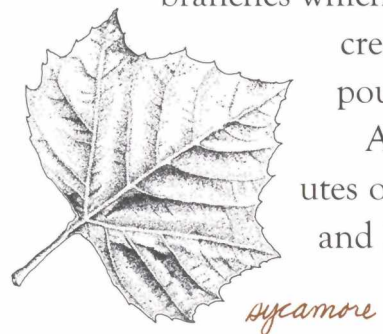




4 stream life

In the Smokies you are seldom far from the sound of water. Fast-flowing, boulder-strewn streams with intermittent pools and numerous cascades are among the park's most attractive natural features.

The Great Smokies receive more annual precipitation than almost any other area in the contiguous United States. Much of this rainfall seeps into the ground and then is forced up through surface openings as springs. Thousands of springs create



branches which flow into creeks, which pour into rivers. A few quiet minutes of watching and listening here

may reveal many river inhabitants that would otherwise be missed. For example, fish easing out of the shadows and cruising through sunlit pools; a waterthrush hunting insects as it teeters on rocks in the middle of the stream; a loud rattling call that identifies a Belted Kingfisher on an aerial fishing patrol.

5 boulders

Beneath the predominant mantle of forest and the thin crust of soil that nourishes it is a huge mass of solid rock that is the foundation of the Great Smoky Mountains. It is not often exposed, except as cliffs or occasional outcrops or as great boulders or "graybacks"

that are strewn over the mountain-sides and along streams.

The geologic story is complicated and is highlighted by epochs of mountain-building and the cooling effects of the Pleistocene Ice Age, but the main feature is erosion—the relentless forces of rock-weathering that gradually carved the valleys throughout the park.

How did these particular boulders get here? No one can be certain, but possibly during colder times, when peaks like Le Conte reached above timberline, they were initially split-off from cliffs by the action of freezing water. As gravity and running water urged them downhill, they were gradually smoothed and rounded.

6 forests & flowers

The outstanding attraction of the Great Smokies is its flora. It's been said that vegetation is to Great Smoky Mountains what geysers are to Yellowstone and granite domes and waterfalls are to Yosemite. Most of the major eastern forest types are represented here. There are more kinds of native trees than in any

other area of comparable size in the United States and more types of flowering plants than any other North American national park.



In the years since the creation of the park in the 1930s, the land that was previously settled has gone from potato patch to pine field and will eventually resemble the cove forest environment that was encountered by the earliest people to visit this valley centuries ago.

The forest is never static and the changes brought about by natural succession will likely be as dramatic in the next 100 years as they have been in the last century.

Contributors to the creation of this trail include: the National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains Association, Rotary Club of Knoxville in honor of Charles Miller, Mrs. Evelyn Short, Dr. William F. Hutson, and Lions District 12-N.

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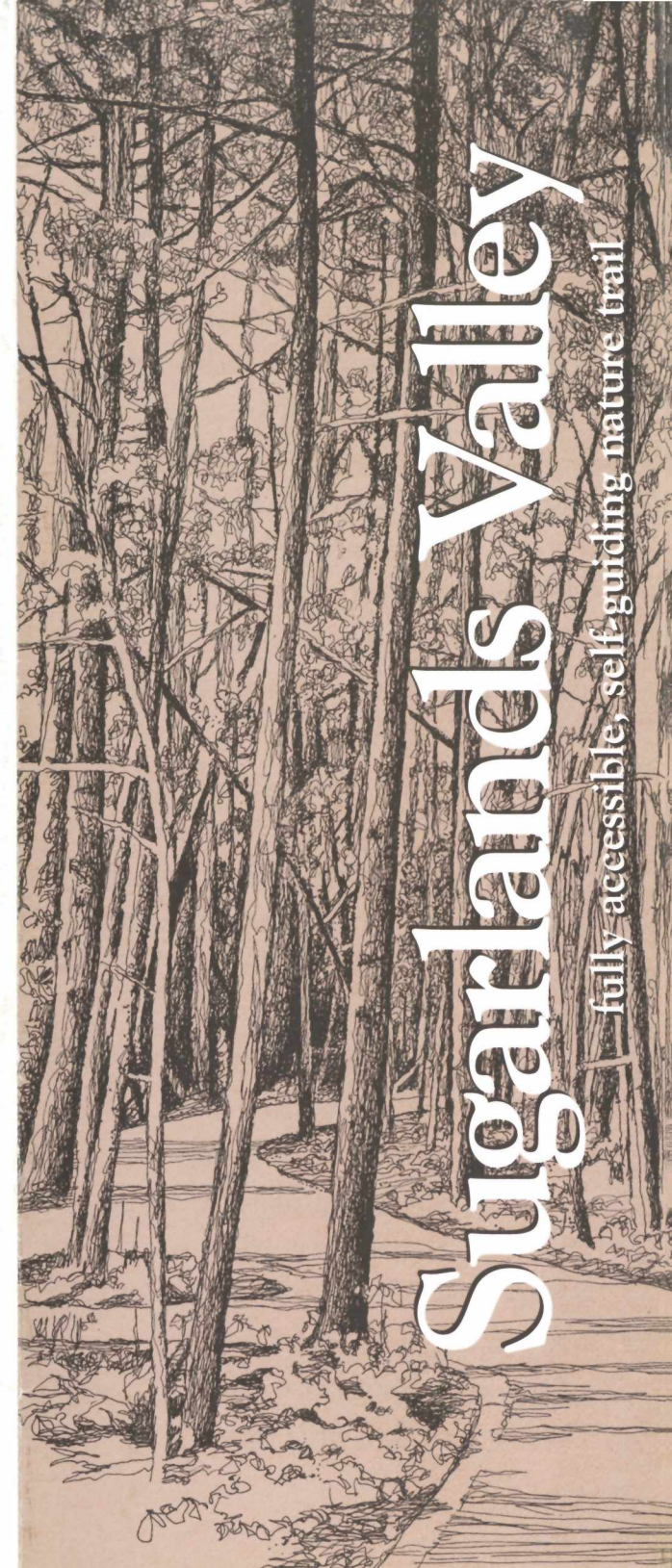
www.SmokiesInformation.org



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Sugarlands Valley

fully accessible, self-guiding nature trail



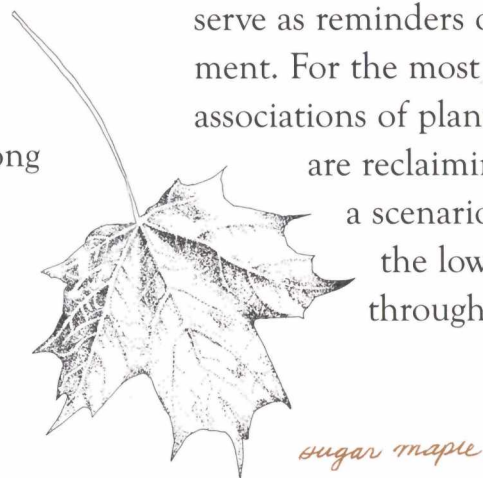


Welcome to Sugarlands Valley...Nestled among mountains that are ancient and time-worn, this valley has attracted people for centuries—Indians, explorers, early settlers, vacationers, and finally national park visitors—all seeking to benefit from mountainous scenery, clear waters, and a forested landscape with an unusually rich assemblage of plants and animals. You are invited to do the same.

This trail is fully accessible. It is wide, paved, and gently-sloped and winds through a wooded streamside that is generally representative of the entire Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The trail distance is one-half mile and travel time is approximately 30-45 minutes.

A description of features along the trail has been recorded on audio tape. You may borrow a copy of the tape and a tape player at Sugarlands Visitor Center (one-half mile north).



1 the valley

Sugarlands Valley is about seven miles long. It generally follows the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River from near the Chimney Tops Picnic Area to the Sugarlands Visitor Center. The name is derived from sugar maple trees that are still found in scattered locations throughout the woods, but are not nearly as abundant now as they were before the valley was logged in pre-park days.

Since the establishment of the park, the look of the land has changed significantly. Logging scars have mostly healed and there is little evidence of the small family farms and community buildings that once occupied the valley. There are still a few stone chimneys, some rock walls, old road beds, and cemeteries that serve as reminders of early settlement. For the most part, though, associations of plants and animals are reclaiming the landscape—a scenario that prevails in the lowland valleys throughout the park.

2 summer home

This stone chimney, and another one like it further down the trail, are remnants of summer vacation cottages that began to appear around 1900. Improved automobile roads increased accessibility to the mountains and people in nearby cities became interested in purchasing land for summer homes. Farmers were quite happy to relinquish plots of undesirable land to accommodate these new residents.

An acre or so was sufficient for a summer home. A cottage was framed of sawed lumber from a nearby mill. It was usually stained dark green and often had a screened-in porch. The stone and cement chimney was characteristic and differed from the mud and stacked stone fireplaces of local residences.

The era of summer homes was brief. It ended in the early 1930s when Congress decided there would be a national park in the Great Smokies and a program was started to purchase land for its development.



3 old road

The wide gully that parallels the trail at this point started out as an Indian footpath. About 1820 it was developed into the Indian Gap Road and became the lowest and easiest route over the mountains between this valley and the Bryson City area in North Carolina.

The old road was occasionally flooded by the overflowing river and it was the responsibility of community neighbors to keep it in good condition for sleds, wagons, and eventually automobiles. All able-bodied males were required to “work the road” six days a year or else pay a fine to the county treasurer.

Just ahead the trail passes through a handsomely-preserved stone wall. Such walls served multiple purposes; they were a place to put rocks culled from farm fields and functioned as property boundaries and barriers to keep livestock out of crops.