Destination:
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
5-Day Appalachian Hiking Experience

"Don't let Smokey mountain smoke get in your eyes
If you do I'm tellin' you
You'll want to live there the rest of your life
If Smokey mountain smoke gets in your eyes,"
- The Osborne Brothers, from the song “Don't Let The Smoky Mountain Smoke Get In Your Eyes"
5-day Appalachian Hiking Experience

Introduction

The Great Smoky Mountains, straddling the Tennessee-North Carolina border, are an icon of Appalachian Mountain culture stretching back to the late 18th century. Great Smoky Mountains National Park was established in 1934 to preserve this naturally and culturally significant mountain landscape. The park’s beauty is underscored by its exceptional biodiversity: it is home to as many tree species as are found in all of Europe (130 native species), it preserves the largest virgin old-growth eastern hardwood forest, and it possesses the greatest variety of salamanders in the world. The park’s magnificent forests, endless ridges, high peaks, cascades and waterfalls, wildlife, and clear mountain streams make it a hiker’s paradise.

Our 5-Day Appalachian Hiking Experience combines the highlights of the Smokies into one all-inclusive, purely Appalachian outdoor vacation. Our tour begins early each morning to accommodate for busy times of the year (fall/spring) and to avoid traffic. You'll intimately experience the Smokies' old growth forests, waterfalls, historical sites, grassy balds, scenic drives and the famous Appalachian Trail all in one action-packed hiking package. We've also hand-picked the inns/hotels, and the restaurants to make your week as comfortable and enriching as possible. The meals are a combination of picnic meals prepared by your guide and restaurant meals at carefully selected establishments that reflect the local color and culture of Appalachia.

Day 1 Grotto Falls/ Brushy Mtn
Shuttle to the Smokies: 1.5-hour drive
Mileage: 6+ miles
Elevation Gain/Loss: 1,745 feet
Accommodations: Dancing Bear Cabins (or equivalent)
Our first day begins with a scenic drive from Asheville to the Tennessee side of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Our first hike takes you to one of Smoky Mountain National Park’s most spectacular waterfalls and compliments it with amazing high country views. Along our hike we will pass through diverse old growth forests and ecosystems, with opportunities to see wildlife such as black bears, deer and elk. Our trail passes literally beneath Grotto Falls (the only waterfall in the Park that you can walk behind). After the falls we’ll continue to the top of Brushy Mountain, where we’ll soak up views of Mount Guyot, Charles Bunion, Mount Chapman, Mount Sequoyah and a lot more. Mount LeConte, where the lodge with the same name sits high on its mountain perch, will dominate our view south.

We’ll enjoy a picnic lunch at this amazing spot before descending back into the forests and eventually our trailhead. You won’t want to leave this amazing place! After our hike we will continue on to Townsend, “the quiet side of the Park,” to settle into our cozy lodging and enjoy our first Appalachian dinner at a local, hand-picked restaurant.

Day 2 Abrams Falls
Mileage: approximately 6 miles
Elevation Gain/Loss: 675 feet
Accommodations: Dancing Bear Cabins (or equivalent)
Today starts with a picnic breakfast in the Cades Cove picnic area. After breakfast we will explore the culturally rich Cades Cove historic district, while keeping an eye out for some of the Park’s many types of wildlife (black bear, deer, elk, turkeys, and more). We will explore the many historic buildings, stunning scenery, and wonderful tranquility of this rich mountain valley.

Today’s official hike is a forested creekside hike to a stunning waterfall that is arguably the Smokies’ most scenic hike. We’ll keep an eye out for otters as we make our way along the creek, eventually arriving at the most voluminous waterfall in the Park. We’ll relax for a picnic lunch on a beach in clear view of the torrent of water spilling over a sandstone cliff. We’ll enjoy the falls, take photos, and eventually hike back to the trailhead. A short shuttle ride to our hotel, a tasty Southern dinner and a cozy night’s sleep top off another rewarding day of Smoky Mountains exploration.

Day 3 Newfound Gap
Shuttle to Newfound Gap: 1-2 hours
Mileage: approximately 8 miles
Elevation Gain/Loss: 1,200 feet
Accommodations: The Everett Hotel and Bistro
Our third day starts with a hearty Appalachian breakfast in a local family-owned restaurant in Townsend. After breakfast we’ll enjoy a scenic drive through the park up to historic Newfound Gap. It was here that Roosevelt dedicated the Park with a speech in 1940. Today’s hike takes us along the
famous Appalachian Trail to Charlie’s Bunion, one of the Park’s most celebrated rock formations. Fantastic views of the endless rolling ridges of the Smokies abound on today’s hike. We’ll enjoy a picnic lunch with the incredible views as our backdrop before hiking back to the trailhead.

If time permits on our way to tonight’s lodging we will check out Clingman’s Dome (the highest peak in the Park at 6,643 feet) and the Mountain Farm Museum in Oconoluftee, both impressive highlights of Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Day 4
**Shuttle to trailhead:** approximately 30 mins  
**Mileage:** 7.5 miles  
**Elevation Gain/Loss:** 900 feet  
**Accommodations:** The Everett Hotel

Today starts with breakfast in Bryson City. After eating we will head over to the highest Dam East of the Mississippi River, Fontana Dam. Here we will enjoy views of Fontana Lake and the surrounding Mountains before continuing on to the Twenty Mile Ranger Station for today’s hike. Today’s hike is one of the most diverse and in many ways fulfilling as we dive into enjoying all the Smokies’ have to offer! Our hike takes us past stunning cascades, through forests bursting with an incredible array of plant and animal life, and along charming mountain creeks. Tonight’s dinner – an outdoor evening picnic dinner prepared by your guide – is enjoyed at the stunning Deep Creek Picnic Area after a refreshing shower and a bit of down time at our hotel.

Day 5
**Shuttle to trailhead:** approximately 1.5 hours  
**Mileage:** 7-8 miles  
**Elevation Gain/Loss:** 1,040 feet  
**Shuttle to Asheville:** 1-hour drive

The final day of our Appalachian Hiking Experience brings us to Cataloochee, home to the newly introduced elk in the Smokies region. We will explore old historical sites from the area’s earliest settlers dating as far back as the 1830’s. This area was one of the last places in Haywood County to be settled due to it’s rough topography. Families homesteading here were extremely isolated taking up to a full day to reach the outside world. We’ll thoroughly explore this area’s historic sites, creekside trails, beautiful meadows, and with any luck it’s wildlife.

After our hike we’ll settle in for a short, scenic shuttle back to Asheville, giving us time to contemplate the natural beauty, invigorating hiking, phenomenal biodiversity, and fascinating history we’ve had the privilege to explore for the past 5 days.

**Trip itinerary note...** all trips are subject to itinerary changes based on a variety of circumstances, including, but not limited to hotel/lodge availability, permit availability, extreme weather, and forest fires. The price and duration of a trip will never change once you’re registered. Payments are not refundable based on itinerary changes, only on cancellations.

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**Trip Details**

**Trip type:** inn-based tour  
**Difficulty:** 2 (moderate)  
**Length:** 5 days  
**Mileage:** 40 miles (64 kilometers)  
**Group size:** maximum 8, including guide  
**Pack weight:** 10 pounds  
**Price/start dates:** see website tour page  
**Meeting time & place:** 5 p.m. the day before the trip start date in the lobby of your hotel or the lobby of another guest’s hotel in Asheville, North Carolina  
**Trip conclusion:** approximately 5:00 p.m. on the last day  
**Trip fees include:** transportation, permits and permit fees, group gear, food (breakfast day 1 through lunch on last day), professional guide  
**Trip fees exclude:** airfare, trip insurance, hotels, gratuity for guide and services not specified
Travel, Transportation, Meeting & Lodging

Travel

Travel to and from the trip starting point is not included in the cost of our trips. Please plan on arriving in time for the orientation meeting the day before the trip leaves and departing the day after getting back from the field.

Gateway Cities: Asheville, North Carolina

All Smoky Mountain National Park trips begin and end from Asheville, North Carolina. Asheville has an airport served by Allegiant Air, Delta, United, and US Airways. One can also fly into Greenville, South Carolina or Charlotte, North Carolina and drive to Asheville. It is a 1.5-hour drive from Greenville to Asheville and a 2-hour drive from Charlotte on good roads.

Shuttle & Ground Transportation

From Asheville Airport... Asheville Airport Express (828-691-1121) runs shuttles to and from downtown. Another option from the airport is Asheville Premier Transportation (828-407-0221).

From Greenville/Charlotte... Asheville Shuttle runs daily vans from Charlotte and Greenville to Asheville. Round trip cost per shuttle is $140 from Charlotte and approximately $90 from Greenville.


Meeting Time & Place

We will meet in Asheville, North Carolina for an orientation at 5 p.m. the day before the trip starts in the lobby of the Holiday Inn & Suites Asheville. We’ll give you a ride to the meeting point from your hotel if needed.

The orientation includes introductions, a briefing on the trip itinerary, and a checking of personal gear.

Important note: Please bring all gear you plan on hiking with to this meeting.

Transportation To & From The Trailhead

We will pick you up at your hotel room in Asheville at 7 a.m. on the first day of the trip, and provide transportation back to your room in Asheville on the last day of the trip.

Storage of Personal Items & Vehicles

Many guests choose to store their luggage with the hotel they’ll be using before and after the trip. You are also welcome to leave your luggage with us for secure storage while you’re in the backcountry - just inform your guide. We recommend parking your vehicle at your hotel as our facility has limited parking.

Pre & Post-Trip Recommended Lodging

Lodging options in Asheville are numerous. Below are some recommended options based on convenience, location, and our experience. We recommend making your reservation early as Asheville is a tourist community and rooms book early.

Holiday Inn & Suites Asheville*
*discounted rate of $99-140 for guests of Wildland Trekking - tell the front desk you are a guest of Wildland Trekking-rate dependent upon hotel availability
phone: 828-225-3550

Haywood Park Hotel & Atrium
phone: 828-252-2522

Four Points by Sheraton Asheville Downtown
phone: 828-253-1851

Downtown Inn & Suites
phone: 828-254-9661
Hiker Notes & Equipment List

The following information includes conditioning recommendations as well as clothing and equipment requirements to help ensure a satisfying experience. All items are designed to better prepare you for your trip and need to be carefully read.

If you have any questions after reviewing this information please feel free to contact our office. Also, please pay special attention to any item marked “Important note.”

Training

The enjoyment received from any physical activity is largely dependent on the shape you’re in. Backpacking is an inherently strenuous activity as you’ll be hiking over varying terrain in uncertain weather with the load of a backpack.

We cannot stress enough that the fitter you are the more fun you’ll have. A combination of cardiovascular fitness, strength in all muscle groups and flexibility will help ensure an enjoyable experience. As such, we recommend you prepare for your trip with a moderate training program focused on walking and hiking, ideally in hilly terrain.

Important note: Always consult with your physician before commencing with a workout program.

What You Need To Bring

Clothing Checklist

The following items are required for your trip. They are a must for your safety and comfort. When shopping think layered clothing systems that work together.

- Sturdy Hiking boots, mid weight, lug-soled, above the ankle, waterproof and ideally well broken in Important note: Buy your boots 1/2 size to 1 size larger than your street shoes to allow for feet swelling and thicker socks
- Hiking socks, one pair for every day of your trip. Recommended brands include Bridgedale®, Smartwool®, or similar padded socks (wearing a thin liner sock under your hiking socks is highly recommended). No cotton socks!
- Sunhat or baseball cap and bandana
- Warm hat and gloves, sherpa style hat and light-to-mid weight fleece or wool gloves
- Long underwear, one pair of wicking tops and bottoms that are light-to-midweight, example materials include capilene, merino wool, polypropylene, etc.
- Several T-shirts and/or nylon travel shirt
- Warm top, mid-weight shirt, sweater or pullover, also wicking material such as merino wool, fleece or polypropylene
- Nylon pants and shorts, or zip-offs
- Bathing suit
- Rainproof jacket and pant - Waterproof/breathable jacket and pant such as Gore-Tex® or coated nylon - with the pants look for side leg zippers or a style that will allow you to remove them without removing your boots
- Casual wear, for your evenings at each lodge

Important note: Please, no cotton hiking clothes with the possible exception of a t-shirt, and feel free to call us if you have any questions.

Gear Checklist

- Water bottles or bladder, 2 liters total capacity
- Contact lenses and glasses if you wear contact lenses please also bring a pair of glasses - your contacts are likely to become dirty and may be difficult to clean
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, lip balm
- Bug repellent, preferably a product containing at least 25% “DEET” (some people are sensitive to this product)
- Camera, spare batteries (optional)
- Knee braces, if needed
- Prescription medicine, please inform your trip leader of any medications you are taking
- Fly fishing gear, if you want to fish
- Money, for tipping your trip leader (optional but appreciated, generally 10-20% of your trip cost based upon the quality of your experience)

Online Store

Most of the items listed above are available in the Wildland Trekking online store. The store is specifically stocked to support you for your trip and is a convenient way to buy your gear since you can do it from home!

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What We Provide

Group Gear

We provide top-of-the-line backpacks, trekking poles and a knowledgeable, experienced, medically trained guide.

Food

We provide a diversity of foods containing the necessary nutrition for sustained energy output. Your guide will prepare all your lunches on the trail and breakfasts and dinners will be eaten at the LeConte Lodge Dining Hall.

We accommodate vegetarian diets and will make adjustments for food allergies. Special dietary requests may require an additional fee or other arrangements.

We do not provide alcoholic beverages. If you’d like to drink beer or wine with your dinner please plan on bringing cash for their purchase.

Important note: It’s critical that you include your dietary needs in your registration - it’s too late once you’ve arrived!

Fun Facts

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is...

• Famous - it’s the most visited park in the United States and is both a World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve Site.
• Big - over 500,000 acres in size, home to the largest old-growth forest in the Eastern United States at 187,000 acres, and it has 10 peaks over 6,000 feet.
• Biologically rich - the park’s cove hardwood forests are among the most diverse ecosystems in North America, the Southern Appalachian spruce-fir forest in the park’s highest elevations is the largest of its kind, and the smokies possess the most diverse salamander population outside of the tropics.
• “Smoky” - the park’s namesake refers to the natural fog that often hangs low over the park’s forests, a result of the collective exhalation of organic compounds by the forests’ vegetation.
• Wet - the park sees some 80 inches of annual precipitation, resulting in a landscape that in some areas feels more like a temperate rainforest than an eastern hardwood forest.

FYI

The following are various park regulations of interest:

• All wild animals are potentially dangerous – approaching or feeding wildlife is prohibited.
• Animal calls, audio attractants or other means of attracting or disturbing wildlife are prohibited.
• You must pack out ALL trash, including toilet paper.
• Firearms, weapons, and traps are prohibited in the backcountry.
• Pets are prohibited in the backcountry.

Clingman’s Dome Observation Tower

Ridge top in the Smokies, just outside Gatlinburg, TN
Discounted American Hiking Society Membership

As a guest of Wildland Trekking you're eligible for a discounted membership of $30 to the American Hiking Society. Benefits include:

- Free subscription to Backpacker Magazine
- American Hiker, AHS's quarterly newsletter
- Opportunities to join members-only Volunteer Vacations
- Contribution to the establishment, protection, and maintenance of hiking trails and the environment
- Read more on our website!

Thank You!

The Wildland Trekking Company is dedicated to delivering an exceptional travel experience that exceeds your every expectation. We believe that travel is one of life's great joys and take seriously our role in helping you create a trip of lasting memories.

In addition to our role as your travel partner and guide we are dedicated to the promotion of stewardship and conservation in the regions we visit. One of our primary goals as a business is to use the business as a tool toward long-term sustainability of the environment and its people.

If there is anything we can do to further inform or help you in preparation for your upcoming adventure please do not hesitate to contact us. Thanks for the opportunity to serve you and we look forward to seeing you soon!

Payment Schedule: A $500 deposit is required to secure your spot. The trip balance is then due 60 days prior to your trip start date. Final acceptance of any participant is subject to receipt and review of all required forms and documents, and payment.

Cancellation Policy: The Wildland Trekking Company reserves the right to cancel any trip because of inadequate sign-up or other causes that make it infeasible for the scheduling of the trip. If this is the case, we will inform you at least 30 days prior to departure, and a full refund of the advertised trip cost will be given, including the deposit. The Wildland Trekking Company is not responsible for additional expenses incurred by preparing for the trip (for example: non-refundable advance purchase air tickets, clothing, equipment, visa fees, medical expenses, etc.). If you cancel or leave a trip for any reason:
- 60 or more days prior to the trip start date, we will grant you a full refund, less a $50 administrative fee per reservation.
- Between 59 and 30 days prior to the trip start date, we will retain 25 percent of the trip cost.
- Between 29 and 15 days prior to the trip start date, we will retain 75 percent of the trip cost.
- Less than 15 days prior to the trip start date, or once the trip has begun, there will be no refund.

Transfer Policy: If you transfer from one trip to another:
- 30 or more days prior to the trip start date, there will be a $25 processing fee per reservation.
- Less than 29 days prior to the trip start date, regular cancellation and refund policies will apply.

Trip Insurance: For your protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of trip insurance. It will protect you against financial loss in the event of trip cancellation or interruption, medical expenses, travel delay, emergency evacuation or other circumstances. Medical coverage secured with your policy will also satisfy our requirement for health insurance. Travel insurance is underwritten by MH Ross Travel Insurance.