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GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

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WELCOME

Blanketed in lush forests and shrouded by mist, the Great Smoky Mountains beckon visitors to explore the mysteries of its ancient landscape. Walk in the woods and stand beneath towering hemlocks. Feel the cool spray of a waterfall splashing against moss-covered boulders. Gaze upon a landscape of gentle blue ridges stretching to the horizon.

The Cherokee described these mountains as *shaconage*, meaning “blue, like smoke.” The bluish mist, which clings to the mountainsides and fills the valleys gives the park its name and remains among its most distinctive features.

Among the oldest mountains in the world, the Smokies teem with a wondrous diversity of life. More than 17,000 species of plants and animals have been documented in the park! Punctuating this phenomenal biodiversity is one of the nation’s largest collections of historic log buildings.

The homes, schools, mills and churches of the mountain people are preserved here for you to discover and enjoy. Experience one of America’s greatest wilderness areas and discover the heritage of natural and cultural diversity it preserves for all time.



FUN FACTS

Established: The park was created in 1934 to protect the last of the southern Appalachian forest, which once covered more than 4 million acres, but was virtually eliminated by logging and fire.

Land Area: The park is 522,427 acres.

Number of Visitors: More than 11 million people visit annually—the highest visitation of any national park.

Lowest and Highest Elevations: The lowest elevation in the park is 870 feet at the mouth of Abrams Creek and the highest is 6,643 feet at the summit of Clingmans Dome.

Plant and Animal Species: The park’s abundance and variety of plant and animal life have earned it the U.N. designation of International Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site. Scientists estimate up to 50,000

different types of plants and animals live in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. When Discover Life in America was founded in 1998, fewer than 10,000 had been identified; however, researchers have added more than 18,500 new species to the park, including 1,000 that were previously unknown!

Sights: Some of the more popular sights include Clingmans Dome, Mount LeConte, the sheer rock pinnacles of Chimney Tops, the 100-foot waterfall Ramsey Cascades, and the scenic and historic sites at Cataloochee Valley, Cades Cove and Oconaluftee.

Hiking and Horseback Riding:

Approximately 800 miles of horse and hiking trails crisscross the park.

Camping: The park has 1,000 developed campsites and 100 primitive sites.

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American Park Network® publishes Oh, Ranger! ParkFinder™, OhRanger.com, and Oh, Ranger!® guides—a collection of visitor guides for public lands all across America—and operates Oh, Ranger! Wi-Fi in parks and public lands. American Park Network is an official partner of the National Forest Foundation, National Parks Conservation Association, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, American Hiking Society and the Student Conservation Association.

PRINCIPALS

Mark J. Saferstein - Founder & Editor-in-Chief
Joel S. Saferstein
Alex Frenkel

TECHNOLOGY

Scott Falconer

EDITORIAL / PRODUCTION

Editors: Sophie Macomber, Rachael Mamane,
Hira Piracha, Amanda Strube, Theo Rossi,
Lori Lee, Erika Skogg
Photo Editors: Wendy Willis
Production Managers: Mario Arce,
Walter Jeronimo
Lead Designer: Dennisse Cruz
Graphic Designers: Michael Cohen,
Alberto Garcia, Alejandro George,
Tatiana Hurtado, Emerson Martinez

ADVERTISING SALES & MARKETING (212) 581-3380

adsales@americanparknetwork.com
Business Development: Randy Burton,
Ron Frederick, Pat Keane, Kristi Rummel

American Park Network

41 East 11th Street, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10003




@OhRanger

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Distribution requests
distribution@americanparknetwork.com

Oh, Ranger! Wi-Fi™ installation/sponsorship
wifi@americanparknetwork.com

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Cover: Hiking Meigs Creek Trail
Christopher Smith/iStock



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QUESTIONS, GO TO
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WHAT'S NEW!

HAVE FUN, STAY SAFE



"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle."

-Plato

Growing up in an urban environment, the parks I was exposed to as a child were mostly concrete, with swings vs. hiking trails. Everything was familiar and everyone was from the neighborhood. My world was quite small. Things have changed a lot. We're all connected now in ways that would have seemed like science fiction in my childhood. Also, as a New Yorker, I'm exposed (IRL) to the most diverse group of people on earth. Ironically, I experience this same amazing diversity when visiting our nation's parks and public lands.

I remember one of my first business trips to a national park. It was a quick visit, with more time spent traveling than in the park. Fortunately, I set aside two hours to go for a hike. I selected a steep switchback trail for a good workout and great views, and ended up with a whole lot more. About half way up, I passed a small nook in a rock formation, where a group was sitting in the shadows, just a few steps off the trail. As I approached, they waved me over. It was an isolated spot, so I cautiously took a step forward. They asked me if I had water, not because they wanted some but because they hiked there regularly and brought extra. You see, this group knew from experience how easy it was to underestimate the physical demands of the trail and the dangers of becoming dehydrated. They shared that they always stopped to rest in the same shady spot on their way down, to make sure people on their way up had enough water

to continue on safely. I couldn't believe they actually carried extra pounds - literally gallons of water - just to give it away!

I quickly learned to call such people "trail angels," and that angels don't always appear as one might expect. Based on first impressions, this disheveled group, slightly hidden from view in an isolated spot, might seem more threat than salvation. With a snap judgement, it would have been easy to keep on walking, perhaps even quickening my pace. Fortunately, I took a leap of faith and, in return, received a lasting memory and had a valuable lesson reinforced. Simply put, we're all more similar than initially meets the eye. Technology has rendered the world a smaller place, but it also seems to be a more divided one. Parks create common ground, where it's easy to discover hidden powers that unite us. These magical places somehow compel total strangers to graciously share and be kind to others. Let's hold onto that wonderfully positive spirit derived from time spent in nature, and use it when we return home to better help each other, regardless of how different we may appear on the surface. By working together and embracing our differences, we're much better equipped to conquer the universal challenges we all face... together!

Founder & Editor-in-Chief

mark@americanparknetwork.com



Check First. Please be sure to check the park's website, ask a ranger or stop by a visitor center to find out about current conditions and regulations, as well as potential changes in operations.

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PLAN YOUR VISIT



GETTING TO GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS

The beautiful **Blue Ridge Parkway** runs from Shenandoah National Park in Virginia to the southern entrance of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. U.S. **441**, known in the park as Newfound Gap Road, is a high mountain road that cuts across the ridge near the center of the park, providing outstanding scenic views.

Car: From the north, take I-40 from Knoxville, Tennessee (about 25 miles away), to TN 66 at exit 407, then U.S. 441 South to Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Drive two miles south on U.S. 441 to Park Headquarters and Sugarlands Visitor Center. Traffic along these U.S. highways is often choked with holiday and weekend travelers, causing delays of one or more hours. Consider using U.S. 321 from I-40 at exits 435 or 440 in Newport to avoid this congestion.

From the south, take U.S. 441 North to Cherokee, North Carolina, then drive two miles north on U.S. 441 to Oconaluftee Visitor Center.

From the west, take U.S. 129 South to Maryville, Tennessee, then take U.S. 321 North to Townsend, Tennessee, and then on to the park's west entrance. Drive west about seven miles through the park to Cades Cove.

From the east, take I-40 West from Asheville, North Carolina (about 40 miles away), to U.S. 19, then U.S. 441 to the park's southern entrance near Cherokee, North Carolina. Or, you may take the Foothills Parkway from I-40 at exit 443, then U.S. 321 into Gatlinburg and the Park Headquarters and Sugarlands Visitor Center.

Air: McGhee-Tyson Airport (TYS), the nearest major airport to the park, is located 45 miles west of Gatlinburg, between Knoxville



and Alcoa, TN. The Asheville Airport is south of Asheville, NC, and about 60 miles east of the park. The **Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge Aviation Center** (GKT) is located 12 miles north of the park in Sevierville, TN and serves private aircraft.

Bus: There is no public bus service to the park. However, Rocky Top Tours in Gatlinburg provides bus tours of the park and operates shuttle service from McGhee-Tyson and Sevierville Airports to Gatlinburg.

Train: Amtrak service is not available to the area. The nearest rail station is 115 miles southeast in Greenville, SC.

GETTING AROUND THE PARK

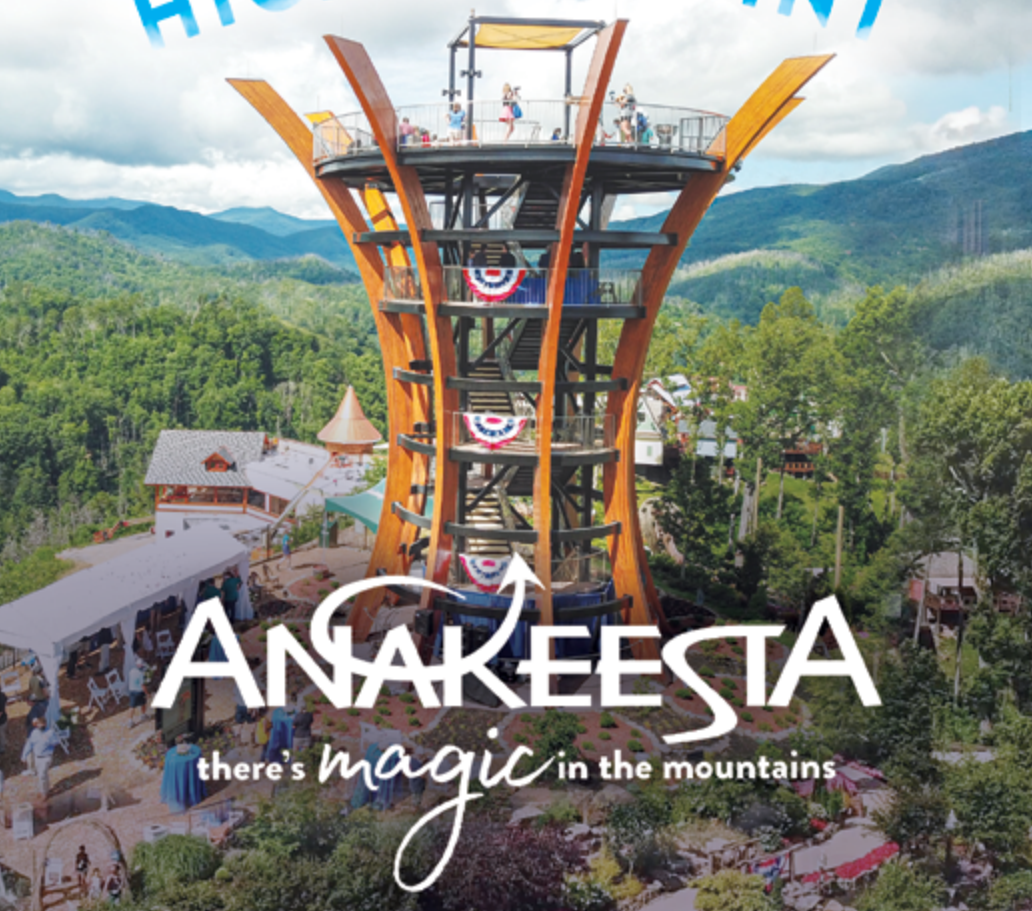
Travel through the park by automobile, by bicycle or on foot. The city of Gatlinburg's trolley service operates a **daily National Park line, or "tan" line**, June through October. The service runs between downtown Gatlinburg and Sugarlands Visitor Center, Laurel Falls Trail and Elkmont Campground at minimal

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PACKING ESSENTIALS

Don't hit the trail without:

- Topographic map & compass + GPS
- Whistle
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Sunglasses, sunscreen and hat
- High-energy food & plenty of water
- Appropriate clothing & extra layers
- Waterproof matches
- Insect repellent
- Pocket knife
- First-aid kit
- Sturdy footwear

cost to the rider. For more information, please call **(865) 436-3897** or visit gatlinburgtrolley.org.

HOURS AND ENTRANCE FEES

The park is open daily, year-round. Entrance to the park is free!

PARK ROADS

Newfound Gap Road should expect weekday, single-lane closures, and traffic delays starting Monday, April 25 from 7:00 a.m. on Mondays through 12:00 p.m. on Fridays. Seasonal road closures include the following: Heintooga Round Bottom, Clingmans Dome, Forge Creek Rd., Rich Mountain Rd., Roaring Fork Mountain, and Straight Fork Mountain. The Greenbrier area and Parsons Branch Rd. are currently closed. Cades Cove Loop Road will be closed to all motor vehicles each Wednesday from May 4 - September 28, 2022. For updated road and weather information, please call **(865) 436-1200**. Current road conditions are also available at [Twitter.com/SmokiesRoadsNPS](https://twitter.com/SmokiesRoadsNPS).

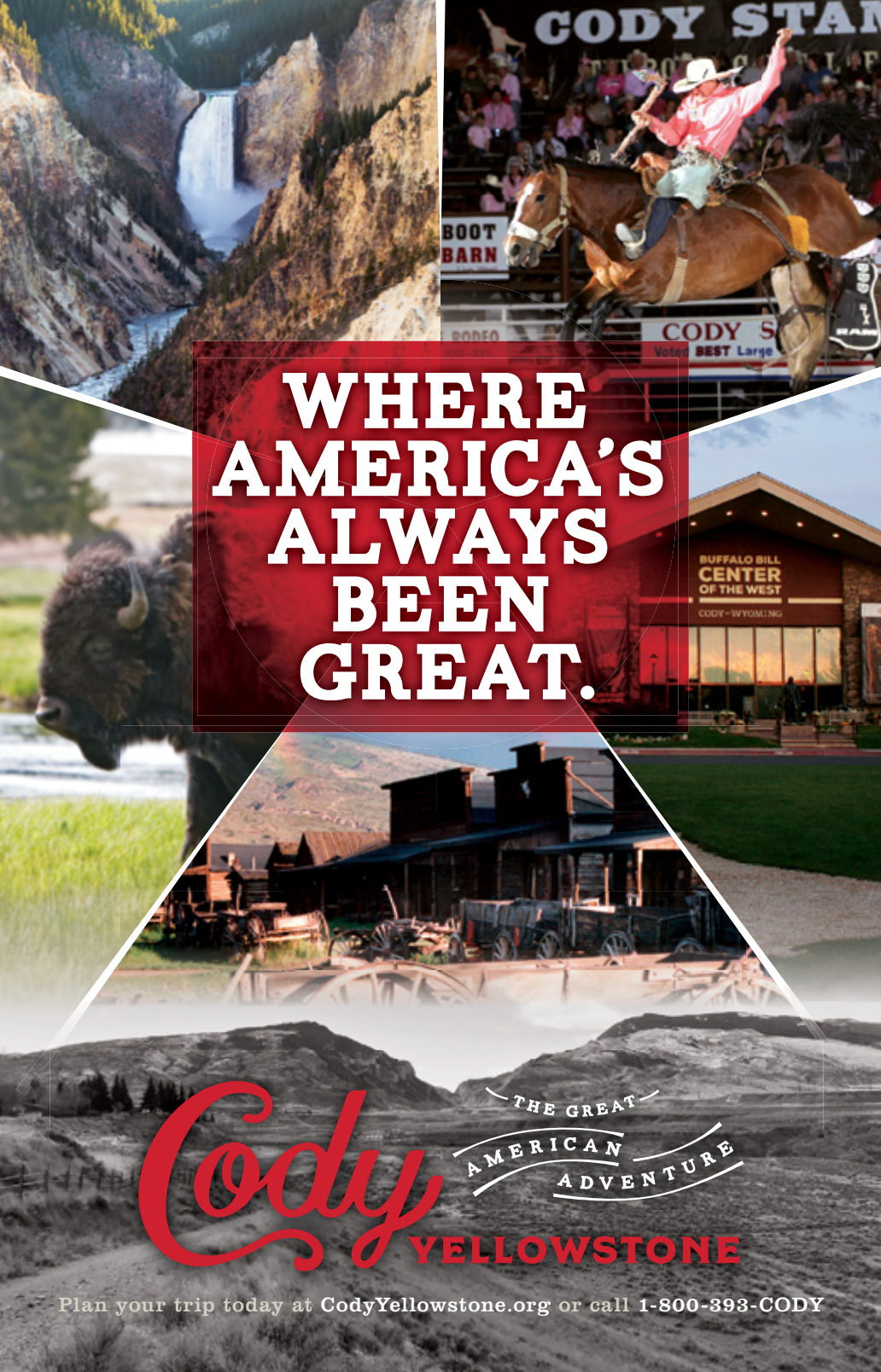
WEATHER

Always be prepared for changes in weather by dressing in layers and carrying rain gear. Rain falls frequently throughout the year; March and July are usually the wettest months. Higher elevations in the park are cooler. Late spring and early fall bring mild days and cool nights, with temperatures in the low 70s during the day and mid-40s at night. Summers in Great Smoky Mountains National Park are warm and humid. At lower elevations, high temperatures range from 55 to 90°F. At higher elevations, high temperatures are in the low 50s to the mid-60s. Winter is often cold, dropping below zero at higher elevations, and occasionally snowy.

PARK VISITOR CENTERS

Three year-round visitor centers and one seasonal visitor contact station are located within the national park. At the two main visitor centers, Sugarlands and Oconaluftee, park rangers are on hand to answer questions and provide information on roads, weather, camping, backcountry conditions, backcountry camping permits and first aid. Ranger-guided walks, maps and books are available at all visitor centers. The Sugarlands, Oconaluftee and Cades Cove visitor centers are all open year-round. The Clingmans Dome contact station is open April to November. Note that due to COVID-19, visitor center hours may vary. For more information, please call the park's main phone number, **(865) 436-1200**.

Sugarlands Visitor Center is located near the park's main northern entrance, two miles south of Gatlinburg along Newfound Gap Road (U.S. 441). This remodeled center offers a free 20-minute orientation film that provides an in-depth look at the Smokies and the



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many recreation opportunities available. Natural history exhibits include mounted specimens of park animals in recreations of their habitats and reproductions of journals kept by the first park naturalists. ♿

Oconaluftee Visitor Center is located at the park’s main southern entrance, two miles north of Cherokee on Newfound Gap Road (U.S. 441). This state-of-the-art visitor center provides interactive exhibits and a museum collection of artifacts and stories that connect people to the human history of the Smokies. ♿

Cades Cove Visitor Center is located off U.S. 321, about 12 miles southwest of Townsend, Tennessee. The visitor center, which is situated among numerous preserved 19th-century farms and historic buildings, emphasizes the cultural history of the Smokies. A bookstore and information on programs and services are provided. There is no telephone service. From

April to November, the visitor contact station at the Clingmans Dome trailhead offers park information, a bookstore and shop and public restrooms. ♿

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTERS

Several tourism information centers outside the park provide national park information in partnership with the National Park Service and feature Great Smoky Mountains Association-managed bookstores. The **Gatlinburg Welcome Center** is on U.S. 441, better known as “The Spur,” at the entrance to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and the **Aquarium Welcome Center** is located in downtown Gatlinburg at traffic light #5. Park information is also available at the Sevierville Visitor Center, located at 3099 Winfield Dunn Pkwy. in Kodak, Tennessee, and the Townsend Visitor Center, located at 7906 East Lamar Alexander Pkwy. in Townsend, Tennessee.



IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Park Headquarters and General Information		nps.gov/grsm or (865) 436-1200
Emergencies		911 or (865) 436-1230
Backcountry Reservations		(865) 436-1297
Special Services ♿		(865) 436-1200
Lost and Found		(865) 436-1216
Road/Weather Conditions		(865) 436-1200
In-Park Lodging with Dining LeConte Lodge		(865) 429-5704
Gatlinburg Convention and Visitors Bureau		(865) 436-4178
Cherokee Indian Reservation Visitor Center		(828) 497-9195
Sightseeing Tours/Rocky Top Tours		(865) 429-8687



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SPECIAL SERVICES ♿

Park activities and facilities that are fully accessible to visitors with disabilities are indicated throughout the guide by the ♿ symbol.

Services: The park film is equipped for use by the vision and hearing impaired. Please inquire at the front desk for an assisted listening device before entering the theater. Inquire at visitor centers or ranger stations for parking permits for visitors with disabilities.

Facilities: The Oconaluftee, Sugarlands and Cades Cove visitor centers are wheelchair-accessible and have restrooms that are wheelchair-accessible. Additional accessible restrooms and picnic sites are located at the Chimney Tops, Cosby, Metcalf Bottoms, Big Creek, Cades Cove, Deep Creek and Collins Creek picnic areas. Cades Cove, Elkmont and Smoke-mont campgrounds are wheelchair-accessible. Reservations for these sites can be made by calling **(877) 444-6777**. Level sites—available first come, first-served—are

located adjacent to accessible restrooms. There are accessible campsites at Big Creek, Cosby and Deep Creek. The Big Creek Horse Camp and the group camps at Deep Creek and Cataloochee are also accessible.

Trails: Walks near Cades Cove, Oconaluftee and Sugarlands visitor centers are best suited for wheelchairs. Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail is specifically designed to accommodate visitors with disabilities. For more information, see the “Walking & Hiking” chapter, inquire at visitor centers, call **(865) 436-1200**, or consult *Access America Guide to the Eastern National Parks*, available at bookstores.



FEDERAL RECREATION LANDS PASSES

A federal recreation pass is helpful if you plan to visit many national parks, forests or other federal lands. For information, call **(888) 275-8747** or visit **store.usgs.gov/pass**

Type	Cost	Availability	Details
Annual Pass	\$80 \$20	General Public Seniors age 62+	This one-year pass is available on site, by phone or online (see above).
Senior Pass	\$80	U.S. residents age 62+	This lifetime pass is available on site or via mail order. ID required.
Military Pass	Free	Active U.S. military members and dependents	This one-year pass is available on site. ID (CAC Card or DoD Form 1173) required. \$10 processing fee on USGS stores.
Access Pass	Free	U.S. residents with permanent disabilities	This lifetime pass is available on site or via mail order. ID and documentation required. Plus \$10 for handling.
Volunteer Pass	Free	250 cumulative volunteer service hours	Inquire locally to obtain information about this one-year pass. Available on site only.

VISITOR SERVICES

Banking Services: Banks in the gateway cities of Gatlinburg, Townsend and Cherokee have 24-hour ATMs, foreign currency exchange and other services.

Camping and Picnic Supplies: Limited picnic and camping supplies are available at Cades Cove and Elkmont campgrounds. You will find a complete selection at numerous stores in the gateway communities near the park.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations: The Great Smoky Mountains National Park has four electric vehicle charging stations at the Sugarlands and Oconaluftee Visitor Centers.

Emergencies: In case of an emergency, please call **911**. For emergency messages, please contact the park communications office at **(865) 436-1230**. The names of people with emergency messages waiting for them are posted at visitor centers or campgrounds.

Gift Shops: Postcards, publications, DVDs and CDs are sold at visitor centers. Many shops selling a variety of gifts, including native crafts, are found in gateway communities.

Kennels: The nearest kennels are in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee; Sevierville, Tennessee; and Cherokee, North Carolina.

Lost and Found: Report lost items and turn in found items at visitor centers or contact Park Headquarters, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738; **(865) 436-1216**.

Medical Services: First-aid facilities are available at Park Headquarters and visitor centers. Medical emergency services are available at the following locations: LeConte Medical Center, **(865) 446-7000**, located on Middle

Creek Road in Sevierville, Tennessee, 15 miles north of Gatlinburg; Blount Memorial Hospital, **(865) 983-7211**, on Highway 321 in Maryville, Tennessee, 25 miles north of Cades Cove; and Swain County Hospital, **(828) 488-2155**, in Bryson City, North Carolina, 10 miles southeast of Oconaluftee Visitor Center.

Postal Services: Park visitor centers have mailboxes, but do not sell postage stamps. Post offices are found in gateway communities.

Religious Services: In the summer, A Christian Ministry in the National Parks sponsors nondenominational Christian worship services on Sundays at several locations.

Service Stations: Gas, diesel fuel and repair services are available in Gatlinburg at the park's main northern entrance, in Townsend, Tennessee, and at the park's main southern entrance in Cherokee, North Carolina. If your car breaks down on the road, contact a park ranger or call the park's dispatch at **(865) 436-1230**.

MORE INFORMATION

PARK NEWSPAPER

The award-winning quarterly park newspaper, *Smokies Guide*, offers current information about National Park Service naturalist walks, programs and other activities. It is available at park visitor centers and campgrounds.

BOOKS AND MAPS

Great Smoky Mountains Association sells park-related literature at visitor centers in the park and at some welcome centers outside the park. Hiking maps, USGS topographical maps, guides, books and other items are available. To order materials, visit **smokiesinformation.org** or call **(865) 436-7318**.

PARK REGULATIONS & SAFETY



You can make the most of your visit to the Smokies by planning ahead and becoming acquainted with some simple safety precautions and park rules.

PARK SAFETY

Please review and observe the following tips, which are designed to enhance your safety and enjoyment.

Feeding the bears is illegal! It makes them bold and potentially dangerous. Keep a clean camp and deposit garbage in park trash cans or dumpsters.

Bears cause significant property damage every year trying to get food, so be sure to “bearproof” your food, toothpaste and cosmetics. If you are car camping, keep food stored in the trunk of your car or in a strong food locker. If you must store food in the passenger compartment, cover it so that bears can’t see it; they have learned to identify packaged food. If you are backpacking, suspend your food and food garbage on the cable system located at all backcountry campsites. Keep your tent, sleeping bag and other gear clean and free of food odor. Food storage regulations are strictly enforced at the park.

If you see a bear or other wildlife, keep your distance. Park regulation prohibits visitors from approaching, disturbing or displacing wildlife. Please keep a minimum distance of 50 yards. Bears may display signs of aggressive behavior such as charging, making loud noises or swatting the ground—all indications of the bear demanding more space. If this happens, don’t run. Instead, slowly back away, always watching the bear. If a bear follows you, change direction or stand your ground. Talk loudly or shout

at it and make yourself look as large as possible to try to intimidate the bear. Never turn your back or run away.

To reduce your risk of poison ivy and ticks, stay on trails and avoid brushy areas.

Wearing a hat, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt helps considerably. If you think you’ve brushed against poison ivy, remove and isolate the clothes you wore until you can wash them. Apply insect repellent to ward off ticks, and check yourself and your clothes for ticks after hiking. If a tick attaches itself to you, remove it with tweezers and then wash the area thoroughly with antiseptic or soap and water. Seek medical attention if part of the tick remains in your skin. Ticks can transmit Lyme disease, which is characterized by skin changes, flu-like symptoms and joint inflammation.

Be careful when walking around streams and waterfalls. Mist and moss make rocks and logs extremely slippery. Stay on trails. Don’t drink untreated water, which may contain impurities and parasites that can make you ill.

Swimming is not recommended because streams contain submerged rocks, logs and debris, and flash floods may occur with little or no warning.

Don’t leave valuables in your car. They are an easy target in a locked or unlocked car. If you must carry these items with you, place them in your trunk before you park your car.

Storms can take you by surprise and temperatures on the Smokies’ ridges are often much cooler than in the valleys. Dress in layers and always carry rain gear for comfort and to prevent hypothermia. This potentially fatal condition occurs when the body loses heat faster than it can generate it.

PARK REGULATIONS

Help protect the park, and yourself, by observing the following NPS regulations:

Alcoholic beverages are permitted only in designated picnic and camping areas. Possession of open alcoholic beverages in motor vehicles is prohibited.

Bicycles, mountain bikes and motor-cycles are allowed on paved roads and in campgrounds, but are prohibited on trails and administrative roads behind locked gates. Motorcyclists are required to wear helmets. **Skateboarding** is prohibited in the park. **Camp** in designated areas only. To camp overnight in the backcountry, you must obtain a **backcountry permit**. Permits are available online at **smokiespermits.nps.gov** or by contacting the backcountry office. Permits cost \$4 per person per night. Federal law allows people who can legally possess **firearms** under applicable laws to possess firearms in the park. It is the responsibility of visitors to understand and comply with all applicable state, local and federal firearms laws before entering the park. Please visit **nps.gov/grsm** for more information. **Hunting** is strictly prohibited.

Beginning in March 2015, only heat-treated, bundled **firewood** that displays a USDA or state Department of Agriculture certification stamp may be used in park campgrounds. It is sold in local communities and through concessions at Cades Cove, Elkmont and Smokemont campgrounds. **Fires** are allowed in established fire rings or fireplaces. Campers may also collect dead and down wood found in the park for campfires. Cutting trees or branches for firewood is strictly prohibited.

Fireworks are not allowed in the park.

Fishing is allowed within the park from sunrise to sunset. A valid Tennessee or North Carolina state **fishing license** is required and may be purchased at sporting



goods stores in gateway communities and at the Gatlinburg Welcome Center at the north entrance to town. Fishing with any natural bait is prohibited, so use single-hook artificial lures. Before you cast any lines, pick up the Great Smoky Mountains Fishing Regulations brochure at any visitor center. Check at a ranger station to learn which stream segments will be closed.

Pets must always be leashed. They are allowed along paved roads, in parking lots and in campgrounds accessible to motor vehicles. Pets are not permitted on trails (exceptions: Gatlinburg Trail and Oconaluftee River Trail), in public buildings or in the backcountry. Service animals are allowed throughout the park.

Vandalism, or the removal of rocks, plants or any natural feature, is strictly prohibited. Please don't feed, approach, chase or harass park **wildlife**.

WHO'S WHO AT THE PARKS



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS)

The NPS is the federal custodian of the park. It preserves the Smokies' natural habitat, which was once heavily farmed and logged, and maintains the park's historic man-made features. The NPS also helps visitors have a more enjoyable stay in the park. Contact the superintendent at: Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 107 Park Headquarters Rd., Gatlinburg, TN 37738; **(865) 436-1200**, or visit nps.gov/grsm.

GATEWAY COMMUNITIES

Great Smoky Mountains National Park's gateway communities of **Gatlinburg**, **Cosby**, **Pigeon Forge** and **Townsend** in Tennessee; and **Bryson City**, **Cherokee**, **Maggie Valley** and Fontana Dam in North Carolina, offer lodging, dining and other services and attractions. Innkeepers, restaurateurs and merchants help make your stay in the Smokies comfortable and enjoyable. For more information about local chambers of commerce, visitor bureaus or departments of tourism, please see the "Lodging & Dining" chapter.

FRIENDS OF GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

This nonprofit organization is dedicated to raising private and corporate contributions to help the park meet some of its critical funding needs. The goals include assisting with natural and historic resource projects and helping to improve visitor facilities and services. For information or to learn how to become a member, please call **(865) 932-4794** or visit friendsofthesmokies.org.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1953 and operating bookstores both inside and outside the park, this nonprofit organization produces the park newspaper and other publications, funds staff positions for the park's library and archives, sponsors research projects, purchases items for living history demonstrations and funds visitor center exhibits. For more information, please call **(865) 436-7318** or visit smokiesstore.org.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS INSTITUTE AT TREMONT

The Institute is a nonprofit environmental education center offering residential and non-residential programs such as photography workshops, wilderness adventure camps and citizen science programs. All programs emphasize exploration and understanding of the park's natural and cultural resources. Please contact the Institute at **(865) 448-6709** or visit gsmit.org.

APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to maintaining and protecting the Appalachian Trail, 70 miles of which run through the park. The organization publishes information about the trail, conducts research projects and assists in trail maintenance. It represents more than 60 volunteer trail clubs and 16,000 members. For more information, please call **(304) 535-6331** or visit appalachiantrail.org.

PRESERVATION



The NPS plays a dual role in Great Smoky Mountains National Park: it preserves the park's natural environment and the historical creclcs of the mountain settlers.

SMOKIER SMOKIES

Air pollution has caused regional haze and decreased visibility from the park's scenic overlooks. Researchers believe the emissions rise at night, mix with air, and settle across the park's ridges. Visibility has significantly improved, over the past 15 years due to emissions reduction.

Ground-level ozone pollution is one of the most serious air pollutants. Concentrations in the park are among the highest in the eastern U.S. During high ozone-pollution episodes, visitors (especially those at-risk) may wish to refrain from strenuous outdoor activities. Acid rain, produced by the combination of sulfur, nitrogen by-products and water vapor, damages sensitive foliage and affects the chemical balance of streams and soils. Air-quality data is on display at the Sugarlands and Oconaluftee visitor centers.

IMPERILED FIRS AND HEMLOCKS

In the case of the Fraser fir, the threat is a tiny insect called the **balsam woolly adelgid (BWA)**. This native of Europe was inadvertently introduced to this country at the turn of the 20th century. Adelgids drink the Fraser fir's sap, killing it within six to eight years of initial infestation. More than 91 percent of the mature Fraser firs in the park have died since BWA was first discovered in 1962. In North Carolina, trees grown from seed in 1995 are managed as a reservoir of the park's genetic material.

The **hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA)**, the park's latest threat, is a tiny insect native to Asia that was discovered in the park in 2002. Spread in part, by larger insects and on birds' feet, HWA suck the sap from the base of tree needles which drop off, impairing new growth. A park team controls HWA with insecticides and the release of tiny predator beetles, which hold the best hope for long-term control. Early results show promise. The **"Save Our Hemlocks Action Team"** is a group of scientists, land managers and others organized by the Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere consortium. These experts pool their resources to survey and monitor impacts of HWA, conduct outreach activities and look at solutions to reduce a potential disaster. For information, visit **samab.org**.

SAVING ANIMALS

Peregrine falcon reintroduction efforts in the Smokies have resulted in recovery of a small population, after the birds nearly vanished from the eastern United States by the mid-1960s as a result of widespread pesticide use. Between 1984 and 1986, 13 peregrines were released in the Greenbrier area of the park. In June 1997, a nesting pair was observed at Peregrine Peak and produced three young. At least two active falcon nests are known in the park. The success of the park's **brook trout restoration** efforts have made it possible for visitors to catch the only native trout species in the park. Logging and non-native fish introductions in the early 1900s reduced the original range of brook trout in the park by 70 percent. The fish now inhabit about 200 miles of streams.



The Great Smoky Mountains are among the highest peaks in the Appalachian mountain range, yet they are rounder and lower in elevation than younger mountain chains such as the Rocky Mountains. How they came to be this way is a story that began almost 1 billion years ago.

An ancient sea flooded what is now the eastern United States, submerging the remnants of an old mountain range. The sea slowly deposited layers of sediment onto the ocean floor. The intense pressure of thousands of feet of **sediment** compressed these layers into metamorphic rock. Almost 300 million years ago, the sea added yet another layer of limestone sediment that was composed of fossilized marine animals and shells. The stage was set for the formation of the Appalachian Mountains.

As a result of the eons-old shifting of the earth's **tectonic plates** (large sections of the earth's crust), Africa and North America collided about 250 million years ago. This caused the older, underlying layer of metamorphic rock to tilt upward and slide over the younger limestone rock, slowly creating a towering mountain range, the Appalachians. The older rocks, known as the **Ocoee Series**, now compose most of the Great Smoky Mountains. Charles Bunion, Sawteeth and Chimney Tops are dramatic examples of how the rock layers tilted and buckled to form steep cliffs and pinnacles. In Cades Cove, erosion of the overlying metamorphic rock reveals the limestone layer beneath.

During the ice ages, massive boulders were created by alternating freezing and thawing of the rock. You can see **boulder**

fields on the Cove Hardwood, Noah "Bud" Ogle and Roaring Fork Motor nature trails.

The Smokies originally looked more like the Himalayas than the rounded mountains we see today. The relentless erosive force of water has sculpted their present-day appearance. Water runoff has also helped to carve the alternating pattern of **V-shaped valleys** and steep ridges. Landslides caused by a torrential downpour in 1951 created the large V-slash on Mount LeConte, and rock slides in 1984 briefly closed Newfound Gap Road. As you explore the park, look for ways water continues to sculpt the land.

HUMAN HISTORY

Evidence of human habitation here goes back thousands of years. The first inhabitants are believed to have been a breakaway group of Iroquois, later to be called **Cherokee**, who had moved south from Iroquoian lands in New England. The Cherokee Nation stretched from the Ohio River into South Carolina and consisted of seven clans. The Eastern Band of the Cherokee lived (and continue to live) in this sacred ancestral home of the Cherokee Nation.

The Cherokee enjoyed a settled, sophisticated agriculture-based life. Their towns of up to 50 log-and-mud huts were grouped around the town square and the **Council House**, a large, seven-sided (for the seven clans), dome-shaped building where public meetings and religious ceremonies were held. The Cherokee first encountered Europeans in 1540, when Spanish explorer **Hernando de Soto** led an expedition through Cherokee territory.

JOHN WALKER



John Walker (1841–1921), of Wears Valley, along with his wife, Margaret Jane, lived in Little Greenbrier Cove with their 11 children and prided themselves on their self-sufficiency. Margaret Jane was an “herb doctor” and a midwife; John was a blacksmith, carpenter, miller and farmer. To accommodate his large family, Walker built a cabin and placed it adjacent to an original structure built by his father-in-law, Wiley King. Walker’s cabin eventually passed to five of his daughters—Margaret Jane, Polly, Louisa, Hettie and Martha—who had never married.

In the 1930s, the commission responsible for acquiring land for Great Smoky Mountains National Park unsuccessfully attempted to persuade the Walker sisters to sell the homestead. To avoid negative publicity, the commission finally opted not to force the Walkers off via eminent domain. The Walker sisters eventually sold the farm in 1941 in exchange for a lifetime lease. A local legend claims the sisters were paid a visit by President Franklin Roosevelt, who convinced them to sell the land.

In the late 18th century, **Scotch-Irish, German, English and other settlers** arrived in significant numbers. The Cherokee were friendly at first, but fought with settlers when provoked. They battled Carolina settlers in the 1760s but eventually withdrew to the Blue Ridge Mountains.

To come to terms with the powerful newcomers, the **Cherokee Nation** attempted to make treaties and to adapt to European customs. They adopted a written legal code in 1808 and instituted a supreme court two years later. **Sequoyah**, a Cherokee silversmith, created an alphabet for the Cherokee language and in the space of two years, nearly all of his people could read and write the language.

But theirs was a losing cause. The discovery of gold in northern Georgia in 1828 sounded the death knell for the Cherokee Nation.

In 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the **Removal Act**, calling for the relocation of all native peoples east of the Mississippi River to Indian Territory, now Oklahoma.

The Cherokee appealed their case to the Supreme Court and Chief Justice Marshall ruled in their favor. President Jackson, however, disregarded the Supreme Court decree in the one instance in American history when a U.S. president overtly ignored a Supreme Court decision.

In 1838, the U.S. government forced some 13,000 Cherokee to march to Oklahoma along what has become known as the **Trail of Tears**. About one-third of the Cherokee died en route due to malnutrition and disease. Altogether, about 100,000 natives, including Cherokee, Seminole, Chickasaw and Choctaw survived the journey.

A handful of Cherokee disobeyed the government edict, however. Hiding out in the hills between Clingmans Dome and Mount Guyot, they managed to survive. In 1889, the 56,000-acre **Qualla Indian Reservation** was chartered with a population of about 1,000 people. Approximately 10,500 of their descendants now live on the reservation, which is located along the park’s southern boundary.

Like the Cherokee, pioneers who settled in the Smokies in the 18th and 19th centuries coveted the fertile valleys. Land soon became scarce. Later arrivals made their homesteads along steep slopes.

Logging began slowly, but by the time it ran its course, it had radically changed the land and the life of the people. Timber, of course, was vital to the early pioneers. They used it for homes, furniture, fences and fuel. They only began cutting it for cash in the mid-19th century. This had little noticeable effect on the forest, however, because men and animals could only carry so much.

Not so by the turn of the century. Technological advances and the eastern United States' need for lumber nearly eliminated all the southern Appalachian forests. Railroads were the key to large-scale logging operations and railroad tracks reaching deep into the mountains made timber readily available. Steam-powered equipment like skidders and log loaders also contributed to cost-effective tree removal.

Some 15 company towns and nearly as many sawmills were constructed in what is now the park. Mountain people who had once plowed fields and slopped hogs began to cut trees and saw logs for a living, abandoning their farms. They were attracted to logging by the promise of security and the stability of a steady paycheck.

Their security was short-lived, however. By the 1930s, the lumber companies had logged all but the most inaccessible areas and were casting their sights to richer pickings out West. Some of the mountain people returned to farming while others left to seek jobs in mines, textile mills and automobile factories.

NATIONAL PARK STATUS

In 1904, a librarian from St. Louis named **Horace Kephart** came to the Smokies for a respite to restore his health. Kephart found that large-scale logging was decimating the land and disrupting the lives of the people. As the years progressed, he promoted preserving the Smokies as a national park. In the 1920s, prominent Knoxville residents took up the cause and formed a citizens' organization.

The NPS was looking for park sites in the East after having established parks in the West. Founded in 1916, the young agency hoped to generate further public support for national parks with a park closer to the majority of the nation's population. Along with private efforts, the NPS promoted the idea of a national park in the Smokies.

The states of Tennessee and North Carolina and countless citizens responded by giving millions of dollars to purchase parkland. The federal government was reluctant to buy land for parks; national parks in the West had been formed from land it had already owned. Eventually, it did contribute \$2 million. Coupled with **John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s** donation of \$5 million, the NPS reached its goal.

Lumber companies were bought out in agreements that phased out operations over several years and some people living within the proposed park boundaries were allowed lifetime residency rights. Most people moved, and consequently were paid more for their land. On June 15, 1934, Great Smoky Mountains National Park was officially established, preserving the land for generations to come.

SIGHTS TO SEE



Steeped in history and blessed with natural beauty, the Smokies provide visitors with historic log cabins, primeval forests and misty vistas of seemingly endless ridgelines. Listed below is a sampling of the best the Smokies have to offer.

CENTRAL SECTION

The following locations are accessible from Newfound Gap Road.

ALUM CAVE BLUFFS

The Alum Cave Bluffs were supposedly a source of saltpeter for Civil War gunpowder. The bluffs, now a popular day hiker destination, were also the site of a 19th-century alum mine. Alum is a compound sulfate used in munitions manufacturing, in medicines and in setting cloth dyes. The trail begins between the Newfound Gap and Chimney Tops overlooks, and becomes somewhat strenuous near the end. It rises 1,360 feet above Newfound Gap Road and at times hikers must grip trailside cables to traverse cliffs. The trail is 2.5 miles to the bluffs and five miles to Mount LeConte and goes through **Arch Rock**.

A restoration project of Alum Cave Trail involved smoothing and widening portions, making steps less steep, improving bridges and freshening old life-lines along the cliffs. One of the most popular trails in the Great Smoky Mountains now offers a safer and more enjoyable opportunity to reach unparalleled views.

Note that all hikers are prohibited from entering caves and mine shafts due to concerns about the spread of white nose syndrome among bats.

ANDREWS BALD

Balds are open, unforested fields on mountain ridges, once referred to by naturalist Edwin Way Peale as, "pieces of prairie lifted thousands of feet into the air." Biologists can't explain exactly why they occur, though theories involve overgrazing, woolly mammoths and repeated fires set by early humans. The NPS maintains several balds in Great Smoky Mountain National Park. Andrews Bald is the easiest of these to reach, located 1.8 miles south of Clingmans Dome by hiking trail. Views from the field make it an inviting picnic spot.

CHARLIES BUNION

The 1,000-foot high Charlies Bunion is a popular destination for day hikers who want to travel a small portion of the Appalachian Trail. Start at Newfound Gap and follow the crest east for four miles to see sweeping views of Mount LeConte and Greenbrier area. Return the same way for an eight-mile hike.

CHEROKEE ORCHARD ROAD AND ROARING FORK MOTOR NATURE TRAIL

Historical sites along these roads include the remains of a homestead owned by the Ogle family who lived here after the Civil War. There are also log cabins and a cemetery in Roaring Fork, remnants of a village that supported some two dozen families about 150 years ago. The sites are located just southeast of Gatlinburg and are accessible to automobiles via the paved **Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail** (closed

in winter). The road is impassable to trailers and recreational vehicles.

CHIMNEY TOPS

Chimney Tops are sheer, dramatic examples of the tremendous forces that caused the eastern edge of North America to buckle, creating the Appalachian Mountains. You can see the twin pinnacles from the Chimney Tops Overlooks, located along Newfound Gap Rd., or hike Clingmans Dome. At 6,643 feet in elevation, Clingmans Dome is the highest spot in the Smokies. A forest of spruce and fir trees covers the top, but an observation platform provides an unparalleled view. From Newfound Gap, drive seven miles southwest on Clingmans Dome Road to the parking lot. Reaching the platform requires a steep, half-mile walk on a paved trail. Clingmans Dome Road is usually closed from December to April.

MINGUS MILL

Located north of the Oconaluftee Visitor Center on Newfound Gap Rd., Mingus Mill is one of two water-powered mills still operating in the park. From mid-March through mid-November, a miller grinds corn and wheat to make cornmeal and flour.

MOUNT LECONTE

Hikers and backpackers often gather at dawn or sunset at Mount LeConte, the third-highest peak in the park, for one of the Smokies' most powerful wilderness experiences. The 6,593-foot-high mountain offers its best views from two outcroppings on Myrtle Point and Cliff Top. There is no road leading to the top of Mount LeConte, or to the lodge perched there, so you'll have to go on foot. To

summit, take one of five hiking trails:

Boulevard Trail via the Appalachian Trail at Newfound Gap, 16 miles round-trip; **Alum Cave Trail** at the Alum Cave parking lot on Newfound Gap Road, 11 miles round-trip; **Rainbow Falls Trail** or **Trillium Gap**, each 13.4 miles round-trip; or **Bull Head**, 14.4 miles round-trip from Cherokee Orchard. **LeConte Lodge** is located in the trees not far from the summit.

MOUNTAIN FARM MUSEUM

Settled around 1800, Oconaluftee is now home to Mountain Farm Museum, which replicates a late 19th-century farm with a house, barn, corncrib, sorghum molasses mill and blacksmith shop. From spring through October, there are **costumed interpretive demonstrations**. The museum is located a short walk from the Oconaluftee Visitor Center.

NEWFOUND GAP

Figuratively (and almost literally) the park's center, Newfound Gap is the cut through the crest of the Great Smoky Mountains located between Sugarlands and Oconaluftee, along Newfound Gap Road. The Tennessee-North Carolina border crosses the gap east to west, as does the Appalachian Trail. At 5,046 feet, it offers spectacular views of the park.

WESTERN SECTION

CADES COVE

In the isolated valley of Cades Cove, first settled by Europeans in 1819, the NPS maintains a historical and cultural preserve of log cabins, churches and other buildings. **Cable Mill**, near Cades Cove Visitor Center, is an **operating water-**

powered gristmill constructed in the early 1870s.

The **Cades Cove Loop Road** is an 11-mile, one-way road that passes 19 tour stops marked by numbered posts keyed to a pamphlet you can obtain at the beginning of the road or at visitor centers. The road is a favorite with cyclists because it is closed to all motor vehicles each Wednesday from May 4 to September 28, 2022 to provide for pedestrian and bicycle use. It is crowded during peak periods. Cades Cove can be reached via U.S. 321 near Townsend, Tennessee, as well as via Little River Road from Sugarlands Visitor Center.

Living history demonstrations, held from spring through fall, include the making of molasses, soap and apple butter. Friends of Great Smoky

Mountains National Park set up two drive-up donation boxes along the Loop Road. Funds go to visitor facility improvements, natural and cultural resource preservation, educational programs, and visitor services.

EASTERN SECTION

CATALOOCHEE VALLEY

Smaller and less visited, this lowland valley was once a choice site for farmsteads and became the largest settlement in the Smokies. Only a few of the nearly 200 buildings that were here at the turn of the 20th century remain. Farmhouses, barns, a schoolhouse and a church are located in the valley. An unpaved steep and narrow road at the junction of I-40 and U.S. 276 leads to Cataloochee Valley.



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KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR ELK!

Elk once roamed the southern Appalachian Mountains, but were extirpated from the region by over-hunting and habitat loss. The last elk in the area are believed to have been killed by the mid-1800s. By 1900, alarmed by the decrease of population of elk in North America, hunting groups and other conservation organizations became concerned the species was headed for extinction. The park reintroduced elk to the park in 2001 and the herd has grown to at least 150 animals.

ELK FACTS

Bulls weigh 800-900 pounds and have antlers as wide as five feet, while cows average 600 pounds. Adults are 7 to 10 feet long from nose to tail and stand four and a half to five feet tall at the shoulder. Cows usually give birth to only one calf annually beginning in the second autumn of their lives. Newborns weigh about 35 pounds and can stand within minutes of birth. Elk graze on grasses, forbs and acorns; and browse bark, leaves and buds from shrubs and trees. In the Smokies, coyotes, bobcats and black bears may kill young, sick or injured elk. Those that survive these threats can live as long as 20 years, though 15 is more typical.

VIEWING ELK

The best elk viewing opportunities are in Cataloochee during early morning or late evening, as well as during the breeding season, known as “the rut,” which occurs in the fall. The rut is a fascinating mating ritual when the bulls bugle and compete for dominance to attract cows. Elk are also active on cloudy summer days and before or after storms. They are best viewed at a distance, using binoculars or a spotting



scope for close-up views. It is unlawful to approach elk. Approaching wildlife causes undue stress, forcing them to expend crucial energy unnecessarily and can result in real harm. If a nearby animal stops feeding, changes direction of travel, or otherwise alters its behavior, you are too close!

WARNING!

Elk are the largest animals in the park and they can be dangerous. Cows will defend their calves and they’ve been known to charge people in the park. Bull elk may perceive people as a challenge to their territory and may charge too, especially during the breeding season. Always keep your distance and never touch or move elk calves. Though they may appear to be orphaned, it is likely that their mother is nearby feeding.

The use of spotlights, elk bugles and other wildlife calls are illegal in the national park. It is also illegal to remove elk antlers or other elk parts from the park. Never feed elk or other wildlife or bait them in for closer observation. Feeding park wildlife is strictly forbidden by law and almost always leads to the animal’s demise.

GATLINBURG, TN



As one of Great Smoky Mountains National Park's principal gateway communities, Gatlinburg, Tennessee, hosts many of the park's millions of annual visitors. It is located on U.S. 441 on the park's northern border, just two miles north of the Sugarlands Visitor Center. The city offers lodging, dining, shopping and other services to make your stay convenient and comfortable.

LODGING

Gatlinburg offers accommodations for every taste and budget. Within Gatlinburg, there are more than 14,000 sleeping rooms including hotels and motels; cabins, condominiums, chalets, inns and lodges; nine bed and breakfasts, and three private campgrounds. Book early, especially if you're visiting during the summer, over the weekend or during holiday periods. For more information, please contact the Gatlinburg Convention and Visitors Bureau at **(865) 436-4178** or **gatlinburg.com**.

DINING

More than 100 restaurants contribute to Gatlinburg's food scene, with plenty of options for every taste, from gourmet hubs serving seafood, prime rib and wild game, to locally owned eateries serving the best in authentic Southern cooking. Dress up if you like, but dining in Gatlinburg is a casual affair.

In 2019, country music superstar Blake Shelton opened Ole Red Gatlinburg, a restaurant, bar and music venue featuring Southern cuisine and live music.

SHOPPING

Gatlinburg has over 500 gift and specialty shops. Handcrafted leather goods, wood carvings, quilts, homemade fudge and candies, jewelry, custom glassware and furniture and pottery are available. Gatlinburg is also home to the **Great Smoky Arts & Crafts Trail**, the largest gathering of independent artisans in North America. Located on an eight-mile loop only three miles from downtown Gatlinburg on East Parkway (U.S. 321-N), the Arts & Crafts Trail features more than 120 shops, studios and galleries for those interested in collecting one-of-a-kind pieces of artwork and crafts. In downtown, the handcrafted, old-world European design of **The Village Shops** transports you back in time as you shop its 27 stores, boutiques and galleries.

ENTERTAINMENT

Gatlinburg SkyLift Park offers thrilling experiences for travelers, including the SkyDeck amphitheater which features an expansive view of the Great Smoky Mountains, and the SkyBridge, which is the longest pedestrian suspension bridge in North America.

Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies

features more than 1.3 million gallons of salt water and is home to thousands of rare fish including 12-foot sharks and other aquatic wildlife. Its Penguin Playhouse, an exhibit of African black-footed penguins, provides an additional interactive offering to aquarium visitors.

Ober Gatlinburg Ski Area and Amusement Park

offers winter skiing, snowboarding and tubing, year-round indoor ice skating and America's

largest tram, a 120-passenger aerial tram that whisks you from downtown Gatlinburg to the top of Mt. Harrison.

Anakeesta celebrates the Smokies' rich mountain heritage. Take a Chondola ride to the summit of Anakeesta Mountain, where you'll be treated to spectacular views, shopping and dining at the new Cliff Top Bar and Grill. You're inner adventurer will love the 16-bridge Tree Canopy Walk, Dueling 1,000+ foot Zipline Adventure and the Brandauer single rail mountain coaster!

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Convenient trolley service travels throughout Gatlinburg and to the park's Sugarlands Visitor Center, Laurel Falls trailhead and Elkmont Campground. Of particular value is the all-day Trolley Pass that provides unlimited ridership on city routes at only \$2 per day.

SPECIAL EVENTS YEAR-ROUND

Gatlinburg offers popular special events throughout the year.

The **73rd Annual Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage** held from April 26-29, 2023 boasts more than 199 programs, including hiking tours, motorcades, demonstrations and lectures centered on the park's flora.

On the evening of July 3, tens of thousands of people gather for Gatlinburg's **4th of July Midnight Parade**. Distinguished as the first Independence Day parade in the country, it steps off at 12:01 p.m. The event's festivities conclude with a downtown fireworks extravaganza the night of the 4th.

At the **Craftsmen's Fair** on July 8-17 and October 13-30, you'll find the best in art, crafts and music with more than 200 exhibitors from across the country.

The **Smoky Mountains Songwriters Festival** celebrates the area's Appalachian musical roots from August 18-21 with entertainment, song competition, workshops, mentoring sessions and stage spots. The SMSWF promotes songwriters and entertains music fans.

Celebrate **Oktoberfest at Ober** Gatlinburg October 24-31. The festival features Bavarian-style food, beverages, music and live entertainment during daily shows all month long.

The **Smoky Mountain Harvest Festival** celebrates the season with new 3D Scarecrow people, festivals, special events and autumn-themed displays mid September through late November.

The **Pigeon Forge Winterfest** runs from November through February 19, 2023, with millions of small, twinkling lights coming together on streets throughout the mountain towns to form elaborate displays.

Shop early for a one-of-a-kind Christmas present during the **Thanksgiving Arts & Craft Show** at the Gatlinburg Convention Center, late November through early December.

Gatlinburg's **47th Annual Fantasy of Lights Christmas Parade** on December 2 is one of the most popular events of the season, with lighted floats, marching bands, balloons and more.



A HISTORY OF CRAFTS AND ARTS



The strong crafts tradition in the Smokies produces many fine handcrafted items. Long after most people along the Eastern Seaboard lived in a cash economy, the mountain people still spun thread from sheep shearings, built furniture from forest hardwoods and made baskets styled after those made by the Cherokee people, their predecessors in the region.

Appalachian crafts include rocking and cane chairs, cornshuck dolls, hand-carved wood sculptures and woven items such as napkins, jackets, scarves and blankets. Situated along an eight-mile loop resplendent with natural beauty is the only zoned crafts community in the United States and the largest group of independent artisans in North America proudly known as Great Smoky Arts & Craft Community.

Visitors to this artists's haven can step back in time and witness the rich heritage of Gatlinburg come to life when they stroll through more than 100 of the commu-

nity's shops, restaurants and studios. Established in 1937, the community boasts celebrated artisans with a variety of skills, specializing in everything from whittling to painting, sewing, weaving and carving to create original collectibles and works. No visitor will leave empty-handed when they shop the many contemporary crafts, handmade gifts, and one-of-a-kind pieces. In the spring, arts and crafts lovers can learn craftsmanship in a variety of mediums during Hands on Gatlinburg, a weekend-long event packed with workshops taught by community artists.

Those looking for unique creations in downtown Gatlinburg can find them at the internationally-recognized Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. Aspiring and advanced artists can participate in workshops taught by studio artists and university faculty

Please visit **gatlinburg.com** for more information.



Kick off the new year in style. Gatlinburg celebrates **Auld Lang Syne** with a **New Year's Eve Ball Drop and Fireworks Show** from the top of the 400-foot-tall Gatlinburg Space Needle.

GUIDE SERVICES

Smoky Mountain Angler offers full- or half-day group and personally guided fishing trips, including waders, rods and license; call **(865) 436-8746** for more information. **A Walk in the Woods** features guided day hikes, nature walks and backpacking trips; call **(865) 436- 8746** for more information. **Nantahala Outdoor Center's Great Outpost**, immediately adjacent to the

park's Gatlinburg entrance, features outdoor gear and guide services for hiking, trout fishing and rafting; call **(865) 277-8209** for more information.

VISITOR SERVICES

There are seven banks with 24-hour ATMs, several service stations, grocery stores, liquor stores and drug stores. Call **911** for ambulance service.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For brochures and additional information, please call the Gatlinburg Convention and Visitors Bureau at **(865) 436-4178**; visit **gatlinburg.com** or download the Gatlinburg app.

CHEROKEE, NC



In Cherokee, there's too much to do in one day. A culture, a people and a place that's actually a sovereign nation, Cherokee is located right in the heart of Western North Carolina. It's also base camp for hiking in the Great Smokies, arts and crafts shopping, elk viewing and hours of fishing fun, and it's home to a history that spans millennia. Each place you visit pulses with the stories and significance of a people whose roots run deep and whose ancient wisdom is fascinating to uncover. How will Cherokee affect you?

THE MUSEUM OF THE CHEROKEE INDIAN

Inspired by the beauty and ingenuity of the Cherokees, this museum is a cultural and historical tour without equal. Hear the whir of the arrow and feel the vibrations of the drums amid spectacular exhibits. Step through the doors and discover up close the Cherokee people's spirit of inventiveness and resilience, and their will to survive.

OCONALUFTEE INDIAN VILLAGE

As you step onto the soft trails of the village, you're immediately transported to the 1760s. The faint tang of wood smoke wafts by as a Cherokee cultural expert leads you on an interactive journey through ancient and authentic Cherokee lifestyle and history. Speak with villagers as they hull canoes, offer blowgun demonstrations, sculpt pottery and masks, weave baskets and fashion beadwork. Watch as a village prepares for war. Note that the village's capacity is limited due to COVID-19 restrictions.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

Having Great Smoky Mountains National Park at your doorstep means heaven for outdoorsy folk. The Cherokee people treat their environment with great care and respect in order to eat well and stay in harmony with nature. Consider that over 800 miles of the best hiking trails east of the Mississippi are located here.

"UNTO THESE HILLS"

A spectacular reimagining of the Cherokee story, **"Unto These Hills"** is an outdoor drama that portrays the gripping legacy of the Cherokee people through the zenith of their power, through the heartbreak of the Trail of Tears and finally ending in the



present day, where the Cherokee people continue to rewrite their place in the world.

FISHING IN CHEROKEE

In Cherokee, anglers enjoy 30 miles of streams, arguably the longest stretch of managed fishing waters in the eastern U.S., stocked with trout: rainbow, brook, golden and brown. You will discover thousands of new favorite fishing spots in Cherokee, all collected into one amazingly beautiful place.

QUALLA ARTS & CRAFTS MUTUAL, INC.

As you walk in, you note the smooth wood of the dramatic masks used in traditional dance rituals or the cool clay of the wedding jugs. Founded in 1946 with the purpose of preserving and advancing Cherokee arts and crafts, Qualla Arts & Crafts Mutual, Inc. is the oldest and foremost Native American arts cooperative in the United States. Here, thousands of authentic treasures wait to go home with you.

HARRAH'S CHEROKEE CASINO RESORT

Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort is home to a 21-story, four-star luxury hotel nestled in the beautiful mountains of western North Carolina. Guests have access to an arcade, indoor pool, workout room and several delicious restaurants. The Mandara Spa brings casino guests the highest quality of therapeutic luxury.

SEQUOYAH NATIONAL GOLF CLUB

Your Sequoyah National Golf Club experience begins with a Robert Trent

Jones II design enveloped in dramatic mountain beauty. With 6,600 yards of rolling fairways and fun, playable tees for all skill levels, it's little wonder Sequoyah was named Golf Magazine's #2 "Best New Course You Can Play" of 2009.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Make a special event the foundation of your vacation. Festivals, fairs and other cultural events abound throughout the spring, summer and fall. All provide an easy opportunity to absorb some Cherokee culture through dance, food, craft making and more. For a full list of events, go to **visitcherokeenc.com**.

The Cherokee Voices Festival, hosted on the grounds of the Museum of The Cherokee Indian in June is all things Cherokee: living history, traditional dances, music, singing, crafting demonstrations and food. The **Cherokee Indian Fair**, which takes place in October, has been taking place for more than a century. It's a cornucopia of sights and sounds, and a treat for the senses, with food, music and rides.

LODGING, DINING & TRANSPORTATION

Cherokee offers accommodations to suit everyone's taste and budget, with a great selection of hotels, motels, rental cabins and cottages, and more than 15 campgrounds. Cherokee operates **two downtown shuttle routes** Monday through Saturday, with stops every 30 minutes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the Cherokee Welcome Center at **(800) 438-1601** or **visitcherokeenc.com** for more information on cultural events and attractions, group rates and value packages.

LODGING & DINING



IN THE PARK LECONTE LODGE

For a taste of the pioneer life, stay at LeConte Lodge, a rustic collection of cabins located in the forest near the top of Mount LeConte. It can be reached only by taking one of five hiking trails, the shortest and steepest being 5.5-mile Alum Cave Trail. Allow yourself time to enjoy the incredibly diverse flora and fauna. Mountaineer Jack Huff built the lodge as a retreat in 1926. He and his wife, Pauline, operated the lodge until 1960. The present concessioner is Stokely Hospitality Enterprises.

Guests stay in rough-hewn private cabins or private rooms in cabins with shared living rooms. The lodge accommodates up to 50 guests. Cabins have kerosene lamps, heaters, sheets and wool blankets; and no indoor plumbing, electricity, television or telephones. Four flush toilets are located in outhouses. Prices include meals. Overnight guests are once again being served meals "family style" in the Dining Hall. This is for breakfast and dinner service only. Lunch can be served as a "to-go" meal. Day hikers and backpackers are welcome to pick up meals from the gift shop as well.

The lodge is open late March to mid-November. To make reservations, contact the lodge to be entered in a lottery, which takes place each fall. For more information Call **(865) 429-5704** or visit **lecontelodge.com**.

NEAR THE PARK

Accommodations and restaurants are available in many communities near the park. For

a more complete list of nearby towns, see the chart in this chapter.

PIGEON FORGE, TENNESSEE

Pigeon Forge is located near the park's north entrance and is home to Dollywood, where visitors experience mountain traditions, amazing adventures and live entertainment.

Wilderness Wildlife Week is returning to the park in May 2022! Warm weather fun continues through October when glorious fall foliage adorns the city. Fall also brings several arts and crafts festivals, two of which are nationally acclaimed. Arrive between November and February to be greeted by five million twinkling lights—part of the annual Winterfest celebration. Live entertainment and traditional holiday festivities take place in November and December, while January and February feature dozens of special events like a storytelling festival.

Pigeon Forge is a prime destination for outlet aficionados, boasting more than 200 factory outlet stores, as well as specialty and craft villages.

TOWNSEND, TENNESSEE

In the early 1890s, this little mountain village was the capital of the lumber industry in the eastern United States. Townsend has become a peaceful vacation spot for travelers who want comfort, good food, affordable prices and easy access to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Accommodations include modern motels, amenity-filled log cabins and camp-

grounds. You can enjoy golfing, tennis, swimming, tubing and horseback riding. Some facilities also offer games, fishing poles and badminton sets for children. Bicycle rentals are available for visitors who want to take advantage of the paved, three-mile bike trail that parallels U.S. 321

through the community.

Townsend's excellent restaurants offer varied menus, some of which specialize in regional dishes such as Tennessee country ham. Many restaurants will prepare box lunches, perfect for a picnic in the Smokies.

NEARBY COMMUNITIES: LODGING & DINING CONTACTS

Accommodations and restaurants are available in nearby communities. Contact the local visitor bureaus, chambers of commerce or departments of tourism below for more information. See the "Plan Your Visit" chapter for a regional map and directions.

Cherokee, North Carolina Adjacent to the park on U.S. 441 at the park's south entrance. See the "Cherokee" chapter for more information.	(800) 438-1601 visitcherokeenc.com
Gatlinburg, Tennessee Adjacent to the park on U.S. 441 near the park's north entrance. See the "Gatlinburg" chapter for more information.	(865) 436-4178 gatlinburg.com
Pigeon Forge, Tennessee On U.S. 441 near the park's north entrance	(800) 251-9100 mypigeonforge.com
Townsend, Tennessee On U.S. 321 near the park's west entrance	(800) 525-6834 smokymountains.org
Bryson City, North Carolina Off U.S. 74 near the park's south entrance	(828) 488-3681 greatsmokies.com
Fontana Dam, North Carolina On Highway 28 on the park's southern boundary	(800) 470-3790 grahamcountytravel.com
Maggie Valley, North Carolina Off U.S. 19, southeast of the park	(800) 624-4431 maggievalley.org
Sevierville, Tennessee On U.S. 441 near the park's north entrance	(888) 738-4378 visitsevierville.com
Jefferson County, Tennessee On 1-40 and I-81 near the park's north entrance	(877) 237-3847 jeffersoncountyvacation.com
Cosby, Tennessee On U.S. 321 near the park's east entrance	(423) 623-7201 newportcockercountychamber.com
Asheville, North Carolina Off of I-26 and I-240 east of the park	(828) 258-6129 exploreasheville.com
Waynesville, North Carolina Off U.S. 74 east of the park	(828) 456-3517 downtownwaynesville.com

THINGS TO DO



Great Smoky Mountains National Park offers a variety of things to do each season.

SPRING, SUMMER & FALL PARK PROGRAMS

The NPS offers talks, slide shows, films, guided nature and history walks and evening campfire programs. The park provides a wealth of year-round classes and programs covering almost every aspect of its nature and history.

HISTORIC EXHIBITS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Barns, churches, a school and many cabins are preserved in Cataloochee Valley, once the largest settlement in the Smokies, located in the park's southeast area. The NPS also maintains historical cabins, farmhouses and churches in Cades Cove, a valley in the western area. Here, and at other locations throughout the park from spring through October, park employees dress as 19th-century settlers and demonstrate how mountain people lived. At the Mountain Farm Museum near the Oconaluftee Visitor Center, they spin wool, weave cloth, forge tools and make sorghum into molasses. At Mingus Mill, also near Oconaluftee, and Cable Mill, near Cades Cove Visitor Center, millers grind corn into cornmeal and wheat into flour using a water-powered gristmill.

FIELD STUDIES

The Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont is located in the park near Townsend, Tennessee. Open year-round this center educates visitors through special science programs, family

weekends, outdoor experiences, craft workshops and other offerings. On-site lodging and dining facilities allow participants to immerse themselves in the programs, which usually last two to six days and cover a variety of subjects. Reservations are required for all summer 2022 programs. For details, please call **(865) 448-6709** or visit **gsmit.org**.

The University of Tennessee Smoky Mountain Field School offers nature programs and activities that incorporate backpacking and hiking. Programs, which run from four hours to two days and are frequently held on weekends, cover various aspects of natural and cultural history. *Note you must be 18 or older to register for and attend a Smoky Mountain Field School course.* For more information, call **(865) 974-0150** or visit **smfs.utk.edu**.



BICYCLING

The park has limited areas for safe biking because roads tend to be steep and narrow, and bicycles are prohibited on trails. Cades Cove and Cataloochee Valley, however, make for pleasant cycling. The 11-mile loop road around Cades Cove is closed to automobiles on Wednesdays from early May through September. Rent bikes at the Cades Cove Campground Store and at Nantahala Outdoor Center in Gatlinburg.

FISHING

You can fish for smallmouth bass, rock bass, and brook, rainbow or brown trout within the park's bountiful streams from sunrise to sunset. A valid North Carolina or Tennessee state fishing license is required.

You can purchase one at sporting goods stores in gateway communities, at the Gatlinburg Welcome Center at the north entrance of town or at ncwildlife.org or gooutdoorstennessee.com. Make sure you pick up a copy of fishing regulations at the visitor centers.

HORSEBACK RIDING

Equestrians consider the Smokies among the best riding country in the east. About 550 miles of the park's hiking trails are open to horses.

Obtain a copy of the park's trail map, which outlines the rules and regulations of riding in the backcountry. It also has information about backcountry camping and permit requirements. Official trail



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maps are available at any park visitor center or by calling **(865) 436-1297**. You can also rent horses from concessioner-managed stables located in the park: Cades Cove, **(865) 448-9009**; Sugarlands Riding Stables, **(865) 436-3535**; Smokemont, **(828) 497-2373**; and Smoky Mountain Riding Stables, **(865) 436-5634**.

The NPS requires concessioners to send guides with rental horses. Children younger

than 6 years old must ride with an adult. The park's five drive-in horse camps are open April through October. Reservations are required and can be made by calling **(877) 444-6777** or visiting **recreation.gov**. In addition, Cades Cove Riding Stable offers carriage and hay rides (wheelchair accessible). The Smokemont Riding Stable offers horse-drawn wagon rides along the historic Oconaluftee Turnpike.



The Appalachian Trail was proposed by conservationist **Benton MacKaye** in 1921. Work began the following year, and by 1937, the trail was complete. The first person to walk its entire length, from Georgia to Maine, did so in 1948. Every year, some 100 hikers repeat the feat. Successful hikers include a 6-year-old boy, several octogenarians and a visually impaired man with his service animal. The entire trip takes four to six months, crossing 14 states, eight national forests, two national parks and 15 major rivers. Elevations range from 6,643 feet at Clingmans Dome in the Smokies to near sea level at the Hudson River in New York. The segment within the park follows the Smokies' ridgeline 68 miles for nearly the entire length of the park. You can access the trail at Newfound Gap, Clingmans Dome, Fontana Dam and at the end of Highway 32 just north of Big Creek Campground. For a suggested route within the park, see the "Walking and Hiking" chapter.

PICNICKING

There are 11 picnic areas in the park. Several remain open year-round and about half have pavilions that are available to reserve up to one year in advance. Visit the park's website for a listing of picnic areas or call **(877) 444-6777**.

WINTER

The two main roads, Newfound Gap and Little River, are closed when they become unsafe. Clingmans Dome Road is closed to cars in winter from early December to April 1. For road and weather conditions, please call **(865) 436-1200**.

WINTER RECREATION

Clingmans Dome Road is one of the best places in the park for cross-country skiing and sledding. **Ober Gatlinburg Ski Resort & Amusement Park** offers

downhill skiing, snowboarding, snow tubing and ice skating. Hikers will have the **Appalachian Trail** all to themselves during the winter. From November through April at elevations above 4,000 feet, it is often snowy with temperatures frequently falling below zero. There is no in-park lodging during the winter, but the Cades Cove and Smokemont campgrounds remain open year-round.

WINTER WILDLIFE WATCHING

The park teems with life and you'll see plenty of white-tailed deer, woodchucks and raccoons in winter, especially around Cades Cove. You likely won't see bears, though; they'll be denning. Some small birds, such as black-capped chickadees also winter in the Smokies. The "Nature & Wildlife" chapter has more information about plants and animals in the park.



WALKING & HIKING



With its miles of scenic paths and trails, Great Smoky Mountains is meant to be explored on foot. Whether you're a casual day hiker or a determined mountaineer, there's a trail for you. You can choose to stroll easy quarter-mile paths called **Quiet Walkways** or go on self-guiding nature walks (pamphlets describing points of interest are available at the trailheads). If you're an experienced hiker, you can tackle trails that bring you up steep mountainsides, along high ridges and through deep forests with rushing streams. Be sure to stop at a visitor center beforehand to learn about your walking and hiking options, pick up maps and find out about weather and trail conditions; and trail closures.

From May 2 to November 17, the Ramsey Cascade Trail and Ramsey Prong Road will be closed Monday to Thursday. Big Creek Trail will be closed May 9 to July 14, Monday to Thursday. Scott Mountain Trail is closed between campsite 6 to Schoolhouse Gap.



HIKING TIPS

- **Consider the weather.** If you get caught in a thunderstorm, stay off the balds and away from meadows and other open areas to avoid getting hit by lightning. Always carry rain gear.
- **Know your limitations.** An average hiker travels two miles an hour. Steep terrain, heavy loads or young children may slow your travel time.
- **Stick to the trails.** Getting lost or injured is much more likely to occur if you are away from established trails. If you do become lost or are overtaken by darkness, stay calm and remain where you are. Park rescues of overdue hikers who stay on trails are usually successful within a few hours; it may take days to locate hikers off the trails. Never hike alone and always leave an itinerary with someone.
- **Be wary of bears and boars**—give them a wide berth. Experienced hikers wear bells, carry a whistle, talk or sing to announce their presence to bears.
- **To prevent blisters**, the most common ailment on the trail, wear comfortable shoes or boots that suit your needs and the terrain. Likewise, choose quality outdoor socks that will cushion and protect your feet.
- **Don't drink stream water.** It may contain impurities and parasites that can make you ill. Boil, filter or treat (with iodine pills) any water from streams or springs.
- **Do not rely on technology to help you.** Cell phones do not work most places in the backcountry and GPS is sometimes unreliable. Carry a current park trail map and know how to read it.



WALKING & HIKING TRAILS

Trail Trailhead	Description	Round-Trip Distance	Difficulty Elevation Gain
Abrams Falls Trail <i>Abrams Falls Parking Lot at west end of Cades Cove Loop Road</i>	This relatively level trail leads to the 20-foot-high Abrams Falls, which spills into a scenic pool.	5 miles	moderate 340 feet
Alum Cave Trail <i>Alum Cave Bluffs parking area at Newfound Gap Road between Newfound Gap and Chimney Tops</i>	Travel through Arch Rock's erosion-created tunnel to Alum Cave Bluffs and finally up steep cliffs to Mount LeConte, one of the park's best viewpoints.	11 miles	strenuous 2,800 feet
Appalachian Trail <i>Newfound Gap</i>	A popular section of the trail leads from Newfound Gap to Charles Bunion, which passes through a spruce-fir forest with spectacular vistas.	8 miles	moderate 980 feet
Boulevard Trail <i>Appalachian Trail from Newfound Gap to Boulevard Trail</i>	This is one of five trails to Mount LeConte's summit. It is the longest, but less steep and still considered strenuous.	16 miles	strenuous 1,545 feet
Chimney Tops Trail <i>Chimney Tops Trailhead on Newfound Gap Road</i>	Because of heavy damage from the November 2016 fire, this trail no longer provides access to Chimney Top pinnacles. NPS created an observation area from which hikers can view them.	1.75 miles	strenuous 1,335 feet
Hen Wallow Falls Trail <i>Before the picnic area on the road to Cosby Campground</i>	A good, short day hike. The main trail leads to the top of the falls; a steep, narrow side trail leads to the bottom.	4 miles	moderate 520 feet
Indian Creek Falls Trail <i>End of Deep Creek Road just past the Deep Creek Campground</i>	This flat trail leads to picturesque Indian Creek Falls, which cascades 60 feet down a series of ledges into a wide pool.	2 miles	easy 100 feet
Laurel Falls Trail <i>Laurel Falls parking area on Little River Road</i>	The paved trail is the most popular waterfall trail in the park. It passes through a pine and oak forest.	2.5 miles	easy 200 feet
Ramsey Cascades Trail* <i>From Greenbrier, follow signs to the Ramsey Cascades trailhead (closed in 2021).</i>	This trail passes through an old-growth deciduous forest before reaching the 100-foot-high Ramsey Cascades.	8 miles	strenuous 2,375 feet
Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail** <i>Off Newfound Gap Road, 0.25-mile south of Sugarlands Visitor Center. 🚸</i>	A paved trail leads to the forest, a river and the remains of pre-park dwellings. Favorite among older visitors, families with children in strollers, and visitors with mobility and sensory impairments.	0.5 mile	easy level

* Do not attempt to climb to the top of the falls; several attempts have resulted in fatalities.

** Special communications media are available at the visitor center to assist in interpreting nature.

Note: Hike times range from 1.5 miles to 3 miles per hour, depending on the steepness of the terrain and the physical fitness of the hiker. Plan your hike based on your individual ability and the trail descriptions above.

CAMPING



Great Smoky Mountain camping is primitive by design. The park operates 10 front-country campgrounds that have 1,000 sites. These campgrounds have cold running water, picnic tables, fire pits and flush toilets. There are no RV hookups or showers. The largest campgrounds also have amphitheaters used for ranger talks and slide shows. Cades Cove and Smokemont remain open year round. For more information about the park's five drive-in horse camps, please see the "Things to Do" chapter.

RESERVATIONS

All campsites require a reservation in advance. To make one, please visit **recreation.gov** or call **(877) 444-6777**. Reservations may be made up to six months in advance. Camping fee to be raised in 2023.

RESTRICTIONS

Stays of up to seven days are allowed from mid-May through October; 14 days is the limit during the rest of the year.

BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING

Permits are required in the backcountry and are available online or at the backcountry office at the Sugarlands Visitor Center. Anyone staying overnight in the backcountry must camp in one of the nearly 100 designated sites or shelters. Permit and site reservations can be made up to one month in advance and cost \$4 per person per night for up to seven nights. Always prepare before heading into the backcountry—listen to the local weather forecast and pack proper clothing, food, water and equipment. Remember to store your food properly and to follow Leave No Trace principles. For more information about backcountry trail and campsite closures and to make backcountry camping reservations, contact the backcountry office at **(865) 436-1297**, or visit **smokiespermits.nps.gov**.

CAMPGROUNDS

Campground	Open dates	# of Sites	Elevation (ft)	Fee Per Night
Abrams Creek †	April 29 to October 30	16	1,125 ft.	\$17.50
Balsam Mountain †	May 13 to October 11	43	5,310 ft.	\$17.50
Big Creek*^ †	April 15 to October 30	12	1,700 ft.	\$17.50
Cades Cove* †	Year-round	159	1,807 ft.	\$25
Cataloochee*†	April 15 to October 30	27	2,610 ft.	\$25
Cosby* †	April 15 to October 30	157	2,459 ft.	\$17.50
Deep Creek* †	April 15 to October 30	92	1,800 ft.	\$25
Elkmont* †	Marrch 11 to November 27	220	2,150 ft.	\$25-\$27
Look Rock †	TBD	68	2,600 ft.	-
Smokemont* †	Year-round	142	2,198 ft.	\$25

*Group sites available ^No RVs permitted †Requires advanced reservations



A visit to the Smokies gives kids a chance to get back to nature and learn about plant and animal life, living history and the wonders of the ecosystem. Here's a helpful rundown of fun ways kids can get involved.

Keep in mind that many park activities are seasonal.

PARK ACTIVITIES

Become a Junior Ranger. Kids can earn a badge by engaging in specially-designed programs such as blacksmithing, pottery, venturing to learn about insects and other wildlife, or becoming a nature detective and identifying animal signs, tracks and scat. Age-specific guide booklets are available at visitor centers.

Walk with a park ranger to get the scoop on nature during a ranger-guided walk, or attend a slide show at campground amphitheaters. Check the park newspaper for current times and topics.

Take a hayride in Cades Cove. Cool mornings are the best time to see wildlife. Call Cades Cove Riding Stables at **(865) 448-9009** for reservations.

Take a field trip. The University of Tennessee Smoky Mountain Field School offers family programs on topics such as reptiles and amphibians, insects and animal tracks. Call **(865) 974-0150** or visit **smfs.utk.edu** for more information.

Listen to Southern Appalachian stories. Check visitor centers for times and locations of these stories about settlers, the Cherokee and even ghosts.

Go Fishing. Nearly 700 miles of fishable streams meander down the Smokies and spill into Fontana Lake and three prongs of Little Pigeon River. Brook, rainbow, brown trout and other sport fish thrive here. You'll

need a valid Tennessee or North Carolina fishing license, for sale in local communities, if you are 16 years or older (13 years or older for non-residents in Tennessee). Always follow state fishing regulations.

Attend Discovery Camp. Participate in a three-day program at Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, designed specifically for children ages 9 through 12. Summer youth programs focus on exploring the Smokies, hands-on science and adventure. Family camps, naturalist workshops and programs for kids are also available. For more information, call **(865) 448-6709** or visit **gsmit.org**.

Families can now experience the Great Smoky Mountains from home with **Smokee's @ Home** adventure. This is an extension of GSMNP's Parks as Classrooms program, in collaboration with Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, Discover Life in America (DLiA) and Great Smoky Mountains Association (GSMA), and in partnership with Friends of the Smokies. Attend ranger-led activities, explore the park and print your very own Junior Ranger badge. Visit **smokee's.org** to get exploring!

ACTIVITIES IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The gateway communities of Great Smoky Mountain National Park offer a variety of fun, kid-friendly events like the **Children's Trout Derby** in Cherokee, NC and **Smoky Mountain Tunes & Tales** in Gatlinburg, TN. For a listing of popular events in Cherokee and Gatlinburg, see the corresponding chapters in this guide. More information is also available at the chambers of commerce listed in the "Lodging & Dining" chapter.



The astounding variety of plants and animals in the Smokies is unequalled in most temperate areas of the world.

Biological diversity is the hallmark of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which encompasses more than 800 square miles in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. No other area of equal size in a temperate climate can match the park's amazing diversity of plants, animals and invertebrates. Almost **20,000 species** have been documented in the park; scientists believe an additional 25,000 to 50,000 species may live here.

Mountains, glaciers and weather are the primary factors in the park's diversity. Elevations in the park range from 875 to 6,643 feet, mimicking the latitudinal changes you would experience driving north or south across the eastern United States from Georgia to Canada. Plants and animals common in the southern United States thrive in the lowlands of the Smokies, while species common in the northern states find a suitable habitat in the higher elevations.

The Great Smoky Mountains are among the oldest mountains in the world, formed perhaps **200-300 million years ago**. They are unique in their northeast to southwest orientation, which allowed species to migrate along their slopes during climatic changes such as the last ice age, 10,000 years ago. In fact, the glaciers of the last ice age affected the Smoky Mountains without invading them. During that time, glaciers scoured much of North America, but did not quite reach as far south as the Smokies. Consequently, these mountains became a refuge for many species of plants and animals that were

displaced from their northern homes. The Smokies have been relatively undisturbed by glaciers or ocean inundation for over a million years, allowing species to diversify.

The park's abundant **rainfall**, 55 inches in the valleys to over 85 inches on some peaks, along with high summertime humidity provides excellent growing conditions. During wet years, over eight feet of snow falls in the high country. The relative humidity in the park during the growing season is about twice that of the Rocky Mountain region.

Some 100 species of **native trees** find homes in the Smokies, more than any other North American national park. Almost 95 percent of the park is forested, 25 percent of which is **old-growth**—one of the largest

FOLIAGE COLOR GUIDE

The Smokies foliage changes in the mountains beginning in mid-September and moves down to the valleys through October, often continuing into early November. Here is a guide to the spectacular fall colors.

Yellow	Flowering beech, birch, black gum, buckeye, hickory mountain ash and poplar trees
Scarlet	Red maple tree
Red	Dogwood, maple, pin cherry, sourwood and sumac trees
Crimson	Blackberry and blueberry bushes
Mixture	Buckeye northern red oak pin cherry (orange, red), red maple, sugar maple (yellow, orange, scarlet), sweet gum (yellow, red, dark purple) and witch hobble (yellow, red)

blocks of deciduous, temperate, old-growth forest remaining in North America. Over 1,500 additional flowering plant species grow in the park. The park is the center of diversity for lungless salamanders and is home to more than 200 species of birds, **66 types of mammals, 50 fish species, 39 varieties of reptiles and 43 species of amphibians.** Mollusks, millipedes and mushrooms reach record diversity here. In recognition of the park's unique natural resources, the United Nations has designated Great Smoky Mountains National Park as an International Biosphere Reserve.

ALL TAXA BIODIVERSITY INVENTORY

There has been much written about the accelerating crisis in protecting global biodiversity. This is as much an issue in the tropics as it is in the United States. How can we make critical decisions about protection,

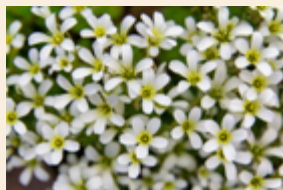
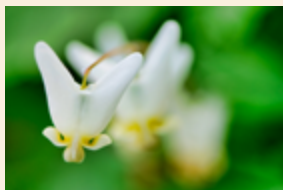


when we do not know what species exist, their relative abundance or distribution?

Discover Life in America, a non-profit partner of the national park, is coordinating an All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory, or ATBI, to catalogue the estimated 25,000 to 50,000 species of living organisms in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

You can be a part of the ATBI. Join other citizen scientists and volunteers in discovering new species in the park. For more information, visit **DLIA.org**.





The Smokies' diversity of flowering plants and deciduous trees makes for a colorful spring, summer and fall. The spring bloom starts in the valleys in late March and works upward to the peaks through July, while the changing colors of the leaves starts on the peaks as early as mid-September and work downward to the valleys into early to mid-November.

FLOWERS

BLOODROOT

This plant's name is derived from its stem, from which American Indians made red dye. A member of the poppy family, the bloodroot's flowers are white with a gold center. It grows along streams in wooded areas.

DUTCHMAN'S BREECHES

This white flower's shape is reminiscent of a pair of pantaloons hung out on the line to dry. The leafless flowering stalk arches over the bluish, finely dissected leaves, which stand upright.

STAR CHICKWEED

This native perennial wildflower member has white star-like flowers with deeply cleft petals in clusters atop an erect stem. It is usually found in woods and on rocky slopes April through June and grows six to 16 inches tall.

TREES

BLACK CHERRY

This is the park's largest native cherry tree, growing up to 60 feet tall. It has white blossoms in spring and leaves that turn red or yellow in fall.

BLACK LOCUST

Black locusts grow mainly in the southern Appalachian Mountains and have forking, irregular trunks. Their aromatic white flowers appear in late spring, and their fruit consists of flat brown pods, which appear in fall and then split open in winter.

MOUNTAIN LAUREL

This common evergreen shrub ranges along the East Coast from southern Maine to northern Florida and west to Louisiana. Its small pink or white flowers appear in spring in clusters of pointed buds, and its leaves are long and narrow.

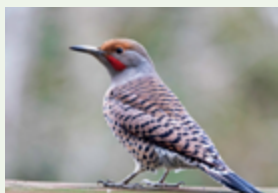
➤ WATCHABLE WILDLIFE



BLACK BEAR

Approximately 1,500 bears live in the park. Coming out to forage during the day, they eat juicy plant parts, insects, berries, nuts, acorns and meat. See the "Park Regulations & Safety" chapter for bear safety tips. •

Weight 200-600 lbs • **Size** 5-6 ft long • **Active** spring through fall.



NORTHERN FLICKER

The only woodpecker in North America that eats primarily from the ground, it uses its long tongue to lick up insects, only pecking on wood as a mating call or to proclaim territory.

• **Weight** 4-6 oz • **Size** 1 ft long • **Active** year-round



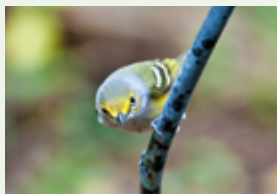
NORTHERN SPRING PEEPER

This nocturnal tree frog gets its name from its familiar peeping sound. Although rarely seen, these frogs are often heard throughout the park. They live in wooded areas near ponds and lakes. • **Weight** 1 lb • **Size** 1 in long • **Active** spring through fall.



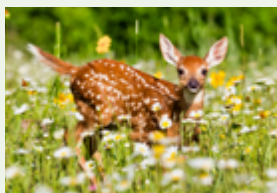
RED FOX

This reddish fox, with white under-parts, chin and throat, is common in the park, but is rarely seen because it is shy and nocturnal. It eats almost anything it can sink its teeth into, including birds, crickets and plants. • **Weight** 10-15 lbs • **Size** 15-30 in long • **Active** spring and summer.



WHITE-EYED VIREO

A small and shy songbird, the White-eyed Vireo inhabits bushes and shrubby areas and is more noticeable for its explosive song than its appearance. Interestingly, the White-eyed Vireo bathes by rubbing against wet foliage. • **Weight** 0.5 oz • **Size** 4-5 in long • **Active** spring through fall.



WHITE-TAILED DEER

White-tailed deer live throughout the Smokies. Most commonly seen in areas with open fields such as Cades Cove and Cataloochee Valley, more than 6,000 may live in the park. • **Weight** 100-350 lbs • **Size** 3-3.5 ft long • **Active** year-round.

PHOTOGRAPHY



Just as large scale paintings and photographic surveys were once the catalyst for Congress to create the first national parks, photographs and videos created by today's visitors continue to inspire a passion for the preservation of these awe-inspiring places. Today more than ever, these wild and captivating environments offer us the much needed opportunity to reconnect with nature; places to recharge our metaphorical batteries. The following tips will help enhance your photography and video work both technically and aesthetically, and empower you to contribute to the ongoing visual preservation of the wildlife and landscapes of our national parks, and have fun doing it!

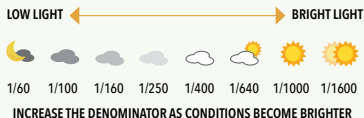
- **Timing is everything.** The best time to photograph is during the soft golden hours—at dusk and dawn—when the light is soft. When your shadow is longer than you are, you've got the best light!
- **Stay in the shallows.** To easily achieve the cinematic, blurred background look, move away from your subject matter and use your telephoto lens to zoom in and compress the image's foreground to background to create a shallow depth of field.
- **Go with the flow.** Fight the desire to constantly follow wildlife, and let the action naturally enter and exit your frame.
- **Framing.** Seek out natural framing ele-

ments—trees and branches, rock formations, knot holes—to add more layers to your image. Leave space around wildlife to frame them within their natural habitat.

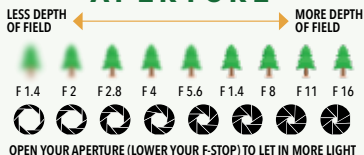
- **The eyes have it.** Change your perspective whenever possible to photograph at an intimate eye level with your subject. Place eyes in the power points (the intersection of rule of third guidelines) and keep them in sharp focus.
- **Use a monopod.** If you are using a heavy telephoto lens for photos or video, consider using a monopod to stabilize it (one can be attached to either the base of the camera or lens). Many hiking poles serve double duty and convert to monopods.
- **Do photo yoga.** Snap a few versions of a composition with a variety of perspectives, both vertical and horizontal. The best image is not likely the first one you take.
- **Shoot in burst mode.** Increase the probability that you'll capture a candid behavior, head position or unique angle of your subject by taking many pictures at once using your camera's burst mode.
- **Steady as you go.** Investing in a pan-and-tilt tripod head will allow you to move your camera smoothly on top of a tripod and avoid hand-held camera shake that will distract from your footage.

CHEAT SHEET

SHUTTER SPEED



APERTURE



ISO





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IF YOU ONLY HAVE A DAY

If you only have one day to visit the park, drive along **Newfound Gap Road** (U.S. 441) between the Sugarlands and Oconaluftee visitor centers. Begin at either visitor center. This trans-mountain road connects Tennessee to North Carolina, offering spectacular panoramic views and plenty to do along the way.

If you're driving south to Oconaluftee, stop first at Sugarlands Visitor Center to get information and a park overview.

A short drive leads to **Chimneys Picnic Area**, where you'll find the 0.75-mile, self-guided **Cove Hardwood Nature Trail**. **Chimney Tops Overlooks** offer a view of the twin summits called Duniskwalguni, which means "Forked Antlers" in Cherokee. Take

a scenic 7-mile drive, then hike the steep half-mile paved trail to Clingman's Dome Observation Tower, for sweeping views.

Continue on Newfound Gap Road to **Oconaluftee Visitor Center**. Just beyond the visitor center is **Mountain Farm Museum**, a collection of farm buildings. Here, costumed interpreters reenact 19th-century farm life from spring through late October. At nearby **Mingus Mill**, watch a demonstration of how people ground grain for their daily bread.

Depending on which direction you drive, finish the trip with an evening in **Gatlinburg** or **Cherokee** (see the relevant chapters of this guide for more information).



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