

2022 Wilderness Wildlife Week Outdoor Excursions

UPDATED JANUARY 24, 2022

TUESDAY, JANUARY 25th – HIKE

LAUREL FALLS HIKE (2.8 Miles – Easy/Moderate)

Noon – 3 PM

Guide: Keith Garnes

This is the most popular waterfall trail in GSMNP. It is considered moderately easy for a 2.8-mile roundtrip paved trail. The falls itself is an 80-foot-high waterfall. Elevation of the hike is a manageable 314 feet. The trail was built originally in the 1930's as an access for fire crews in the event a blaze broke out in the Cove Mountain area. Thirty years later its popularity as a hiking trail coupled with natural erosion created the need for the trail to be paved. Along the trail you'll see lush plant life, including mountain laurel. There are some steep drop offs along the trail especially as you near the falls.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 25th – BUS TRIP

LET'S GO QUILT INN

11:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Guide: Kathy Gwinn

Your guide is one of the best studied guides in regards to these history of Appalachian life and what the early settlers experienced and had to overcome. You will tour 4 – 5 historic and/or Country Inns, with spoken history about the mountains and that of early innkeeping.

PINK JEEP TOURS

Noon – 2:30 PM

This is something new to the area and you will have a chance to take a scenic and educational tour of Sevier County and parts of the Smokies. Your experienced guide will show you many sites of beauty not found by the normal visitor to the area.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26th – HIKES

ROCKY TOP VIA ANTHONY CREEK HIKE (14 Miles – Strenuous)

7 AM – 5 PM

Guide: Marty Silver

This hike is a 14-mile strenuous hike leading from Cades Cove in Townsend to the Appalachian Trail at the top. Definitely challenging but well worth the view on top when it is clear. This hike is lightly trafficked which is a bonus for those who like the quiet and serenity of the mountains.

LAUREL FALLS/CATARACT FALLS HIKE (12.4 Miles – Moderate/Strenuous)

7:30 AM – 4 PM

Guide: Charles Maynard

This 12.4-mile hike starts on a easy to moderate paved trail to one of the most visited waterfalls in GSMNP. The falls itself is about 80 feet high and the trail itself crosses over approximately the middle of the falls. Once passing the falls you will proceed into a rhododendron tunnel and beautiful trees. You will then reach the old fire tower and then start your downward trek approximately 6.5 miles to Cataract Falls and GSMNP headquarters.

WHITEOAK SINK (4.6 Miles – Easy/Moderate)

9 AM – 3:30 PM

Guide: Todd Hurst

After hiking roughly one mile on Schoolhouse Gap, your guide will continue to Whiteoak Sink. This area is a small basin surrounded by steep hills. Other than sinkholes in the area, there are four caves located in the area along with a waterfall near one of the more visited cave sites. Structural remains prior to the formation of GSMNP give a glimpse into the past of those who resided in the area as well.

SENIOR NATURE TRAIL HIKE (1 Mile – Easy)

9 AM – 11:30 AM

Guide: Jane Blevins

This is a wonderful short hike partially on black top and partially on woodchips. You will pass through a brief barrier of woods that runs along a stream with a beaver dam. You may see otter swimming as well. Also included will be a visit to a butterfly compound where butterflies are raised and released once they are fully grown.

HIKE TO JOHN OLIVER'S CABIN & OTHER HOMESITES (3.5 Miles – Easy/Moderate)

9:30 AM – 5 PM

Guide: Mark Snyder

The start of this hike is at the entrance to Cades Cove where you will follow the Rich Mountain Loop Trail to the John Oliver Cabin. Along the way you will make some side trips to various former home sites, some are real close to the trail. After reaching the John Oliver Cabin you will continue to some of John Oliver's descendants, one home site still has a nice chimney standing.

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 27th – HIKES

HEN WALLOW FALLS (4.4 Miles – Moderate)

7:30 AM – 1 PM

Guide: Keith Garnes

This is a pleasant hike through a hemlock and rhododendron forest. A side trail will lead you down to the base of the falls. The falls are only two feet wide at the top, but fans out to 20 feet at the bottom some 90 feet below. If you look closely you will see salamanders swimming at the bottom.

ALBRIGHT GROVE (7.2 Miles – Easy/Moderate)

7:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Guide: Charles Maynard

This trail hike leads one through a vast forest with a canopy overhead of Eastern hemlock and the needle carpet provides an atmosphere that seems to require whispering. Tulip trees, Fraser magnolias and maples have grown into giants over the years in a virgin forest that Champion Fibre Company once owned. There are beech trees that send out buttress roots; silverbell trees bulge at the base; and Fraser magnolias extend roots that look like big toes. This is an enjoyable historic hike with an old cabin built in 1889 out of one chestnut tree. The trees located on this hike are the largest trees that grow in GSMNP.

MIDDLE PRONG (7.5 Miles – Moderate)

9:30 AM – 5 PM

Guide: Mark Snyder

This hike follows an old railroad bed which was the last to be used in hauling out timber in 1939. The Little River Lumber Company hauled out one billion board feet of lumber (enough to build 10,000 homes) during the period of 1903 – 1930. You will see signs of recent disturbance, road cuts, second growth forests, cables and bridges. However, you will see how this area has recovered into the beauty it once showed. You will visit where the Company store stood, home sites, a school, post office and hotel all in the area called Stringtown.

WALKER SISTERS (3.5 Miles – Moderate)

11 AM – 5 PM

Guide: Joel Zachry

If you truly want a historical hike, then this is one you don't want to miss. The Walker sisters was a family of eleven children – seven girls and four boys. The home where they were raised consisted of 122 acres and all of the children had moved away except for six girls. When the Park was dedicated in 1940

by President Roosevelt the sisters were paid \$4,750 for their land as well as given a lifetime lease. The sisters continued to live and love their previous land and the last one stayed until her passing in 1964. You will hike to their home where you can stand on the porch and imagine what life was like for these sisters who survived, by themselves for many, many years.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 27th – BUS TRIPS

PHOTO SAFARI OF THE SMOKIES BUS TRIP

9 AM – 2 PM

Guide: Colby McLemore

Learn the use of your camera and photo composition from your instructor who will provide insight on how filters, lenses and other equipment can enhance your artistic ability as you tour beautiful Cades Cove. A small amount of hiking or short walks will be done as you hop on and off the bus during your tour.

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 28th – HIKES

SEVEN ISLANDS BIRDING WALK (2 Miles – Easy)

7:30 AM – 2 PM

Guide: Seven Islands Ranger

This is a trip for the bird enthusiast. You will tour the Seven Islands State Birding Park a premier birding destination with more than 190 species of birds that have been sighted. The Park consists of 416 acres along the French Broad River containing more than eight miles of natural trails. Your Park Ranger guide will be able to point out and discuss all of your birding questions and novice to professional birders will be rewarded for the experience.

ALUM CAVE (5 Miles – Moderate/Strenuous)

7:30 AM – 2:30 PM

Guide: Todd Hurst

This hike is one of five trails to Mt. LeConte Lodge, the only overnight accommodations in the Smokies. It is a 4.4 mile (round trip) beautiful and scenic hike which will get half-way up. At 1.3 miles from the trailhead, you will reach Arch Rock. The arch was formed by freezing and thawing. The trail actually goes under the arch and requires a climb of several steps etched into the stone before exiting at the top. Beyond the Rock hikers will reach Inspiration Point with commanding views of Little Duck Hawk Ridge. The eye of the needle can also be seen from this vantage point. Once reaching the cave itself, you will begin your descent back towards the trailhead. This hike is considered moderate/strenuous and will depend upon road closures on the day of the event.

CUCUMBER GAP LOOP (5.5 Miles – Easy/Moderate)

8 AM – 2 PM

Guide: Keith Garnes

This trail is located in the Elkmont Campground area of the Park and extends about 5.5 miles in a loop. It begins along a creek with a small waterfall and then extends into the woods with some elevation change. The first trail is the Little River trail and is very level and easy and was used formerly as a logging road by the Little River Lumber Company. At about 2.2 miles you will then make a right turn onto Cucumber Gap with some elevation change although moderate. It is a well-worn path and you will find the stillness of the mountains. At 2.4 miles you will then reach the Jakes Creek trailhead, which is an old gravel road. By turning right, you will begin your descent down into what use to be the summer Elkmont community. Those who have completed this hike suggest you check out the remains of a few old structures still erect.

GATLINBURG TRAIL (2 Miles – Easy)

8 AM – 11:30 AM

Guide: Joel Zachry

This 2-mile roundtrip riverside jaunt through the woods is right at Gatlinburg's doorstep and is one of the most popular and pleasant hikes in the GSMNP. Great choice for families, bicyclists, dog walkers and joggers. This trail is only one of two trails in the park to allow dogs and bicycles. The trail itself leads up to the Park Headquarters. The trail hugs the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River and is quite level. You will pass through second-growth hardwoods and rhododendron thickets. With its rapids and occasional cascades, the river makes a pleasant companion as you follow the well-graded gravel path.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 28th – BUS TRIPS

TOWNSEND RAILROAD MUSEUM & APPALACHIAN BEAR RESCUE

9 AM – 2 PM

Guide: Jim Eastin

Step back in time to view and learn of the old railroad systems that were so valuable to the area for the logging companies that operated within the mountains. Then you will be transported to Appalachian Bear Rescue's Educational Center where you will learn about rehabilitation of orphaned and injured bear cubs and view videos of many of the ones who have been taken care of and released back into their natural habitat.

HISTORY TOUR OF GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

10 AM – 3 PM

Guide: Kathy Gwinn

Your guide for this bus tour is one of the best studied guides and storytellers of Wilderness Wildlife Week. She will provide history of the establishment of GSMNP, its people, wildlife, plants and many visits to places such as Oconaluftee Visitor Center, Mingus Mill, mountain farms, homesteads, Mingo Falls Qualla Drama Theatre and Cherokee.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29th – HIKES

SUGARLANDS CEMETERY HIKE (6.5 Miles – Easy/Moderate)

9 AM – 2:30 PM

Guide: Joey Holt

This easy to moderate hike is for everyone who is interested in the Sugarland Valley, the conservation of the Civilian Conservation Corps and history of the inhabitants of the area before the establishment of GSMNP.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29th – BUS TRIPS

CADES COVE MUSEUM/FOOTHILLS PARKWAY

9 AM – 3 PM

Guide: Gloria Motter

This small museum is located in the Thompson-Brown cabin located on its original foundation in its original location next to Maryville College. It's small, but has a lot of information and artifacts relating to Cades Cove and the many families who lived there. Volunteers are incredibly knowledgeable and helpful. From there you will be given the opportunity to ride the new Foothills Parkway extension which has been in the works for some 75 years and is estimated to be another 20 years until completion. The southern 17 miles running from US 129 at Chilhowee Lake to US 321 at Walland was completed in 1966 and is quite spectacular. The next 16 miles was finally opened in December 2018. There is another 5.6 miles open from I40 south to US 321 near Cosby. This short section was opened in 1968. Meanwhile, in between these sections is 33.5 miles where construction has not even begun. Portions of this fantastic road skirts Great Smoky Mountains National Park and has spectacular views of the area.