



Outdoor Excursions

Sign-ups online starting January 8, 2024

Monday, January 22-Hikes

Chimney Tops

7:30 AM-3 PM

4 miles, Strenuous (3.5- 4 Hour Hike)

Limit: 12

Guide: Todd Hurst

This will be an interesting hike for those who know of the devastating fires the Smokies endured in late November 2016. The Chimneys were closed for an extended period and has only recently partially reopened. You will be able to ascertain some of the destruction and regrowth as you journey up a portion of the trail to where the gate area is located due to the uncertain terrain above. The views at the top are well worth the hike. Please bring water, snack, sturdy boots/shoes.

Seven Islands State Birding Park

7:30 AM-2:00 PM

3 miles, Easy (4.5 Hour Hike)

Limit:15

Guide: Keith Watson

Birding lovers, this is the hike for you. The hike is mostly on a mowed grass trail, with paved roads and walkways on sections. Bring your binoculars as your guide will be able to point out and discuss some of up to 190 species of birds, and from novice to professional birders will be rewarded for the experience. This park was named "State Park of the Year" for 2023 by Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation.

Rainbow Falls Trail

8:00 AM- 3:00 PM

5.1 miles, Moderate (3.5 Hour Hike)

Limit: 12

Guide: Stella Koret

The original trail is arguably the oldest or earliest route to Mount LeConte. The trail begins off Cherokee Orchard road and you will be rewarded for your climb by the beautiful Rainbow Falls of LeConte Creek and the 82 foot drop of the falls. The mist reflecting in the sunlight gives the falls its name. Please bring water, a snack, rain gear and sturdy hiking boots/shoes. You will cross LeConte Creek at least twice.

Hiking with the Llamas

8:30 AM – 3:45 PM

4.6 miles, Easy/Moderate (4.5 – 5 Hour Hike)

Limit: 10

Guide: Laura Higgins, MD, San Juan Mtns Llama Treks

Come and hike with a Llama on this old historic trail, you will first learn about the Llamas and go over some instructions in a short lesson from Dr. Higgins. You will hike the wide footpath, following an old road bed and there is 1 stream crossing while you learn about the history of the C.C.C. camp and the Old Cemetery on the Old Sugarlands Trail. Children 6 years and older are welcome on this hike if they accompanied by a parent/legal guardian. Please wear good hiking boots/shoes, bring a lunch or snack and water.

Monday, January 22, Bus Tours

Cades Cove and Little River Tour

9:00 AM - 4:00PM)

6-7 Hours (Easy to Moderate)

Guide: Kathy Gwinn

Limit: 23

Bring a sack lunch

Highlights on this trip would include the history of the families in Cades Cove, history of the Civil War in the Cove, the Cherokee in the area, logging and C.C.C. camp in the area. There will be some walking back to the churches, cabins, cemeteries etc... You will need to bring a sack lunch and water for a picnic style lunch break.

Pink Jeep Tours

10:00 AM – 2:00PM

Approximately 2.5 - 3 Hours Each Tour

Rider Limit: 6 EACH TOUR

You will have a chance to take a scenic and educational tour of the Elkmont Historic District. Your experienced guide will show you many sights of beauty not found by the normal visitor to the area, including a short off-road experience!

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23 – HIKES

Little River>Huskey Gap>Newfound Gap Road

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

6.5 miles, Moderate (4 Hour Hike)

Guide: Joel & Kathy Zachry

Limit: 15

Starting out at the Elkmont Little River Trailhead you will learn about the history and culture of the area, discover the flora, fauna, and back country safety. There is at least one river/stream crossing, exposed roots and steep slopes on this trail. Please wear sturdy boots, layers, bring rain gear, trail snacks, and water to have a safe and enjoyable time!

Laurel Falls/ Walker Sisters

7:00 AM – 5:00 PM

8.5 miles-Moderate/Strenuous (6.5 Hour Hike)

7:00 AM – 5:00 PM 6

Guides: Charles Maynard/David Morris

Limit: 12

Starting at the Laurel Falls Trail Head, crossing the bridged river crossing (which may be icy) the hike climbs around 1000 feet in 3 miles, and you will see the beautiful 80-foot high waterfall. Continuing on Cove Mountain to the Walker Sisters' cabin (which is now open again), you will learn about the geology of the Smokies, the logging, the Old Growth Forest, the Walker Sisters, Little Greenbrier school and church, ending in the scenic Metcalf Bottoms Picnic area.

Baskin Creek Falls Trail

9:00 AM – 3:30 PM

3-4 miles-Moderate/Strenuous (3 – 3.5 Hour Hike)

9:00 AM – 3:30 PM

Guide: Keith Garnes

Limit: 12

Described as one of the best kept secrets of the Great Smoky Mountains. The trail starts at Cherokee Orchard which features a short climb and a long descent. You will see old homesteads, new growth in the areas of the fires of 2016, hear an explanation of the three watersheds flowing from LeConte, and discover the Baskins cemetery and bat cave. There is at least one stream crossing. A hiking stick, snacks and water will help on the steep cardio challenge on the return trip!

Metcalfe Bottoms>Little Greenbrier Schoolhouse>Walker Sisters' Cabin

9:00 AM – 3 PM

4 miles, Easy (3 – 4 Hour Hike)

Guide: Clayton LePrees

Limit: 12

Smoky Mountain Guides are providing transportation bus

This easy hike starts at the Metcalfe Bottoms picnic area near Wears Cove and makes a gentle climb to the one-room Little Greenbrier Schoolhouse which operated from 1882 until 1936. The hike continues to the Walker Sisters' cabin, home to the sisters who continued to live a traditional mountaineer lifestyle after the creation of the GSMNP. Along the way we'll have an opportunity to learn about many plants and animals that call this area home. Bring water, a snack and wear good walking shoes/boots please.

TUESDAY, January 23 – Bus Trips

Cades Cove Museum & Blount County Museum

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Easy

Guide: Richard Anderson

Limit: 24

Museum lovers, this is the tour for you! The Cades Cove museum is located in the Thompson-Brown cabin, located on its original foundation, and 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. Some of the helpful volunteers are related to some of the original families of Cades Cove. Just a short distance away is the Blount County Museum. Opened in the 1920s and filled with artifacts from the first families in the area. There are items that have been collected and on loan from the families throughout the county.

Pink Jeep Tours

10:00 AM – 2:00PM

Approximately 2.5 - 3 Hours Each Tour

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WEDNESDAY, January 24, Hikes

Twin Creeks Trail

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

2.5 miles, Easy/Moderate (4 Hour Hike)

Guide: Jaimie Matzko

Limit: 15

Do you visit the Smokies? Do you have a phone? Then you can contribute to community science in the Smokies through the Smokies Most Wanted Project! On this hike, you will learn how to use a nature app called iNaturalist to document the animals & plants you encounter in the GSMNP (bring your phones). We will also be touring the park's natural history collection at the Twin Creek Science Center to learn more about Discover Life in Americas work on the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory, an ambitious project to document every species in the park! *There is at least one stream crossing that may require a "rock hop" during high water. Twin Creek Trail Head is the start and Noah Bud Ogle Parking Lot is the trail end.

Mt Sterling (Baxter Creek)

7:30 AM – 5:00 PM

13 miles, Strenuous (8 Hour Hike)

Guide: Marty Silver

Limit: 25

Hike to the high country above Big Creek. Enjoy the young woodlands full of birds and small mammals, and the many hints of early human settlement. Work hard to climb up to the fire tower, where we will enjoy (weather permitting) awesome 360 views of the surrounding mountains. Be sure to pack your lunch and snacks, plenty of water and foul weather gear. Bring a flashlight (just in case) and wear sturdy hiking footwear. *Some steep & rocky places, and some long uphill grades.

White Oaks Sinks Trail

9:00 AM – 3:30PM

4.6miles, Easy/Moderate (6 Hour Hike)

Limit: 12

Guide: Keith Garnes

This historic hike will start and end back at School House Gap. This area is a small basin surrounded by steep hills. Along with a few sink holes, there are four caves located in the area along with a waterfall near one of the more visited “Bat Cave” sites. Structural remains prior to the formation of the GSMNP give a glimpse of those who resided in the area as well.

WEDNESDAY, January 24, Bus Tours

Appalachian Bear Rescue

9 AM – 1 PM

Easy

Guide: Don Lockett

Limit: 24

You will be transported through the beautiful Wears Valley area to the Appalachian Bear Rescue’s Trillium Cove Visitor & Education Center in Townsend. There you will learn about the rehabilitation of orphaned and injured bear cubs and view the videos of many of the ones who have been taken care of and released back into their natural habitat. There will also be a question and answer time after the program.

Pink Jeep Tours

10:00 AM – 2:00PM

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Thursday, January 25, Hikes

Sugarlands Cemetery

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

5.5 miles, Easy/Moderate (5.5 Hour Hike)

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Guide: Joey Holt

Limit: 12

This is an easy to moderate hike 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 the GSMNP. Touring the old homes sites, cemetery and the CCC camp will give you a feel for the early times. Don't forget your water, snack/lunch, rain gear and good sturdy hiking shoes.

Hen Wallow Falls

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

4.5 miles, Moderate/Challenging (3 – 3.5 Hour Hike)

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Guide: Todd Hurst

Limit: 12

Starting at the Cosby Campground, 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 it then fans out to 20 feet wide at the bottom some 90 feet below. This is an historical trail with a few hiking stories that will be shared along the way. Don't forget to bring your walking stick, a snack/lunch, water, rain gear, and good sturdy walking shoes/boots.

Albrights Grove

9 AM – 3:30 PM

6.6 miles, Moderate (4.5 Hour Hike)

Guide: Keith Garnes

Limit: 12

This enjoyable historic hike starts at the Maddron Bald Trailhead passing through a vast forest with a canopy of Eastern Hemlock on an old road bed, then moves along an exposed root trail with a foot log crossing of Indian Camp Creek. You will explore the Baxter cabin on the Jenkins' Home Place and the Old Growth Forest. The trees on this trail are the largest that grow in the GSMNP. A good walking stick, water, a lunch/snack and good hiking shoes are a must on this hike.

THURSDAY, January 25, Bus Tours

Cades Cove, Little River Tour

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Easy to Moderate (6 – 7 Hours)

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Guide: Kathy Gwinn

Limit: 23

Bring a sack lunch

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