



## Drive safely in wintry conditions

Temperatures drop swiftly at higher elevations, and precipitation is much more frequent and heavy. Steep grades and curves can become especially dangerous in winter. Be prepared:

- Reduce your speed
- Leave extra space between you and the vehicle in front of you
- Avoid sudden braking—instead, use lower gears or brake gently to slow down
- Check current conditions at [twitter.com/SmokiesRoadsNPS](https://twitter.com/SmokiesRoadsNPS) before departing



# SMOKIES GUIDE

The Official Newspaper of the Smokies • Winter 2022-23

The Mount Cammerer fire tower located in the Cosby area of the park is one of many iconic Smokies structures constructed in the 1930s by Civilian Conservation Corps workers. *Image by Roger Trentham.*

## Park It Forward in 2023

*Parking tags help pave the way for improved visitor services and park preservation*

Beginning March 1, a valid parking tag will be required for all visitors parking for more than 15 minutes in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Parking tags will not be required for motorists who simply pass through the area or park for less than 15 minutes.

Daily (\$5), weekly (\$15), and annual (\$40) parking tags will be available for purchase at automated fee machines and visitor centers as well as online at [recreation.gov](https://recreation.gov) or [smokiesinformation.org](https://smokiesinformation.org). Each tag is valid for use in a single vehicle and must include a license plate number matching the vehicle in which it is displayed. Tags must be displayed physically in vehicles; digital representations will not be accepted. Parking tags do not guarantee a parking spot in a specific location or at a specific time.

Revenue generated by parking tags will help to improve visitor services in

the park and preserve the Smokies for generations to come. Park visitation has increased by 57 percent over the last decade to a record 14.1 million visits in 2021. These critically needed funds will supplement federal funding, grant monies, and donation dollars, providing an opportunity to address the rising costs associated with maintaining what is consistently the most visited national park in the country.

All revenue generated through the sales of parking tags will stay in the Smokies to directly improve visitor experiences and help fund things like trail maintenance, custodial services, trash removal, historic cabin preservation, and staffing for increased ranger presence across the park.

For more information about parking tags, scan the code at the right with your camera app or visit [go.nps.gov/GRSMfees](https://go.nps.gov/GRSMfees).



## PARKING TAGS AHEAD!

Beginning in March 2023, parking in the Smokies will require a valid parking tag (annual tag pictured).

For more info, scan code with camera app.





## Visitor centers

Oconaluftee, Sugarlands, and Cades Cove: 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Dec.–Feb., 9 a.m.–5 p.m. in March.  
 Clingmans Dome: *closed for the season.*  
 Mingus Mill: *closed for the season.*  
 Cable Mill: *closed for the season.*  
*Note: All visitor centers are closed on Dec. 25.*



## Road closures

• Seasonal closures include: Forge Creek Road, Parson Branch Road, Heintooga Ridge Road, Heintooga/Round Bottom and Straight Fork roads, Rich Mountain Road, Clingmans Dome Road, Little Greenbrier Road, and Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail.  
 • All roads including Newfound Gap, Cataloochee, and Cades Cove Loop roads are subject to temporary closure due to dangerous driving conditions. Check [twitter.com/SmokiesRoadsNPS](https://twitter.com/SmokiesRoadsNPS) for updates.



## Park weather

As winter arrives, days can be sunny and 65°F or snowy with highs in the 20s. Conditions vary considerably between low and high elevations. Nearly 70 inches of snow fall on Newfound Gap every year. Lows of -20°F are possible at the higher elevations. At lower elevations, snows of an inch or more can be expected about three to five times a year. Milder temperatures typically arrive by mid-to-late April.



## Special events and ranger programs

Check at visitor centers or [nps.gov/grsm](https://nps.gov/grsm) for information about special events and ranger programs.



## Camping in the national park

The National Park Service maintains developed campgrounds at ten locations in the park. Only Cades Cove and Smokemont are open in winter. There are no showers or hookups other than circuits for special medical uses at Cades Cove, Elkmont, and Smokemont.

Campsite reservations are *required* at all park campgrounds, including Abrams Creek, Balsam Mountain, Big Creek, Cades Cove, Cataloochee, Cosby, Deep Creek, Elkmont,

Smokemont, and Look Rock. Sites may be reserved up to six months in advance. Make your reservation at [recreation.gov](https://recreation.gov) or call 877.444.6777.

Site occupancy is limited to six people and two vehicles (a trailer = one vehicle). The maximum stay is 14 days.

Campsites for large groups are at Big Creek, Cades Cove, Cataloochee, Cosby, Deep Creek, Elkmont, and Smokemont. Reservations are required and may be secured up to a year in advance. For more information, visit [nps.gov/grsm](https://nps.gov/grsm).

Site	No. of Sites	Elevation	Expected Open Dates 2023	Nightly Fees	Max RV Length
<b>Abrams Creek</b>	16	1,125'	4/28 – 10/29	*	12'
<b>Balsam Mountain</b>	42	5,310'	5/12 – 6/4 6/17 – 10/9	*	30'
<b>Big Creek</b>	12	1,700'	4/7 – 10/29	*	tents only
<b>Cades Cove</b>	159	1,807'	open year-round	\$25	35'–40'
<b>Cataloochee</b>	27	2,610'	4/7 – 10/29	*	31'
<b>Cosby</b>	157	2,459'	4/7 – 10/29	*	25'
<b>Deep Creek</b>	92	1,800'	4/7 – 10/29	*	26'
<b>Elkmont</b>	220	2,150'	3/10 – 11/26	*	32'–35'
<b>Smokemont</b>	142	2,198'	open year-round	\$21–\$25	35'–40'
<b>Look Rock</b>	68	2,600'	4/28-10/29	*	no limit

\*Camping fees will increase effective March 2023. See QR code on page one for details.



## Firewood

To prevent the spread of destructive pests, only USDA- or state-certified heat-treated firewood may be brought into the park. Campers may gather dead and down wood in the park for campfires.



## Picnic areas

Picnic areas at Cades Cove, Deep Creek, Greenbrier, and Metcalf Bottoms are open year-round. Big Creek, Chimneys, Collins Creek, Cosby, Heintooga, and Look Rock are closed for the season. Picnic pavilions may be reserved for a fee at [recreation.gov](https://recreation.gov). Some restroom facilities at picnic areas may be closed for the season.



## Accommodations

LeConte Lodge (accessible by trail only, reopens March 20) provides the only lodging in the park. Advanced reservations required. 865.429.5704 or [lecontelodge.com](https://lecontelodge.com)



## Services

There are no gas stations, showers, or restaurants in the national park.



## For rent

The Appalachian Clubhouse and Spence Cabin at Elkmont can be reserved for daytime events at [recreation.gov](https://recreation.gov) starting April 1, 2023.



## Pets in the park

Pets are allowed in frontcountry campgrounds and along roads as long as they are restrained at all times. Pets are not allowed on park trails, except for Gatlinburg and Oconaluftee River trails. Pets must be kept in control on a leash no longer than six feet.

## SMOKIES GUIDE

*Smokies Guide* is produced four times per year by Great Smoky Mountains Association and Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

[nps.gov/grsm](https://nps.gov/grsm)  
[SmokiesInformation.org](https://SmokiesInformation.org)

**Publication dates**  
 Spring: mid-March  
 Summer: early June  
 Autumn: mid-Sept.  
 Winter: mid-Dec.

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 © 2022 GSMA  
 P.O. Box 130  
 Gatlinburg, TN 37738

**Available in digital format** at [issuu.com/greatsmokymountainsassociation](https://issuu.com/greatsmokymountainsassociation)

Printed on recycled paper



**Download the free NPS App** for interactive maps, tours, and more.





## Bicycling

Most park roads are too narrow and heavily traveled for safe or enjoyable bicycling. Bicycles are permitted on park roads but prohibited on trails except Gatlinburg, Oconaluftee River, and lower Deep Creek and Indian Creek trails. Helmets are required by law for persons age 16 and under and strongly recommended for all.



## Horseback riding

Some 550 miles of park trails are open to horses. See park trail map for trails and rules. Horse camps are available at Anthony Creek, Big Creek, Cataloochee, Round Bottom, and Tow String. Make reservations at recreation.gov.

Three concession horseback riding stables offer rides from March through November. Call for exact opening dates.

- **Cades Cove** 865.448.9009 [cadescovestables.com](http://cadescovestables.com)
- **Smokemont** 828.497.2373 [smokemontridingstable.com](http://smokemontridingstable.com)
- **Sugarlands** 865.436.3535 [sugarlandsridingstables.com](http://sugarlandsridingstables.com)



## Fishing

Fishing is permitted year-round in the park, but a Tennessee or North Carolina fishing license is required. Either state license is valid throughout the park, and no trout stamp is required. Fishing with bait is prohibited. Special permits are required for the Qualla Boundary and Gatlinburg, and licenses are available in nearby towns. A free fishing map with a complete list of all park fishing regulations is available at visitor centers.



## Backcountry camping

Camping can be an exciting adventure for those who are properly equipped and informed. To facilitate this activity, the NPS maintains more than 800 miles of trails and more than 100 backcountry campsites and shelters throughout the park. One of the greatest chal-

lenges is deciding where to go. Here are some tools to help.

1. **Get the map.** Go online to view the park's official trail map ([nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/maps.htm](http://nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/maps.htm)), which shows all park trails, campsites, and shelters. Park rules and regulations are also listed here. You can purchase the printed version of the trail map for \$1 at any park visitor center or online at [SmokiesInformation.org](http://SmokiesInformation.org).

2. **Plan your trip.** Call or stop by the park's Backcountry Office from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for trip planning help. The office is located in Sugarlands Visitor Center, two miles south of Gatlinburg on US 441. 865.436.1297.

3. **Get a permit.** Make your reservation and get your permit through the Backcountry Office at Sugarlands Visitor Center (*by phone or in person*) or online at [smokiespermits.nps.gov](http://smokiespermits.nps.gov).

Reservations and permits are required for all overnight stays in the backcountry. The cost is \$4 per person per night. Reservations may be made up to 30 days in advance. Note: Nightly backcountry permit fees will be increasing to \$8 effective March 2023. Scan the QR code on page one for more details.

Winter hikers should be especially aware of abrupt weather changes and the danger of hypothermia—the dangerous lowering of body temperature. Always carry

an ample supply of food, water, and reliable rain gear. Layer clothing that provides warmth when wet (not cotton). Be prepared for sudden weather changes, especially at the higher elevations, including rain, snow, cold, and wind. Stay dry and know your limits.

See page 4 for more trip essentials.



## COVID-19

The National Park Service is working with federal, state, and local health authorities to closely monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. Check [nps.gov/grsm](http://nps.gov/grsm) for the latest updates on open facilities, access, and updates on mask-wearing requirements. All openings are based on available staffing. Temporary closures may occur on short notice. Play it #SmokiesSafe in the park:

- Delay your trip if you are sick
- Bring a mask and check for current mask requirements
- Avoid crowded areas
- Maintain social distancing six feet away from others



**Learn the BARK principles so you and your pet can have a safe and fun visit any time you go to a national park.**

## Take the BARK pledge:



**B**ag and bin your pet's waste



**A**lways leash your pet



**R**espect wildlife



**K**now where you can go

*The only two pet-friendly trails in the Smokies are Gatlinburg Trail in TN and Oconaluftee River Trail in NC.*

*Check out the BARK ranger products at [SmokiesInformation.org](http://SmokiesInformation.org)*

**GSMNP  
BY THE NUMBERS**



**14 million+**  
visitors per year



**1,000+** species  
new to science  
found in the park



**31** species of  
salamanders



**69** species  
of mammals



**9,900+** species  
of insects



**16** mtns. higher  
than 6,000'

# Anything can happen out on the trail, but you'll be prepared if you keep it **SMOKIES SMART!**



Tell someone where you're going, stay on established trails, pack the essentials, and know what to do in case of an emergency. Let the NPS Backcountry Office help you plan your hike and prepare for what you may experience along the way. Call 865.436.1297, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

## PACK ESSENTIALS

- **Navigation**—map, compass, and knowledge of how to use them
- **Water and food**
- **Extra layers**
- **Rain gear and pack cover or waterproof bags**
- **Headlamp or flashlight**
- **Traction support** like microspikes or hiking poles
- **Emergency whistle**
- **First aid kit**
- **Sun protection** with sunscreen, sunglasses, and hat

## FOR A LONGER HIKE

- **Repair kit** with multi-tool or knife
- **Fire starter**
- **Shelter**—emergency tent or tarp



## IN AN EMERGENCY

- Call 911 if you can acquire a signal.
- Remain with any injured parties until help arrives. Use what basic first-aid techniques you know, but do not attempt invasive intervention unless you are medically trained.
- Use an emergency whistle to issue a series of three spaced blasts every few minutes to alert rescue crews. If you are in an open area, display brightly colored clothing or gear.

## YOUR CELL PHONE IS **NOT**

- a light
- a map
- a survival kit
- always going to have service





# THINGS TO DO IN THE WINTERTIME

## Hit the trail

There are more than 800 miles of maintained trails in the Smokies ranging from leisurely quiet walkways to challenging mountain ascents. Just be sure to come prepared with rain gear, layers, and plenty of water and snacks.

Download a free copy of the park's trail map at [nps.gov](https://nps.gov) or purchase one for \$1 at a visitor center or kiosk. Visitor center bookstores offer hiking references including *Day Hikes of the Smokies* and *Hiking Trails of the Smokies*. See page 4 for pack essentials.



## Find the Smokies Most Wanted

Help scientists gather important information about plants, animals, fungi, and more by using the free iNaturalist app in the park.

**1 Get the iNaturalist app**  
Download the app. Log in.  
Try it out.



**2 Record life you find in the Smokies**

Find a cool organism. Take photos or sound recordings. Post it to iNaturalist. Repeat.

Up for a challenge? Look for the target species (like this cup lichen) in the Smokies Most Wanted guide. Find the guide and more at [dliia.org/smokiesmostwanted](https://dliia.org/smokiesmostwanted).

Photo by Alan Rockefeller



## Explore Smokies history

Great Smoky Mountains National Park has been recognized as a World Heritage Site and holds one of the best collections of log structures in the eastern US. Particularly in Cades Cove, Cataloochee, Elkmont, and Oconaluftee and along the Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail, the bareness of winter reveals hidden structures, cemeteries, and other reminders of past Smokies residents.

In Cherokee, North Carolina, the Museum of the Cherokee Indian offers immersive experiences and exhibits exploring 13,000 years of Cherokee history. See [mci.org](https://mci.org) for hours and details. *Photo by Judy Baxter*



## Spot winter wildlife

There's still plenty of wildlife to see in the Smokies even after the black bears have ambled off to their winter rest. Elk and white-tailed deer remain active, and birds (like this eastern bluebird) are much easier to see when deciduous trees lose their leaves. Take photos of what you see and use the iNaturalist app to share your observations.

Do not feed or approach wildlife. If you see wildlife from your vehicle, continue to the nearest pull-out before attempting to view. Sudden stops can be dangerous and cause traffic delays for others. *Photo by Warren Lynn*



## Driving distances and estimated times

All driving times may vary due to traffic conditions.

### Cherokee, NC to:

Gatlinburg: 34 miles (1 hour)  
 Cades Cove: 58 miles (2 hours)  
 Newfound Gap: 18 miles (½ hour)  
 Clingmans Dome: 25 miles (¾ hour)  
 Cataloochee: 39 miles (1½ hours)  
 Deep Creek: 14 miles (½ hour)

### Gatlinburg, TN to:

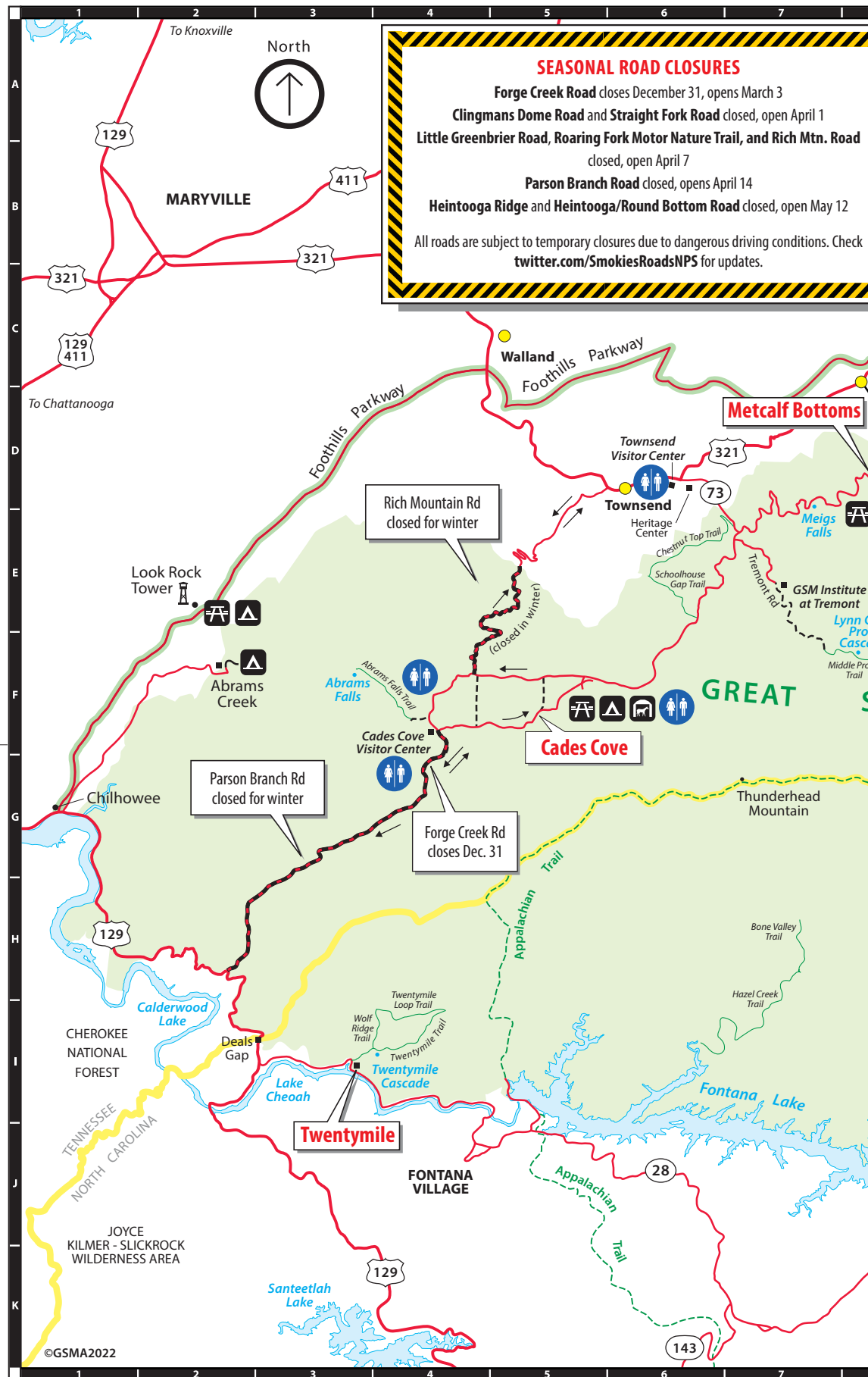
Cherokee: 34 miles (1 hour)  
 Cades Cove: 27 miles (1 hour)  
 Newfound Gap: 16 miles (½ hour)  
 Clingmans Dome: 23 miles (¾ hour)  
 Cataloochee: 65 miles (2½ hours)  
 Greenbrier Cove: 6 miles (¼ hour)  
 Deep Creek: 48 miles (1½ hours)

### Townsend, TN to:

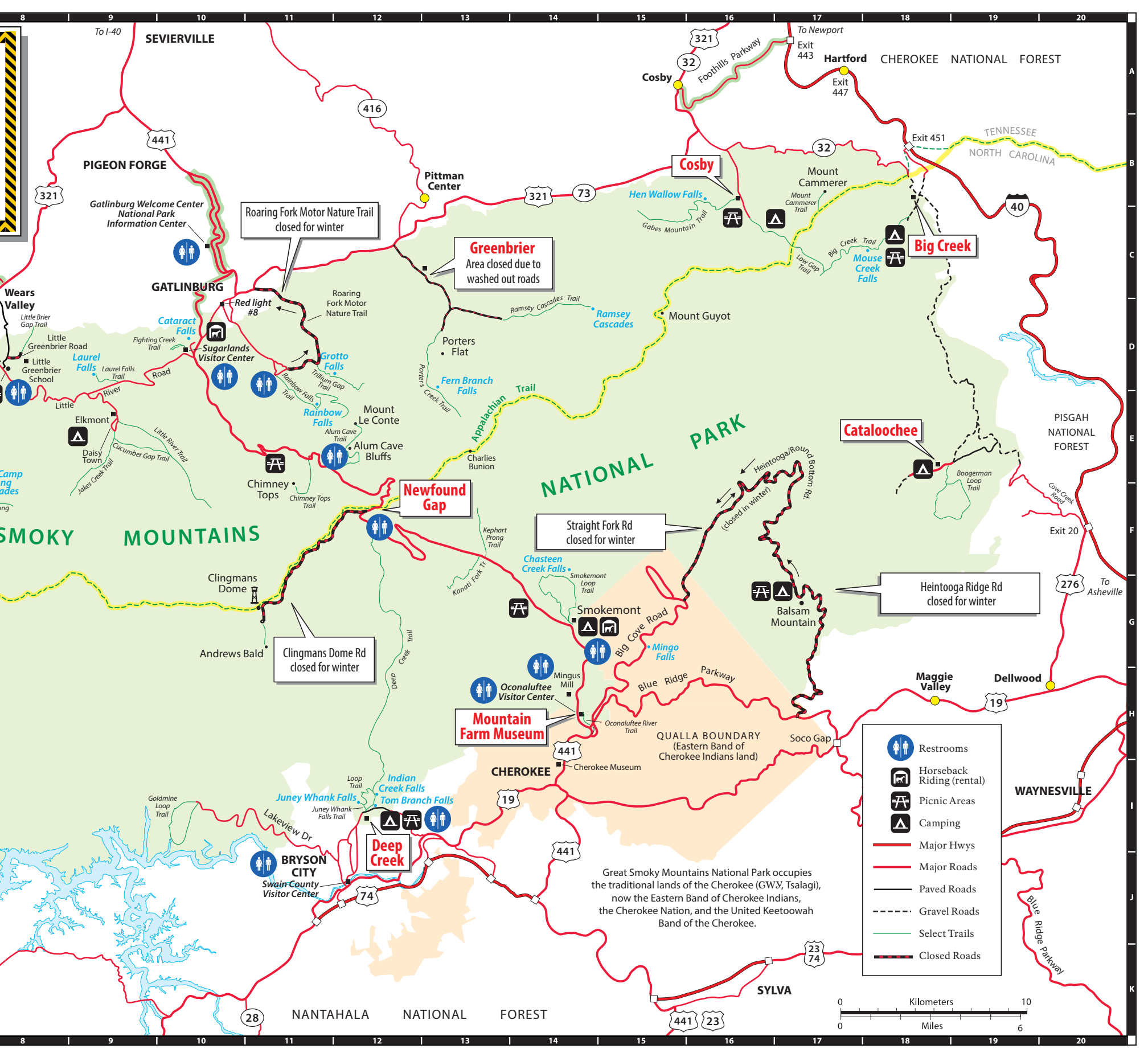
Cades Cove: 9 miles (¼ hour)  
 Newfound Gap: 34 miles (1¼ hours)  
 Gatlinburg: 22 miles (¾ hour)  
 Cherokee: 52 miles (1½ hours)  
 Look Rock: 18 miles (½ hour)  
 Cataloochee: 87 miles (3 hours)

	Gatlinburg, TN elev. 1,462'			Mt. Le Conte elev. 6,593'		
	AVG. HIGH	LOW	PRECIP.	AVG. HIGH	LOW	PRECIP.
Jan.	49°	27°	4.0"	36°	18°	6.7"
Feb.	53°	28°	4.1"	37°	19°	5.6"
March	62°	35°	5.5"	44°	25°	7.0"
April	71°	42°	4.5"	52°	31°	6.7"
May	77°	50°	5.7"	58°	39°	8.0"
June	82°	58°	5.8"	64°	47°	8.7"
July	85°	62°	6.3"	67°	50°	9.0"
Aug.	84°	61°	5.3"	67°	49°	7.6"
Sept.	79°	55°	4.7"	62°	44°	7.2"
Oct.	70°	43°	2.9"	55°	35°	4.7"
Nov.	60°	34°	3.4"	46°	27°	6.8"
Dec.	51°	28°	4.6"	38°	20°	6.4"

These temperature and precipitation averages are based on data for the last 20 years. Temperatures are in degrees Fahrenheit. An average of over 84 inches (7 feet) of precipitation falls on the higher elevations of the Smokies.







Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail closed for winter

**Greenbrier**  
Area closed due to washed out roads

Clingmans Dome Rd closed for winter

Straight Fork Rd closed for winter

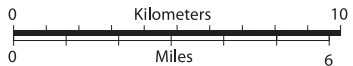
Heintooaga Ridge Rd closed for winter

**Mountain Farm Museum**

**Deep Creek**

Great Smoky Mountains National Park occupies the traditional lands of the Cherokee (GWS, Tsalagi), now the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the Cherokee Nation, and the United Keetoowah Band of the Cherokee.

- Restrooms
- Horseback Riding (rental)
- Picnic Areas
- Camping
- Major Hwys
- Major Roads
- Paved Roads
- Gravel Roads
- Select Trails
- Closed Roads





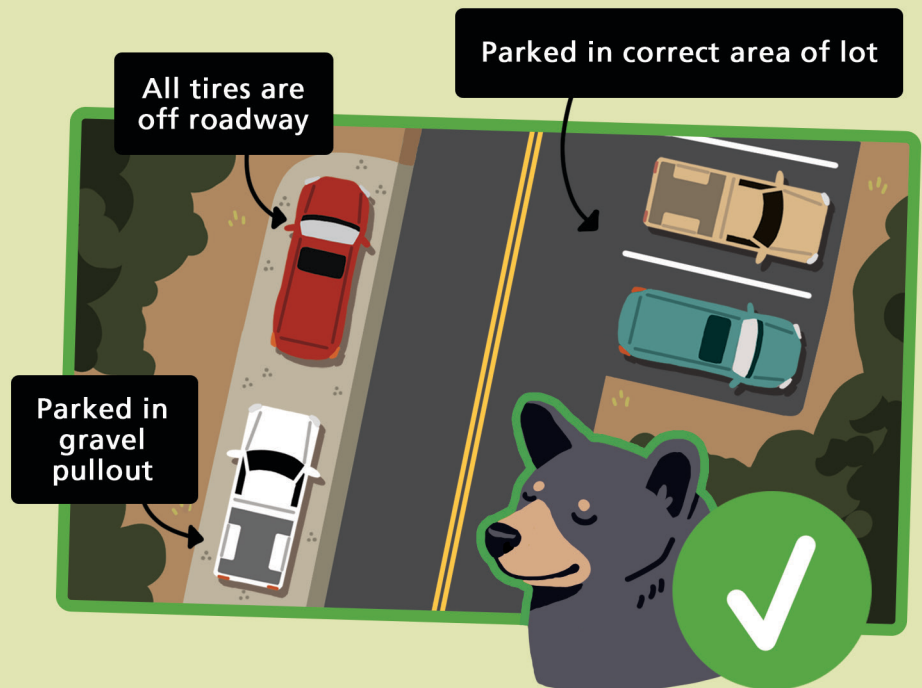
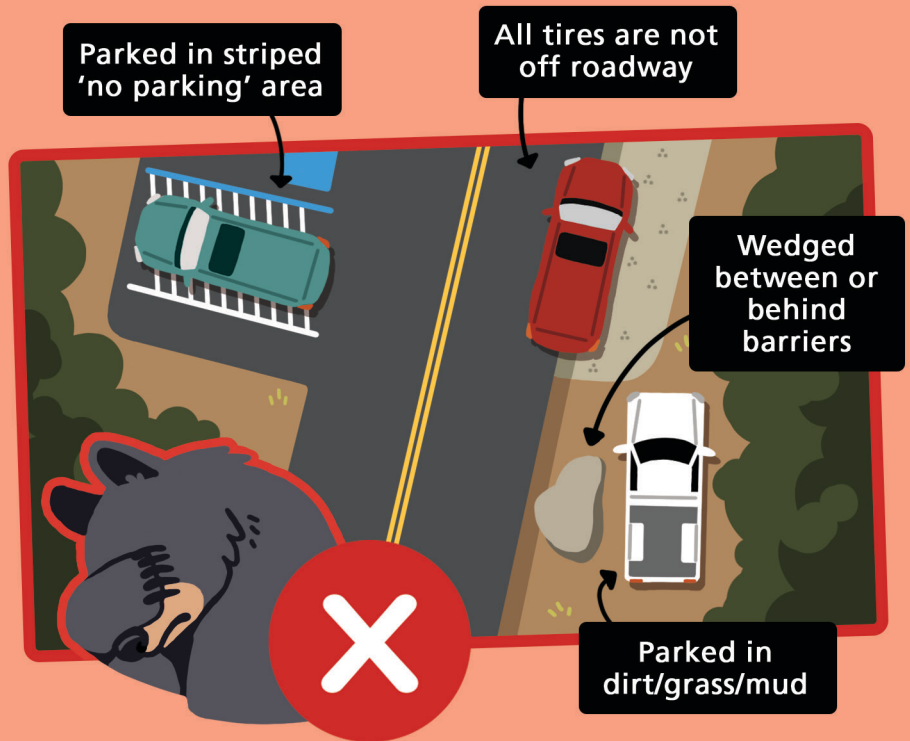
Raccoon and firewood safety illustration on page 9 by Lisa Horstman. All others by Emma Oxford.

### RULE OF THUMB FOR WILDLIFE VIEWING

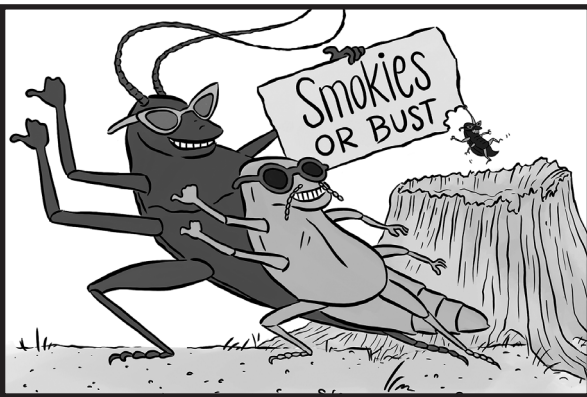


When viewing wildlife, hold your arm out straight. If you can't cover the animal in your line of sight with your thumb, you're too close!

## PARK SAFELY IN THE SMOKIES







## PLEASE LEAVE YOUR FIREWOOD AT HOME

Use only heat-treated or dead and down wood within the park. Harmful pests can hitchhike into the park on your firewood, which could kill millions of trees.

## LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS

Writing on or carving into trees, stones, or structures can cause permanent damage—it's also a crime! Taking a photo is always a better way to remember your time in the Smokies and helps preserve the park for others too.

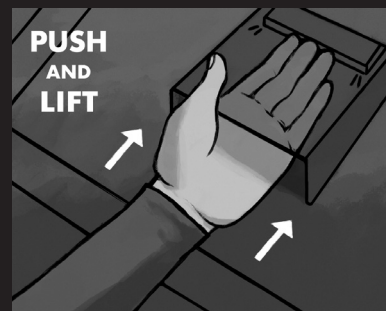


## KEEP PETS ON DESIGNATED TRAILS

Remember that the Gatlinburg Trail and Oconaluftee River Trail are the *only* pet-friendly trails in the park. All pets must be kept on a leash no longer than six feet at all times.

## BIN IT FOR THE BEARS

Help protect bears by packing out all trash and food waste and using bear-proof dumpsters in the park.



# IF YOU LOVE THE SMOKIES

Great Smoky Mountains National Park depends on four primary nonprofit partners as well as 2,800 park volunteers to help its staff meet the needs of 14+ million visitors and manage 522,000 acres of resources.

## Great Smoky Mountains Association

Since 1953, the nonprofit Great Smoky Mountains Association has supported the educational, scientific, and historical preservation efforts of the park by operating the park's official bookstores, publishing books and other media about the park's natural and cultural resources, and supporting park programs. Over the years, GSMA has contributed more than \$47 million to assist with living history demonstrations, save hemlock trees, fund natural resource education internships, construct visitor centers and the Collections Preservation Center, and much more.



Association members receive a number of benefits to keep them informed about special events in the park and issues affecting the Smokies:

- Subscription to the biannual full-color magazine *Smokies Life*
- Digital access to this award-winning park newspaper and *Smokies LIVE* e-newsletter
- 15–20% discount on books, music, gifts, and products at park visitor centers and at GSMA's web store
- 10% (or more) discount at 500+ additional nonprofit public lands partner stores
- Access to member-exclusive group hikes, backpacking excursions, and educational sessions
- Invitation to GSMA's Members Weekend

Join today by visiting [Smokies-Information.org](http://Smokies-Information.org) or call us at 888.898.9102, ext. 257.

## Friends of the Smokies

Founded in 1993, supporters of Friends of the Smokies have contributed over \$75 million to the park. Funds help the park provide more than 14 million visitors a safe, memorable experience while protecting the historic and natural resources of the park. Every year, the park requests funding for numerous projects and programs that would be unfulfilled without the support of Friends.



Programs and projects include:

- 'Forever Places' endowment to support historic preservation
- 'Trails Forever' endowment to fund the skilled crews who lead trail rehabilitation
- 'Trails Now,' which funds materials for 'Trails Forever' projects
- Facility improvements and visitor amenities
- Campground renovations
- Cultural experiences and special events
- Search and Rescue vehicles and safety equipment
- Education programs to serve over 10,000 students every year
- Air and water quality monitoring
- Conservation and wildlife management

Programs like 'Forever Places' support the park's efforts to ensure that future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy the park and walk in the footsteps of those who once called these mountains home.

Your donation makes a difference. Learn more and become a 'Friend' by visiting [FriendsOfTheSmokies.org](http://FriendsOfTheSmokies.org).



For information about memberships and planned giving, email: [info@friendsofthesmokies.org](mailto:info@friendsofthesmokies.org) or call 800.845.5665.

Join the park's partners in helping to protect this place for ourselves and future generations

## Discover Life in America

The Smokies have long been renowned for their rich variety of life. Knowing what creatures reside here helps the National Park Service better protect the Smokies against threats like air pollution, wildfire, habitat fragmentation, invasive species, and climate change.



Discover Life in America is a nonprofit partner that was launched in 1998 to manage the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI), an effort to identify and learn about every variety of plant and animal in the park. The organization works with leading biologists from around the globe to conduct this massive inventory.

Volunteers and interns become 'community scientists' who help with DLiA's work. These participants get an insider's look at the park, as well as firsthand knowledge of biology, field science, and laboratory practices. Funding comes from donations by individuals and institutions.

To date, DLiA has helped add more than 10,000 species to the inventory of life in the park, including more than 1,000 species completely new to science! Today there are more than 21,000 different kinds of organisms known to the park with new discov-

eries happening every day. You can support DLiA by purchasing the Smokies Species-a-Day perpetual calendar. Learn more at [DLiA.org](http://DLiA.org) or by calling 865.430.4757.

## Tremont

Born out of a need for residential education programs in the park, Great Smoky Mountains

Institute at Tremont has offered student and adult programs that promote a connection to nature for more than 50 years. Up to 6,000 students and adults annually attend workshops, camps, and school programs at the institute that are designed to promote curiosity and inspire learning.

Adult workshops include hiking, backpacking, community science, professional and teacher development, photography, and the Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification program. Summer camps provide youth and their families opportunities to spend three to ten days exploring the national park and its wonders. Fees include meals, lodging, and most equipment.

Call 865.448.6709 or visit [GSMIT.org](http://GSMIT.org) for program dates and information and to learn how you can support life-changing learning experiences in the Smokies!

**GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS INSTITUTE AT TREMONT**

**GSMNP**  
BY THE NUMBERS



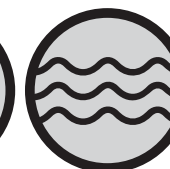
**135**

species of trees



**250+**

species of birds



**2,900**

miles of streams



**90+** historic structures



**3,400+** species of fungi



**500,000+** acres of land



**848** miles of trails



# WINTER WONDERS

## BATS

Some bats migrate south for the winter, while others hibernate in caves. In hibernation, their body temperatures drop to about the same air temperature as the cave, and their heart rates and breathing slow.



## RHODODENDRON

This is one of the most common shrubs in the park. Its long, thick leaves curl up like cigars in cold weather. This helps the plant conserve moisture.

## BEARS

About half the bears living in the Smokies make their winter dens in hollow trees, sleeping most of the time. Cubs born in wintertime emerge from their dens in the spring, old enough to climb and explore the forest.

BRRR!

## BIRDS

Some birds keep warm by growing a lot more feathers. They also shiver all winter long. Shivering burns fat and produces heat.



Here are a few ways plants and animals survive winter in the Great Smoky Mountains.

Color this page!



Illustrations by Lisa Horstman



