a walking and bicycling trail follows the river to Cherokee.

**Swain County Heritage Museum**
Located in downtown Bryson City, NC at the corner of Main & Everett Streets.
Open 9-5, closed Christmas Day
Admission: Free
(865) 436-7318 x318

The Heritage Museum covers the dramatic history of Swain County, NC, including the story of Cherokee Indian towns like Kituwah, European-American settlers eeking a living from the rugged Smoky Mountains, Civil War battles, moonshiners, bear hunters, Fontana Dam, and the creation of the national park. The museum includes interactive exhibits just for kids as well as video presentations, a real log cabin, and many mural-sized photographs and artifacts.

In the visitor center there is information about hiking, rafting, sightseeing, and riding the Smoky Mountain Railroad.
campsites at Smokemont and Cades Cove are open all year.

The National Park Service maintains developed campgrounds at seven locations in the park. There are no showers or hookups other than circuits for special medical uses at Cades Cove, Elkmont, and Smokemont.

Campsites at Elkmont, Smokemont, Cataloochee, Cosby, and Cades Cove may be reserved. For reservations call 1-877-444-6777 or contact www.recreation.gov. Sites may be reserved up to six months in advance. Reservations are required at Cataloochee Campground. Other park campgrounds are first-come, first-served.

Site occupancy is limited to six people and two vehicles (a trailer = 1 vehicle). The maximum stay is 14 days.

Special camping sites for large groups are available seasonally at Big Creek, Cades Cove, Cataloochee, Cosby, Deep Creek, Elkmont, and Smokemont. Group sites must be reserved. Call 1-877-444-6777 or contact www.recreation.gov. Group sites may be reserved up to one year in advance.

The list below shows number of sites, elevations, fees, approximate 2016 operation dates, and maximum RV lengths. Dates are subject to change. Visit www.nps.gov/grsm for current information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Elev.</th>
<th>Fees</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Max. RV Length</th>
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<tr>
<td>LOOK ROCK</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1,125'</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>May 27-Oct 10</td>
<td>35'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMOKEMONT</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1,125'</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>May 27-Oct 10</td>
<td>35'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

bicycling

Most park roads are too narrow and heavily traveled for automobiles so be prepared for enjoyable bicycling. However, Cades Cove Loop Road is an exception. This 11-mile, one-way, paved road provides cyclists with excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing and touring historic homesites.

Cyclists must use designated roads or trails and not enter picnic areas. Helmets are required by law for persons age 16 and under. However, helmets are strongly recommended for all bicyclists.

Bicycles are permitted on park roads but prohibited on trails except Gatlinburg, Oconaluftee River, and lower Deep Creek.

For biking in national forests, call (828) 257-4200.

smokies trip planner

to order maps and guides: www.smokiesinformation.org

accommodations

Le Conte Lodge (accessible by trail only) provides the only lodging in the park. Call (865) 429-5704.

For information on lodging outside the park:
Bryson City 1-800-867-9246
Cherokee 1-800-438-1601
Fontana 1-800-849-2258
Gatlinburg 1-800-267-7088
Maggie Valley 1-800-624-4431
Pigeon Forge 1-800-251-9100
Sevierville 1-888-766-5948
Townsend 1-800-525-6834

pets in the park

Pets are allowed in frontcountry campgrounds and beside roads as long as they are restrained at all times. Pets are not allowed on park trails, except for the Gatlinburg and Oconaluftee River trails. Dogs on these trails must be leashed.

ter closures

The following roads close for the winter. Listed below are the estimated 2016 opening dates. This schedule is subject to change.

Clingmans Dome—April 1
Rich Mountain—April 8
Roaring Fork—March 25
Parson Branch—April 8

special events

December 12, 2015
Festival of Christmas Past: Sugarlands Visitor Center

December 19, 2015
Holiday Homecoming at Oconaluftee Visitor Center

April 20-April 24, 2016
Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage: parkwide

May 11, 2016
Start of bicycle mornings in Cades Cove

June 18, 2016
Women’s Work, Oconaluftee

September 9-11, 2016
Music of the Mountains at Sugarlands Visitor Center

picnic areas

Picnic areas open year-round are: Cades Cove, Deep Creek, Greenbrier, and Metcalf Bottoms. Please see page 16 for locations.

other services

There are no gas stations, showers, or restaurants in the national park.
The above temperature and precipitation averages are based on data for the last 20 years. Temperatures are in degrees Fahrenheit. An average of over 84" (7 feet) of precipitation falls on the higher elevations of the Smokies. On Mt. Le Conte, an average of 82.8" of snow falls per year.
Cades Cove is one of the most popular destinations in the Smokies because it offers an unusual blend of both natural and cultural resources.

Deer are often sighted in the fields, and their breeding season (or "rut") continues through early winter. Observations of other wildlife, including bear, Wild Turkey, and coyote are also possible. Please use pullouts when viewing wildlife. Never approach or feed animals.

A wide array of historic buildings, some dating back to the mid-19th century, are preserved throughout the cove. These include a grist mill, a variety of barns, three churches, and a renowned collection of log homes.

An 11-mile one-way loop road takes you around the cove. A visitor center (open daily), restrooms, and the Cable Mill walking tour are available. A visitor center (open daily), restrooms, and the Cable Mill walking tour are available.

Numerous trails start in the cove, including the 5-mile roundtrip trail to Abrams Valley. These include a grist mill, a variety of barns, three churches, and a renowned collection of log homes.

Deep Creek area loop hikes include Juney Whank Falls (0.6 mile), Three Waterfalls Loop (2.4 miles), and Deep Creek-Indian Creek Loop (4.4 miles). Longer loop hikes are also possible.

Bicycles are permitted on Deep Creek and Indian Creek trails to the points where the old roads end and the trail treads begin.

Deep Creek Picnic Area is open year-round. The picnic pavilion can be reserved at www.recreation.gov.

newfound gap

In southern Appalachian vernacular, a gap is a low point in a mountain ridge. New Englanders call such places "notches" while westerners refer to them as mountain "passes."

At nearly a mile high (5,046'), Newfound Gap is significantly cooler than the surrounding lowlands and receives much more snow. On average, 69 inches of snow falls at the gap each year.

When there is snow on the ground, Newfound Gap Road has not been closed because of it, opportunities do exist for snow sports in the area. Many people use Clingmans Dome Road (closed to vehicles in winter) for walking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. The road starts 0.1 mile south of Newfound Gap.

A trip to Newfound Gap is a trip to the Canadian zone spruce-fir forest. This fragment evergreen woodland is similar to the boreal forests of New England and eastern Canada.
Remote Area Closed to Help Bats

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE has closed the White Oak Sinks area again this winter to help protect overwintering bats from disturbance by humans. Much of the park’s bat population has been decimated by White-Nose Syndrome, a disease that harms bats during hibernation. By closing the area, park biologists hope to increase the winter survival rates of bats, some of which are officially threatened or endangered.

GSMA Director Retires After 25 Years

TERRY MADDOX, EXECUTIVE Director of Great Smoky Mountains Association since 1990, is retiring at the end of 2015. Under his leadership the nonprofit has grown exponentially and now provides over $1 million in support to the Smokies each year. His accomplishments include funding the construction of Oconaluftee Visitor Center and the opening of visitor centers in Bryson City, Gatlinburg, and on Clingmans Dome.

Your Cell Phone May Not Work Here

BECAUSE OF THE MOUNTAINOUS terrain and lack of local cell phone towers, your cell phone will likely not find service in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Don’t rely solely on your cell phone for navigating or emergencies when driving or hiking in the park. Carry a map and compass and know how to use them. Cell phone service is most likely to be found on ridge tops.

Alum Cave Trail Will Stay Open Through Winter

THE EVER-POPULAR Alum Cave Trail to Alum Cave Bluff and Mt. Le Conte will remain open throughout the winter again this year. It will then close on Mondays-Thursdays starting in early May 2016. The closure will allow the Trails Forever crew to continue upgrading the badly worn route. Hikers can already appreciate all that the crew accomplished on the lower portion of the trail during 2015, including new stone steps through Arch Rock.

Park Visits to Break All-time Record

I t looks like 2015 will go into the record books as the busiest year in the entire history of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. As of the end of October, park visitation was running at a 5.6% increase over 2014, which was itself one of the busiest years in park history.

If this rate of increase holds through December, the final tally will surpass 10.6 million visits, beating the old visitation record by well over 350,000 people. And since the Smokies are already the most-visited national park in the country, a record for the Smokies is a record for the entire national park system.

What makes the Smokies so popular this year? Brent Everitt, park ranger and spokesperson, says it’s been a combination of factors. “Almost perfect weather, especially during spring and fall, certainly contributed,” Everitt said. He also credits the “Find Your Park” media blitz with attracting people to the Smokies and other parks. “How often have you seen T.V. and radio announcements about national parks?” Everitt asked.

The Find Your Park campaign is part of the 2016 National Park Service Centennial celebration being coordinated by the National Park Foundation. Although the 100th birthday is in 2016, the commemoration began in 2015 and will continue through 2016 and beyond.

Everitt cites the Centennial campaign for raising the public consciousness about the 409 unit national park system and “reminding people of the unbelievable opportunities that public lands offer.”

No doubt the recent plunge in gasoline prices is also part of the equation. The surge of park visitors this year is certainly not limited to the Smokies. Parks like Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, and Yosemite are also reporting significant increases of 16%, 13%, and 5%, respectively. Across the entire park system, 9.5 million more people have visited the parks year-to-date in 2015 compared to 2014.

And the uptick isn’t limited only to cars on the roads at our parks, monuments, and seashores. In the Smokies year-to-date, backcountry camping is up 11.5% and camping in “frontcountry” developed campgrounds has risen by 10%.

New Historic Preservation Center Opens this Spring

C onstruction is nearing completion on a new park facility that will preserve 418,000 artifacts and 1.3 million archival records documenting the history of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and four other Park Service areas in East Tennessee.

The 14,000 square foot collections preservation center is located on land adjacent to the Great Smoky Mountains Heritage Center in Townsend. The new facility centralizes irreplaceable materials in a secure, climate-controlled space in which they will be preserved, as well as office and lab space where they can be studied by park staff and visiting researchers.

The collection includes pre-historic projectile points, logging-era equipment, vintage weapons, clothing, farm implements, tools and other possessions that would have been found on the farmsteads of the southern Appalachian in pre-park days. The collection also includes oral histories of southern Appalachian speech, folklore, official documents, photographs, and stories. Having these artifacts more accessible will also allow more opportunities for the NPS to share items with approved public museums.
Across our nation, from northern Alaska to the Virgin Islands, from Acadia to Zion, the National Park Service is responsible for protecting 409* of America’s most beautiful natural areas and most significant historic places. Here is a sampler of the diversity of public lands that have been set aside and protected by the National Park Service “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”

**NATIONAL PARKS (59)**
Example: Grand Teton, Wyoming. Preserves the magnificent Grand Teton mountain range and the wildlife-rich valley of Jackson Hole.

**NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARKS (49)**
Example: Cumberland Gap, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia. Starting around 1775, this mountain pass became the primary route for American settlers moving west into Kentucky.

**NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES (78)**
Example: Andersonville, Georgia. The Camp Sumter military prison at Andersonville was one of the largest Confederate military prisons during the Civil War.

**NATIONAL HISTORIC AND SCENIC TRAILS (3)**
Example: Appalachian Trail, Georgia to Maine. 2,180 miles of foot trail along the crest of the Appalachian Mountains (see page 13).

**NATIONAL BATTLEFIELDS (11)**
Example: Moores Creek Park, North Carolina. Commemorates the 1776 victory by a thousand Patriots over about eight hundred Loyalists at the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge.

**NATIONAL LAKESHORES (4)**

**NATIONAL MEMORIALS (30)**
Example: Flight 93, Pennsylvania. Commemorates the site of the crash of United Airlines Flight 93, which was hijacked in the September 11 attacks.

**NATIONAL MILITARY PARK (9)**
Example: Kings Mountain, North Carolina, South Carolina. Commemorates the Battle of Kings Mountain, a pivotal victory by American Patriots over American Loyalists during the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War.

**NATIONAL MONUMENTS (80)**
Example: Walnut Canyon, Arizona. Includes 25 cliff dwelling rooms constructed by the Sinagua, a pre-Columbian cultural group that lived in Walnut Canyon from about 1100 to 1250 CE.

**NATIONAL PARKWAYS (4)**
Example: Natchez Trace, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee. Commemorates the historic Old Natchez Trace, an ancient buffalo trail used by Native Americans and 18th century European-Americans for commerce.

**NATIONAL PRESERVES (19)**
Example: Little River Canyon, Alabama. This verdant, biologically-diverse area includes one of the deepest canyons in the eastern U.S.

**NATIONAL RECREATION AREA (18)**
Example: Chattahoochee River, Georgia. This 48-mile stretch of river offers public recreation and access to historic sites.

**NATIONAL RIVER (15)**
Example: Big South Fork, Kentucky, Tennessee. The Big South Fork of the Cumberland River region contains one of the highest concentrations of natural bridges in the eastern U.S.

**NATIONAL SEASHORE (10)**
Example: Gulf Islands, Florida, Mississippi. Offers recreation opportunities and preserves natural and historic resources along the Gulf of Mexico barrier islands.

**NATIONAL MALL AND MEMORIAL PARKS (20)**

As of fall, 2015. Not all categories of parks are listed here.
1872
Yellowstone National Park established.

1890
Yosemite National Park established.

1891
The U.S. Army stations soldiers at major Yellowstone geyser basins to deter vandalism by tourists.

1894
Poacher Ed Howell is nabbed skinning a dozen bison in Yellowstone. The story goes national and the Lacey Act is passed "to protect the birds and animals in Yellowstone…"

1897
Robbers hold up six stage-coaches packed with Yellowstone tourists.

1899
Mount Rainier National Park established.

1902
Crater Lake National Park established.

1903
African-American Buffalo Soldiers ride into Yosemite and Sequoia national parks to drive out timber thieves and poachers, and to fight wildfires and build trails.

1905
Visitation to national parks hits 314,000.

1906
Antiquities Act passes to protect Southwestern cultural sites from artifact looters. The Act allows presidents to create national monuments.

1908
Visitation to parks tops 500,000.

1911
Visitation to parks tops 1 million.

1915
Rocky Mountain National Park established.

1916
Congress and Woodrow Wilson pass the Organic Act creating the National Park Service whose job it is: "To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and… leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

1919
Acadia, Zion, and Grand Canyon national parks established.

1921
Hot Springs designated national park.

1929
Arches and Grand Teton national monuments/parks established.

1933
Horace Albright convinces Franklin D. Roosevelt to allow the NPS to absorb all national battlefields into the park system. 200,000 Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enrollees start building trails, roads, and other facilities in the national parks.

1934
Great Smoky Mountains National Park established.

1946
The end of W.W. II unleashes a surge into the parks with infrastructure accomplished, roads are paved.

1950
Visitation to parks tops 5 million.

1956
NPS launches Mission 66, a ten-year program to improve park facilities to meet the surge in park visitation.

1960
Visitation to parks tops 71 million.

1963
The Leopold Report, which guides wildlife management in parks, is published.

1964
The Wilderness Act passes.

1965
Visitation to parks tops 102 million.

1968
Visitation to parks tops 168 million.

1970
Visitation to parks tops 168 million.

1972
NPS opens first "urban" park sites.

1974
Visitation to parks tops 255 million.

1978
Badlands National Park established.

1982
Visitation to parks tops 220 million.

1984
Visitation to parks tops 255 million.

1987
Visitation to parks tops 281 million.

1989
Visitation to parks tops 285 million.

1990
Visitation to parks tops 255 million.

1991
Visitation to parks tops 272 million.

1994
Death Valley and Joshua Tree national parks established.

1997
Visitation to parks tops 280 million.

1998
Visitation to parks tops 285 million.

1999
Visitation to parks tops 285 million.

2000
Visitation to parks tops 285 million.

2001
Visitation to parks tops 285 million.

2003
Congaree National Park established.

2014
Visitation to national parks hits 293 million.

2015
Visitation to parks tops 285 million.

2016
National Park Service embarks on "second century of service."

2017
Visitation to parks tops 285 million.

2018
Visitation to parks tops 285 million.

2019
Visitation to parks tops 285 million.

2020
Visitation to parks tops 285 million.
Q: The National Park Service turns 100 years old in 2016. What does that mean to you?

A: If we don’t create the next generation of national park users, advocates, and supporters, I think the work we’ve done in the first 100 years of the National Park Service will be in vain. You protect what you value. If you haven’t visited parks and public lands in your formative years, you run the risk of not knowing or caring about them.

As I get older, I realize I want to be doing something that lasts beyond me. At this point in history, with the Park Service turning 100, I want to tell my daughters that I left the Smokies a better place than when I found it. There’s a lot riding on this. I don’t want to be the one to let this go.

Q: What does the Second Century of the National Park Service look like?

A: When the National Park Service was created, the country was 50 percent urban. Now it’s 80 percent urban. The Park Service is a very traditional organization—and we honor those traditions. But we need to hand the NPS arrowhead over to the next generation and let each person define his or her own park experience.

We don’t want to try too hard to define what we think a park experience should be. Our millennials are very different, their values are very different. They approach the outdoors a lot differently.

That’s why “Find Your Park” is the theme of our Centennial. It’s an individual thing.

We’re looking at this as the right time to reach out to audiences that haven’t traditionally been park visitors, or park employees, for that matter.

Q: How are you going to celebrate the Centennial in the Smokies?

A: There are going to be some fun events like Smokies Centennial Challenge: Hike 100 where participants log their miles and earn a special reward. We especially want to involve families from nearby urban areas. And I plan on hiking 100 miles myself, split between the North Carolina and Tennessee sides of the park.

We’re also working with our partners on some beautiful publications commemorating the first 100 years. Plus we’re developing a lot of commemorative merchandise that will be featured in the visitor center stores and will benefit the Smokies and the whole park system.

Many Americans today grow up in cities and have only a limited exposure to wild places like the Great Smoky Mountains. Superintendent Cash and the National Park Service are especially enthusiastic about offering urban youth the opportunity to explore the great outdoors.

The following goals have been officially adopted by the National Park Service to guide the agency and its partners and volunteers into 2016 and beyond.

1. Connect people to parks and help communities protect what is special to them.

2. Advance our educational mission based on core American values, historical and scientific scholarship, and unbiased translation of the complexities of the American experience.

3. Preserve America’s special places and be a leader in extending the benefits of conservation across physical, social, political, and international boundaries.

4. Enhance professional and organizational excellence by adapting to the changing needs of visitors, communities, and partners.
just about any trail in Great Smoky Mountains National Park offers pretty good views in winter. After all, most of the park is covered with dense deciduous forest, and when the trees drop their leaves, an expansive world of ridges, valleys, and old settlements is revealed. Here are some of the better day hikes in the Smokies with good to excellent winter views.

**EASIER**

1. **Look Rock Tower**
   The half-mile paved trail to Look Rock observation tower is located off the Foothills Parkway West between Walland and Chilhowee Lake. The tower offers excellent views of the Smokies and Tennessee Valley.

2. **Cucumber Gap Loop**
   A 5.5 mile loop hike starting from Little River trailhead near Elkmont Campground. The loop includes portions of Little River, Cucumber Gap, and Jakes Creek trails. There is one small creek crossing that can be challenging during high water.

**MODERATE**

3. **Rich Mountain Loop**
   An 8.5 mile loop hike starting at the entrance to Cades Cove Loop Road. Follow Rich Mountain Loop Trail to Indian Grave Gap Trail and on to Crooked Arm Ridge Trail. Offers good views of Cades Cove.

4. **Thomas Divide**
   The trail starts 3 miles south of Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road in a large parking area. Follow the trail out and back to the junction with Kanati Fork Trail for good views of the North Carolina Smokies. 3.6 miles roundtrip.

5. **Sugarland Mountain**
   Start this trail from Little River Road 4 miles west of Sugarlands Visitor Center. Parking is the same as for Laurel Falls Trailhead. Follow the Sugarland Mountain Trail out and back to the junction with Huskey Gap Trail for good views of Mt. Le Conte and The Sugarlands. 6.2 miles roundtrip.

**STRENUOUS**

6. **Alum Cave**
   The 2.3 mile hike to Inspiration Point and Alum Cave Bluff offers good views of the West Prong river valley. Start this trail at one of the large parking areas 6.8 miles south of Sugarlands Visitor Center on Newfound Gap Road.

7. **Charlies Bunion**
   Follow the Appalachian Trail 4.0 miles north from Newfound Gap parking area to this famous rock outcrop. During cold weather this trail will be very icy and dangerous. Ice cleats may be required.

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**Winter Hiking Safety**

In addition to proper clothing, hikers should always bring water, a map, snacks, a flashlight, and matches. Keep in mind that cell phones often do not work in the park because of terrain and lack of towers. Always let someone responsible know where you plan to go and when you plan to return.
In the days before television, movies, the internet, iPods, video games, Facebook, Instagram, smart phones, tablets, and YouTube, people could still make their own music for entertainment.

Cabin Fever
The homes of 19th century farm families were usually small, while the families themselves were often large. The typical log home was 18’ x 20’ (360 square feet) plus, perhaps, a sleeping loft. Families were frequently multi-generational, including a grandparent and five to 12 kids.

During periods of cold, snowy, or rainy weather, families were forced to spend most of the day indoors. Dorie Woodruff Cope, who spent her childhood and young adulthood in the Smokies, described winter this way: “So we waited. Snow came two or three times a week to add inches to the blanket already on the ground. Silence hung over the mountains like a misty fog... Wind whistled around the corners of the cabin and down the chimney, causing the fire to reach out of the fireplace and fill the room with ashes. Ma kept beans and meat boiling in a kettle.”

Most, but not all cabins, had a few windows for light.

Making Music
Mountain folk knew lots of songs and enjoyed singing ballads at home during winter, often solo and unaccompanied by musical instruments. Many of the ballads were from the British Isles and were about love or death, or religious faith. Ballads told stories and sometimes included lessons on life. Examples are “The Drunkard’s Last Drink,” “Barbara Allen,” “Pretty Polly,” “Geordie,” “Young Hunting,” and “Bold Soldier.”

The most common types of musical instruments were fiddles and banjos and later on, guitars.

Lessons Learned
Winter days were often school days in the Great Smoky Mountains of the mid-1800s. Winter was when children were needed the least on the farm, so it was the logical time to hit the books.

In the early days, the school year lasted only 2-4 months. Parents paid about $1 per student per month to get their children educated. The money (or produce in lieu of cash) went to a teacher who often boarded with a local family.

Most students completed only 3-5 years of schooling, enough to learn to read and write and perform basic mathematics. By the early 20th century, however, Smoky Mountain schools and school years more closely resembled today's.

Two country schools are preserved in the national park, Little Greenbrier (near Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area) and Beech Grove in Cataloochee Valley.

Tapping Maple Syrup
Sugarland Mountain, Sugar Orchard Branch, Maple Sugar Gap. The Sugarlands, and other park places were all named for sugar maple trees and the sweet sap they relinquish for the making of maple syrup and sugar.

Tapping sugar maples was once a fairly common enterprise in the Smokies and elsewhere in the Southern Highlands. Native Americans used maple sap and sugar to season meats and grains and to make candy and beverages. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, mountain farm families maintained areas in the forest they called “sugar camps” or “sugar bushes” for the production of syrup and sugar.

These operations might include several dozen sugar maples that had been grooved and tapped to produce sap. They would run wooden troughs from the trees to central buckets or barrels for efficient collection. Family members then carried the sap in buckets to a shed which housed a stone furnace and large metal evaporator pan.

One good-sized tree could produce about 20 gallons of sap per year or about 3/4 gallon of maple syrup.

Many Smoky Mountain residents described the best time to tap maples as “after the first snow of spring” and when the strong, warm late winter/early spring winds roar down from the mountains. The tapping season could last from two to eight weeks.

Maple syrup and sugar were commodities that farm families could consume themselves or trade at a country store for cash or merchandise. Stores were good places to obtain salt, coffee, tobacco, nails, and cloth.

Light sources other than the fireplace or open door included burning pine knots, homemade candles, saucers of oil with wicks, and kerosene lamps.

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Making Moonshine
Making corn whiskey or “moonshine” was a fairly common way of earning cash for “store bought” goods in the mountains. Homemade whiskey and brandy were perfectly legal during most of the 1880s. Later it became a way to dodge liquor taxes, and from 1920-1933, Prohibition made moonshining very risky and very profitable.

According to one source, Prohibition-era moonshiners earned up to $20 per gallon, but getting caught often resulted in a year or more in the penitentiary. Following repeal, prices dropped to around $2 per gallon.

Whether moonshining was more prevalent in the Southern mountains than elsewhere in the country is a matter of debate. However, Cocke County, at the eastern end of the Smoky Mountains, was frequently championed as the “Moonshine Capital of America.” Stills as large as 500 gallons were confiscated by rangers on park property near Cosby. They were often concealed in rhododendron thickets or partially buried in the ground.

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The Appalachian Trail is arguably the world’s most famous footpath. Travelers who happen upon it in Georgia, North Carolina, New Jersey, or any of the other 11 states it traverses, can’t help but wonder what it would be like to abandon their everyday lives for five to seven months and immerse themselves in the Appalachian wilderness.

Most of those who have chucked it all and attempted hiking the entire 2,189-mile-long trail will tell you the task is more difficult than they had expected. Although the A.T. stays to the ridgetops for much of its length, there is a relentless gain and loss of elevation. The trail tread is notoriously rocky. And it rains a lot.

Of the estimated 2,500 prospective northbound thru-hikers who departed from Springer Mountain, Georgia in 2014, about half made it as far as the mid-point in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia and only 25% made it all the way to Mount Katahdin in Baxter State Park in Maine.

Statistics kept by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the official nonprofit steward of the trail, indicate that the number of people hiking the entire A.T. has “risen dramatically over the years.” From 1936 to 1969, a total of only 59 successful thru-hikes were recorded. In 2014 alone, 653 people went all the way.

And in some important ways, thru-hiking the A.T. has gotten a little easier since Benton MacKaye conceived of the trail in the 1920s. Volunteers from the ATC and other organizations are constantly improving the pathway through upgrades and reroutes. Modern, lightweight backpacking equipment, including freeze-dried foods, have reduced average pack weights by as much as 50%. Cell phones make communications and logistics easier. Still, equipment and technology alone won’t carry you and your pack up one ridge and down the next.

During 2016, officials at the ATC and the National Park Service predict foot traffic on the A.T. will increase even further. Their expectations stem from the release of the 2015 film, “A Walk in the Woods” starring Robert Redford and Nick Nolte, a comedy about old friends reuniting to take on the challenging trek. The movie is based on the book of the same name by Bill Bryson, and when it was published in 1998, the number of feet on the A.T. jumped by 60% over the following two years.

By mid-March it should be apparent whether or not a stampede of hikers will be hitting the trail in 2016. That’s when the first wave of northbound thru-hikers flocks to Springer Mountain, Georgia to start the mass migration. By mid-April the early bird hikers should have made it to Mile 160—the southern boundary of Great Smoky Mountains National Park at Fontana Dam. The park hosts 72 miles of the Appalachian Trail, including its zenith at Clingmans Dome.

Because backcountry campsites and shelter spaces in the national park are limited, as is the carrying capacity of the trail itself, the NPS and ATC are already taking actions to better accommodate an influx of hikers while preserving the fragile Appalachian high country. Some thru-hikers are being encouraged to start from a midpoint, hike to Maine, then “flip-flop” and hike from the mid-point south to Georgia. A hike is considered an “official” thru-hike if one traverses the entire length of the A.T., in any order, in 12 months or less. Such an alternate route is appealing to those thru-hikers wishing to avoid the crowds and would help alleviate spring bottlenecks in places like the Smokies. All thru-hikers and other backcountry campers are required to have a reservation and a permit to camp in the Smokies. To do so, visit www.smokiespermits.nps.gov or call 865-436-1297.

Hiking the A.T. in the Smokies

Most people who hike the Appalachian Trail aren’t thru-hikers, they are day hikers or backpackers out for a weekend or a week in the mountains. For many adventurers, hiking the A.T. through the Smokies is the trip of a lifetime, yet can be done in 6-8 nights.

The 72-mile section of the A.T. through the national park is one of the most scenic and rigorous of the entire trail. Smokies hikers enjoy numerous grassy balds, knife-edge ridge tops, wide, primeval viewsheds, a Canadian zone ecosystem, and the opportunity to explore one of the most biologically diverse areas in the temperate world.

If you do choose to hike the Smokies A.T., the best time to do so is mid-May to early November when conflicts with winter weather and thru-hikers are minimal.
Mountains Association

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bookstores across the country.
• Special discounts at area
rental cabins, inns, restaur-
ants, shops, and attractions
• And most importantly,
the satisfaction of helping to
preserve nature and history in
Great Smoky Mountains
National Park.

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field school

An exciting variety of adven-
tures await adults who long
to get out and explore the
park accompanied by expert
guides. Programs are offered
by the Smoky Mountain Field
School and include Mt. Le
Conte overnights, wildlife
workshops, edible plants,
wildflower photography,
animal tracking, bird watch-
ing, salamanders, mountain
cooking, and more. One day
programs start at as little as
$79. Contact: (865) 974-0150 or
sdfs.utk.edu
gsmi at tremont

Great Smoky Mountains
Institute at Tremont provides
residential environmental
education programs in Great
Smoky Mountains National
Park. Up to 5,000 students
and adults annually attend
workshops and school
programs at the Institute.
Tremont’s adult workshops
include birding, backpacking,
environmental education,
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448-6709 or www.gsmi.org

summer camps

Great Smoky Mountains
Institute at Tremont offers
a variety of summer youth
camps in the national park.
Camps last from 6-11 days
and cost from $572. Fees
include meals, lodging, and
most equipment.

Next year’s offerings
include: Discovery Camp (ages
9-12), Wilderness Adventure
Trek, Girls in Science (ages
12-15), and Teen High Adven-
ture (ages 13-17).

Contact: (865) 448-6709 or
www.gsmi.org

YES, I WANT TO JOIN GSMA!

Name(s) ____________________________

Address ____________________________

Email (for Club Report) ____________

Telephone # ________

Please include your check with this form. Mail to:
GSMA, P.O. Box 130, Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Support the Friends

Friends of Great Smoky
Mountains National Park
is a nonprofit organization
that assists the National Park
Service by raising funds and
public awareness and pro-
viding volunteers for park
projects.

Since 1993, Friends has
raised over $35 million for
park projects and programs.
These donations help:
• protect elk, bear, brook
tROUT, and other wildlife
• improve trails, campsites,
and backcountry shelters
• support educational pro-
grams for school children
• improve visitor facilities
• fund special educational
services like the park movie
• preserve log cabins and
other historic structures.

Your donation can help
make these projects a reality.
Put a few coins or a few
dollars in one of the dona-
tion boxes located at visitor
centers, roadsides, and other
locations around the park.
Buy the Smokies license plate
for your car (available in Ten-
ssee and North Carolina).

However you choose to
give, your donation will really
help protect the Great Smoky
Mountains for many years to
come!

Friends of the Smokies
P.O. Box 1660,
Kodak, TN 37764
(865) 932-4794
1-800-845-5665
www.friendsofthesmokies.org

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is one of the few large national parks without an entrance fee. Most
parks now charge $30 per vehicle. Without this supplemental income, it is difficult for the Smokies to ade-
quately protect wildlife, preserve historic areas, and provide educational opportunities. You can help by using
some of the money you saved at the entrance to support the park partners on this page.
Smokies Superlatives

Great Smoky Mountains National Park has lots to brag about!

Thousands of Plants!
Because the park contains a huge variety of habitats, it is home for some 1,500 species of flowering plants, 10% of which are considered rare, and well over 4,000 non-flowering plants such as mushrooms and mosses.

Fee Free!
The Smokies are one of the very few major national parks without an entrance fee. This anomaly can be traced back to the park’s main roads that were once owned by the states of North Carolina and Tennessee and were transferred to the Park Service with stipulations that no fee ever be charged. Unfortunately, because of this restriction, the Smokies must get by on a budget that is a fraction of that of other large, but much less-visited parks.

More Trees!
The park has 100 species of native trees, more than all of northern Europe and more than any other U.S. national park. It also contains one of the largest blocks of virgin temperate deciduous forest in North America.

Nowhere Else on Earth!
Several species of plants and animals are found in the Smokies, but nowhere else in the world. These species include a wildflower called Rugel’s ragwort and Jordan’s (red-cheeked) salamander. Species new to the scientific community are found nearly every year in the park.

Why so many endemics in the Smokies? For one, the mountain range has not been glaciated or inundated by oceans for millions and millions of years. This has made the area a sanctuary for a huge variety of plants and animals. Secondly, most of the endemics are in the park’s high elevations where the mountain top ecosystems stand like “islands in the sky,” isolated from similar populations elsewhere.

Salamander Capital of the World!
At least 30 species of salamanders live in the Smokies, more than in any similar-sized area on earth. The park’s abundant rainfall, range of habitats, and moderate climate make it the perfect place for these moisture-loving amphibians.

Preserving History!
Culturally, the park has an unequaled collection of log buildings, including large two-story dwellings and working grist mills—over 100 historic structures in all.

World Famous!
The park is honored to be designated as an International Biosphere Reserve and a World Heritage Site because of the significant value of its natural and cultural resources.

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America’s Most Visited Park!
Located within a two-day drive for half of the nation’s population, Great Smoky Mountains National Park has the highest visitation of any national park in the country. There are between nine and ten million visits to the park annually. The second most visited national park is Grand Canyon, with 4.5 million annual visitors.

Most Difficult Birth!
Unlike many Western parks that were largely cobbled together from existing public lands, every acre that became Great Smoky Mountains National Park was privately owned at one time and had to be appraised, haggled over, and purchased from families or large companies. Established in 1934, the park was created from more than 6,000 tracts of private and commercial land that were purchased primarily with money raised by public and private donations.

Three “Long Trails!”
Three of the nation’s most famous long distance hiking trails run through the Smokies, including The Appalachian Trail, Mountains-to-Sea Trail, and Benton MacKaye Trail.

Bears and More Bears!
With some 1,600 black bears in this 800 square mile park, the Smokies can boast one of the densest populations of black bears in the world.

Appalachian Trail
Benton MacKaye Trail
Mountains-to-Sea Trail
winter travels

for more information: www.nps.gov/grsm

441 snow routes

For periods when Newfound Gap Road (U.S. 441) is closed because of snow, alternate routes around the Smokies are shown below. Commercial traffic must use “Primary” routes. “Secondary” routes are shorter but the roads are more winding.

emergencies

Listed below are some numbers to call for emergencies that arise after hours.

Park Headquarters (865) 436-9171
Cherokee Police (828) 497-4131
Gatlinburg Police (865) 436-5181

hospitals

Le Conte/Sevier County
(865) 446-7000, Middle Creek Rd., Sevierville, TN.
Blount Memorial (865) 983-7211, U.S. 321, Maryville, TN.
Haywood County (828) 456-7311, Waynesville, NC.
Swain County (828) 488-2155, Bryson City, NC.

regulations

Picking or digging plants is prohibited in the park.
Persons feeding wildlife are subject to a $5,000 fine.
Pets are not permitted on most park trails. Only the Gatlinburg and Oconaluftee River trails allow dogs on a leash.

accessibility

Restrooms at all park visitor centers (Cades Cove, Oconaluftee, and Sugarlands) are fully accessible. The Sugarlands Valley all-access nature trail is located on Newfound Gap Road just south of Sugarlands Visitor Center.

For more information: www.nps.gov/grsm