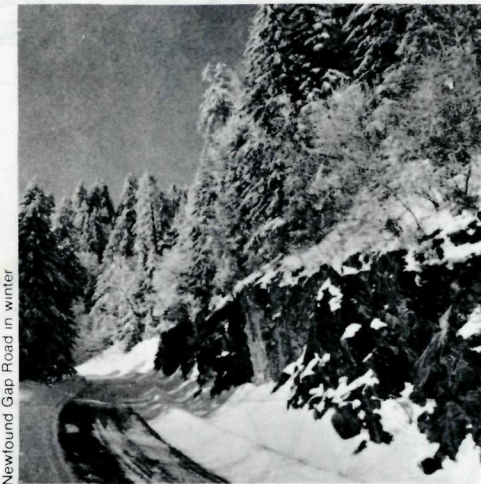


# AUTO TOURING

## AUTO TOURING IN THE SMOKIES

**Great Smoky Mountains National Park** encompasses over one-half million acres, the largest wilderness area in the Eastern United States. An auto tour of the Park offers a variety of experiences, with panoramic views, tumbling mountain streams, weathered pioneer buildings and uninterrupted forest stretching ridge after ridge to the horizon. There are over 270 miles of roads within this vast area, and as was true in pioneer times, most roads extend a short way up into the mountains and connect with foot trails. Drive slowly and stop often to discover some of the less obvious secrets of these mountains. Each road, valley and mountain peak has a character and charm all its own that is yours to explore and enjoy.



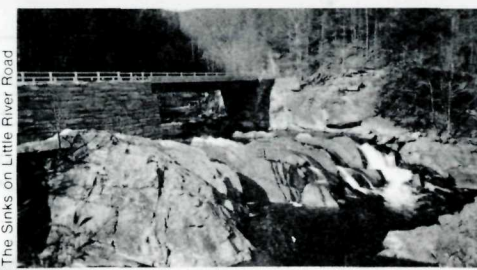
Newfound Gap Road in winter

Before you begin, there are a few things to remember that will make auto touring more enjoyable, and at the same time help protect the Park's resources.

- The Park belongs to all visitors and must be treated with care.
- Picnic areas and restroom facilities are located throughout the Park.
- About twice the usual traveling time should be allowed because of steep, winding and often crowded roads.
- Driving may be done at a more leisurely pace in evening or early morning hours when there are fewer vehicles on the road.
- Watch the road while driving and stop at pullouts to sightsee. Expect the unexpected from other drivers.
- Use litter collection stations to discard trash.
- Disturbing natural features or historic buildings is illegal.
- Trails are inviting when traffic is heavy. *Quiet Walkways* along the main roads offer short (usually less than one-half mile) strolls for those who wish to enjoy some of the sights, sounds and smells of the Smokies. A map of over 800 miles of other trails is available at visitor centers.
- Adverse weather may temporarily close some roads during winter months.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The Superintendent's address is Gatlinburg, TN 37738.

This folder is published by the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, a nonprofit organization cooperating with the National Park Service in the interpretive programs of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The association offers at nominal cost publications intended to develop a broad public understanding of park geology, biology, history, and related subjects.



The Sinks on Little River Road

**Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail** is a pleasant drive through five miles of vigorous young forest, past aging pioneer structures. A self-guiding booklet is available at the road entrance for an introduction to this area. Much of the drive follows the rapid descent of the creek. Water cascades down the mountainside over moss-covered rocks. White, frothy, and noisy, Roaring Fork is aptly named.



Newfound Gap Road

## ROADS IN THE PARK

**Newfound Gap Road** begins at approximately 2000 feet elevation and rises gradually to 5048 at Newfound Gap Overlook, which straddles the Tennessee-North Carolina state line. As you drive along Newfound Gap Road, distinct changes in vegetation and temperature can be noticed. The forests range from southern cove hardwood and pine-oak at lower elevations to northern hardwood, heath bald and spruce-fir at the higher elevations. You can compress a trip from Georgia to Canada into a short drive up the mountain. This is the only road across the Park. Originally, the transmountain road (the Oconaluftee Turnpike) was a toll road and went through Indian Gap, following an ancient Indian trail. When an easier and lower gap was discovered in the 1860's, the local people dubbed it New Found Gap and the Park road was constructed along its present route. Except in summer, traces of old roads and trails can still be seen extending into the mountains.

**Clingmans Dome Road** follows the crest of the Smokies along the state line, offering spectacular views on a clear day. Most of the drive passes through spruce-fir forest. For more information about this forest type, stop at the Spruce-Fir Self-Guiding Nature Trail. From the parking area at the end of the Clingmans Dome Road you can hike one-half mile to the observation tower and enjoy a panoramic view of the Park and surrounding area (weather permitting). Clingmans Dome, at 6642 feet elevation, is the highest peak in the Smokies.



Cades Cove

**Cades Cove Loop Road** skirts the edge of the valley, offering scenic views of pasture land and former pioneer settlements. A self-guiding auto tour booklet, available at the entrance to the loop road, will help you to understand the Cove and its history. Supposedly, this broad fertile valley was named after the wife of the Cherokee Chief, Abram. It was called Kate's Cove, which was later corrupted into Cades Cove. A visitor center and an operating grist mill are located at the Cable Mill area. Pioneer demonstrations are given during the summer.

**Cherokee Orchard Road** offers a short, relaxing drive into the Park. The Cherokee Orchard was an apple orchard before the Park was established. You can still see some of the apple trees and old homesites in this area. Noah "Bud" Ogle Place Self-Guiding Trail combines pioneer history and a pleasant walk, especially for the wildflower enthusiast.

**Greenbrier Road** is a cool drive on a hot summer's day leading to trailheads which provide access to virgin stands of timber. This is an excellent area for finding mushrooms and other fungi in late summer.

**Big Creek — Cataloochee Road** is for adventurous people who like out-of-the-way places. Chartered in 1833, the Cataloochee Turnpike, as it was then called, followed the trail of circuit rider Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Church. Few road improvements have been made since that time.

**Rich Mountain Road** follows the early wagon road to Maryville and reaches US 321 near Townsend. The drive provides several excellent views of Cades Cove and winds through pine-oak forests.

**Parson Branch Road** turns off the Forge Creek Road just beyond the Cable Mill parking area. This remote road meanders through second growth forest, fording several creeks.

**Heintooga-Round Bottom Road** is an unpaved extension of the Balsam Mountain Road. The road descends through second growth forest, following an old logging road. In summer wildflowers are abundant along the roadsides and streams.



view south from Clingmans Dome Road

**Balsam Mountain Road** follows the ridge to Heintooga Overlook, which offers an extensive view of the main crest of the Smokies.

**Cataloochee Road** provides access to a remote sheltered valley of the Smokies. Broad pastures, distant mountains, and shady streams lure the visitor. Settled in the early 1800's, only a few buildings and cemeteries remain as evidence of this thriving mountain community.

**Laurel Creek Road**, the only road into Cades Cove today, originally provided access to the Tremont area, not Cades Cove. Tremont has a varied history, changing through the years from logging camp to CCC camp to Job Corps Center to Environmental Education Center.

**Lakeview Drive** overlooks Fontana Lake. The road passes through stands of pine-oak forest in various stages of succession following forest fires. This is a good area for viewing fall colors.

**Little River Road** crosses Sugarlands Mountain at Fighting Creek Gap and then descends into Little River Gorge, paralleling the course of the river to Townsend. In 1907, Little River Lumber Company began constructing the Little River Railroad from Townsend to Elkmont to bring logs to the sawmill. The present road was built on this old railroad grade. East of Fighting Creek Gap, at Maloney Point, there is an excellent view of Mt. LeConte and the Sugarlands Valley. In pioneer times this area was covered by sugar maples, hence the name Sugarlands.



Newfound Gap Road

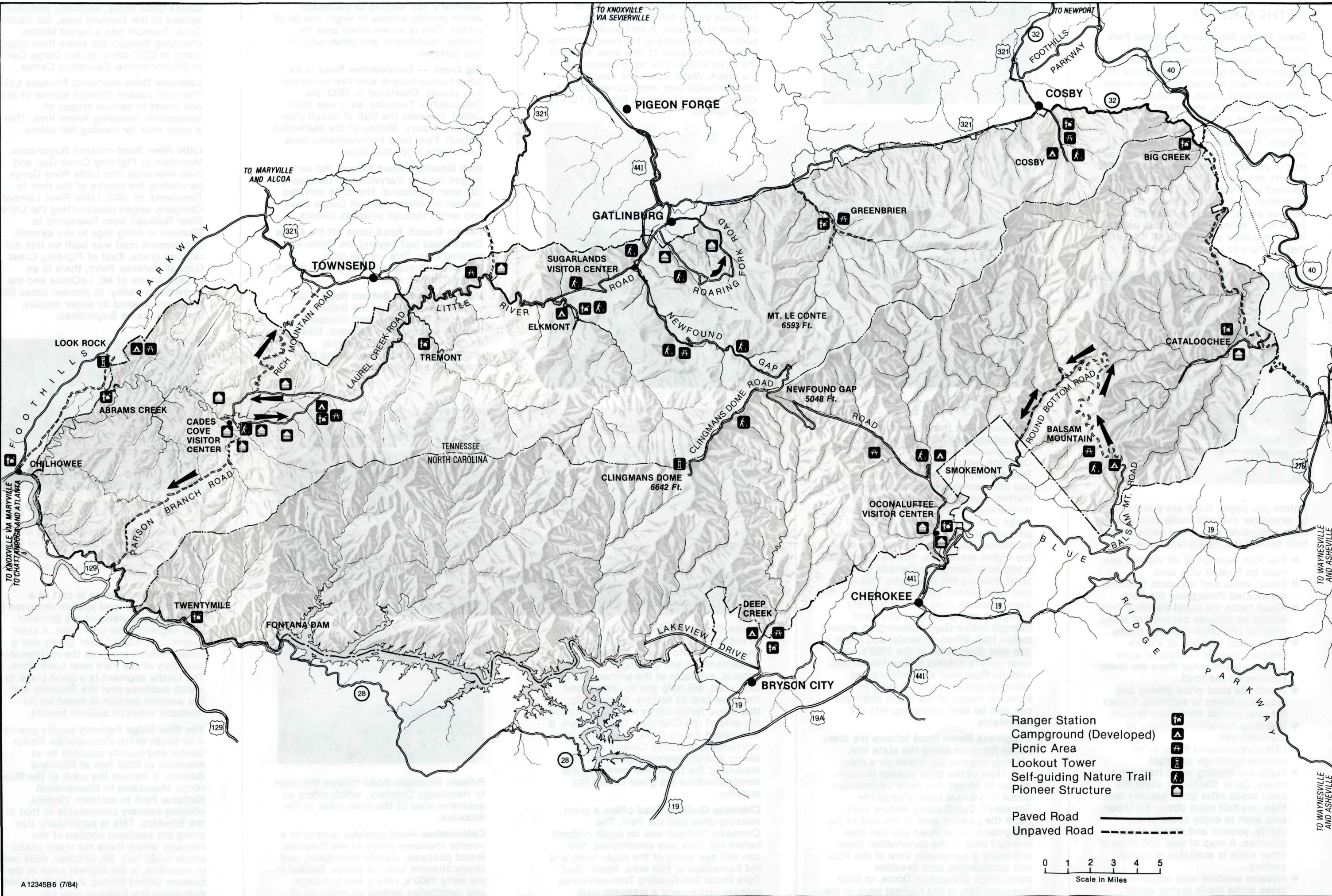
## ROADS OUT OF PARK

Two paved roads of outstanding scenic value are located in the vicinity of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Both may be closed by adverse winter weather conditions.

**The Foothills Parkway** is part of a circumferential road system designed to offer dramatic views of the Smokies. Two segments are now open. A short segment is located near Cosby and a longer stretch parallels the northwestern boundary of the Park near Look Rock. The Cosby segment is a good place to watch sunrises over the Smokies and the western section is noted for its dramatic views of autumn forests.

**The Blue Ridge Parkway** begins one-half mile south of the Oconaluftee Visitor Center and quickly ascends to an elevation of 6053 feet at Richland Balsam. It follows the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains to Shenandoah National Park in northern Virginia, offering scenery comparable to that of the Smokies. This is particularly true along the southern section of the Parkway where there are many peaks above 6,000 feet. Mt. Mitchell, 6684 feet in elevation, is the highest peak in the Eastern United States. A detailed folder explaining the Parkway may be purchased at Oconaluftee Visitor Center.





	* Closed in Winter	One-way Mileage	Driving Time	Location	Trailers and RV's Permitted	Road Information	* Closed in Winter	One-way Mileage	Driving Time	Location	Trailers and RV's Permitted	Road Information
Newfound Gap Road		32	1 hour	Cherokee, NC, to Gatlinburg, TN	Yes	Scenic drive over crest of the Smokies.	Greenbrier Road	6	20 min.	6 miles E of Gatlinburg, TN, off US 321	No	Paved only to Ranger Station
Clingmans Dome Road		7	20 min.	Newfound Gap to Clingmans Dome Parking Area	Yes	Road ends at trail to Clingmans Dome.	Big Creek-Cataloochee Road (old NC 29)	15	2 hours	Big Creek Primitive Camp-ground to Cataloochee Road	Yes	Not recommended for RV's or trailers; very curvy; 14-mile road with 2-way traffic. Not recommended for RV's.
Little River Road		18	45 min.	Sugarlands Visitor Center to Townsend Intersection	Yes	Curvy road, following Little River.	Cataloochee Historic District	6	30 min.	Cataloochee Historic District	Yes	High mountain drive with access from the Blue Ridge Parkway.
Laurel Creek Road		7	15 min.	Townsend Intersection to Cades Cove	Yes	Provides access to Cades Cove.	Blue Ridge Parkway to Balsam Mountain Campground	9	30 min.	Blue Ridge Parkway to Balsam Mountain Campground	Yes	One-way, rough road; curvy 10 miles; changes to two-way road at Round Bottom.
Cades Cove Loop Road		11	1 hour	Cades Cove Historic District	Yes	One-way self-guiding loop road through historical area; best drive to see wildlife.	Balsam Mountain Camp-ground to Cherokee, NC	14	1 hour	Balsam Mountain Camp-ground to Cherokee, NC	No	One-way, rough road; curvy 10 miles; changes to two-way road at Round Bottom.
Rich Mountain Road*		7	1 hour	Cades Cove Loop Road to US 321 in Townsend, TN	No	One-way; steep and curvy.	Lakeview Drive	6	20 min.	Bryson City, NC to Laurel Branch	Yes	Scenic views; lightly traveled.
Parson Branch Road*		8	1 hour	Cades Cove Loop Road to US 129 near Fontana, NC	No	One-way; curvy.	Foothills Parkway-West	17	30 min.	US 321 near Walland, TN, to US 129 near Fontana, NC	Yes	Lightly traveled mountain drive with scenic views.
Cherokee Orchard Road		3 1/2	15 min.	Airport road in Gatlinburg, TN, to Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail	Yes	Two-way road; turn at traffic light #8 in Gatlinburg.	Foothills Parkway-East	6	15 min.	TN 32 near Cosby, TN, to I-40	Yes	Scenic access to Interstate 40.
Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail		5	1 hour	Self-guiding road beginning on Cherokee Orchard Road	No	One-way road; steep and curvy.	Blue Ridge Parkway*	489	3 days	Great Smokies to Shenandoah Nat. Pk.	Yes	Scenic drive along crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains.