

# Great Smoky Mountains

National Park  
North Carolina/Tennessee  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



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## A Wildlands Sanctuary

The Great Smoky Mountains, the majestic climax of the Appalachian Highlands, are a wildlands sanctuary preserving the world's finest examples of temperate deciduous forest. The name *Smoky* comes from the smoke-like haze enveloping the mountains, which stretch in sweeping troughs and mighty billows to the horizon. The park boasts unspoiled forests similar to those early pioneers found. Restored log cabins and barns stand as reminders of those who carved a living from this wilderness. Fertile soils

and abundant rain have encouraged the development of a world-renowned variety of flora, including more than 1,400 kinds of flowering plants. In the coves, broadleaf trees predominate. Along the crest—more than 1,800 meters (6,000 feet) elevation—are conifer forests like those of central Canada. Wildflowers and migrating birds abound in late April and early May. During June and July rhododendrons bloom in spectacular profusion. Autumn's pageantry of color usually peaks in mid-October. For many

this is the finest time of year, with cool, clear days ideal for hiking. In winter, an unpredictable season, a peace pervades the park. Fog rolling over the mountains may blanket the conifers in frost.

A scenic, high mountain road winds up through Newfound Gap, with a spur out to Clingmans Dome and its observation tower. Along the road are superb views, and those from the tower are truly panoramic. But roads offer only an intro-

duction to the Smokies. More than 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) of trails thread the whole of the Smokies' natural fabric—its waterfalls, coves, balds, and rushing streams. Each trail invites you into the intimacy and richness of these highlands. The Smokies, a wild landscape rich with traces of its human past, calls people back year after year.



The richly forested park is now an International Biosphere Reserve.

From high in the park ridges roll like waves to far horizons.



Trails abound, from the Appalachian Trail to quiet nature walks.



Restored historic structures punctuate the park's wild qualities.

## Enjoying the Park

The park is a delightful mix of forest wildlands and outdoor museum of pioneer life. Try to experience both aspects, by hiking and by visiting its restored structures.

**Naturalist activities.** From mid-June through August evening programs and nature walks are offered at most developed campgrounds. Spring and fall activities are limited. Check schedules at a visitor center or ranger station.

**Trails and hiking.** Horse and foot trails wind along streams and through forests into the wild stillness of the Smokies. For "do-it-yourself" naturalists there are short, self-guiding nature trails. Pick up a leaflet at the start of each trail. A backcountry use permit, required for all overnight hiking parties, can be obtained free at

ranger stations or visitor centers. Overnight use of shelters and backcountry campsites is rationed. Write or call the park for particulars.

**Camping.** There are seven developed campgrounds and three primitive camping areas in the park. Fees are charged at developed campgrounds and reservations are required at Cades Cove, Elkmont, and Smokemont. Developed campgrounds have water, fireplaces, tables, comfort stations, tent sites, and limited trailer space. No shelters are provided. There are no showers or hookups for trailers. Camping limit: 7 days between May 15 and Labor Day; 14 days between Labor Day and May 15. Find disposal stations at Smokemont, Cades Cove, and Cosby Campgrounds, and across the road from Sugarlands Visitor Center. Pit toilets are provided in

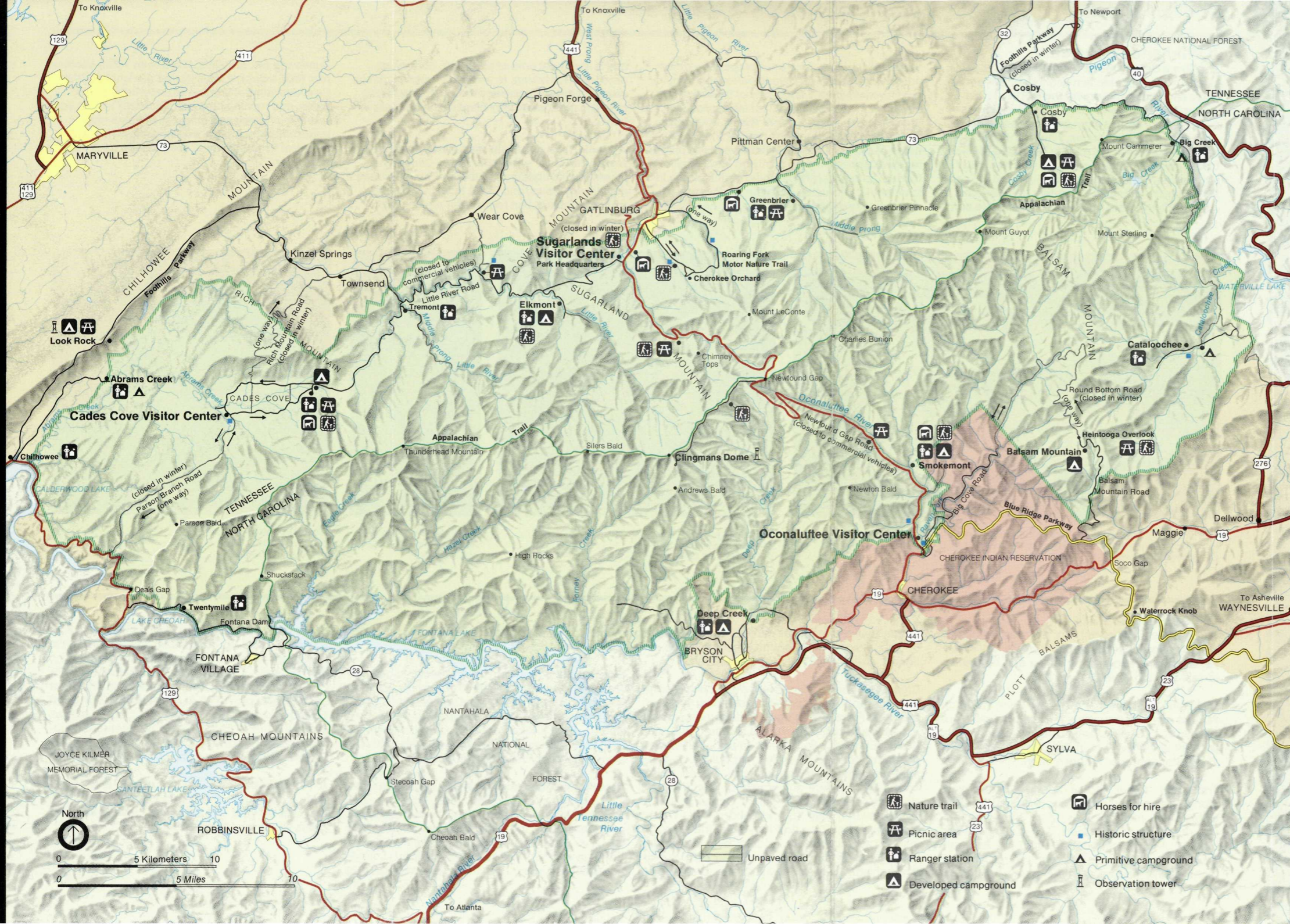
primitive camping areas and all drinking water must be boiled or chemically treated.

**Fishing.** Many park streams provide fishing for rainbow trout and brown trout from April 15 through October 15. Tennessee or North Carolina fishing licenses are required, but rot trout stamps. Check local regulations at a ranger station or visitor center before you fish. *Possession of any brook trout is prohibited.*

**Accommodations and Services.** Most neighboring towns have gasoline, food, lodging, and camping supplies. Many private campgrounds operate outside the park. For information write the chambers of commerce of nearby North Carolina and Tennessee towns. LeConte Lodge, accessible only by trail, offers accommodations

in the park from mid-April to late October. Allow a half-day hike up a mountain trail to reach this secluded retreat. Reservations are necessary; call or write LeConte Lodge, Gatlinburg, TN 37738. Rustic hotel accommodations and food service are provided at Wonderland Hotel, at Elkmont, June 1 to October 31. Saddle horses are available at Cades Cove, Smokemont, Dudley Creek, Cosby, and Two Mile Branch near Gatlinburg, from about April 1 to October 31.

**A Word about Bears.** Bears are wild and potentially dangerous. If one approaches your car, stay inside with the windows closed. Feeding bears violates park regulations.



### Park Visitor Centers

From the Tennessee side make your first stop the Sugarlands Visitor Center. Publications, information, exhibits, and a film are offered here at the intersection of the Newfound Gap and Little River roads. At Cades Cove you will find another visitor center (open mid-April through October), and an 18-kilometer (11-mile) loop drive through a pastoral Smokies scene with restored buildings and an old mill.

From the North Carolina side make your first stop the Oconaluftee Visitor Center. Publications, information, and exhibits are offered here. Adjacent to the visitor center the Pioneer Farmstead lets you see how the early mountain people lived. Just up the road into the park is Mingus Mill, a large, operating (mid-April through October) water-powered mill for grinding corn and wheat.

Sugarlands and Oconaluftee are connected by the Newfound Gap Road, a scenic drive, closed to commercial vehicles, across the Smokies crest. Numerous scenic pullouts are provided. You can park at the crest at Newfound Gap, where the Appalachian Trail crosses the road. Or you can drive the spur road out to Clingmans Dome, highest point in the park, and its observation tower (a strenuous 0.8-km/0.5-mi hike from the parking lot.)

### Regulations and Safety

The park is managed as a natural and wild environment. Motorists must drive defensively. Hikers must meet nature on its own terms. Do not hike alone. Let someone know your plans and schedule, and have proper clothing and gear. In winter, gear and clothing should be suitable for survival in deep snow and extreme cold not characteristic of the mid-South. To prevent accidents please stay on trails, stay off cliff faces, be careful around water, and watch and control children. Pets, permitted in the park if on a leash or under other constant physical control, are *prohibited* on trails or cross-country hikes.

For more information call or write: Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Gatlinburg, Tennessee 37738. Telephone 615-436-5615.