



April 2009

Dear Friends,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the Mount Le Conte Hike, for May 8-10. We hope you are excited and looking forward to your adventure in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. You may find this information helpful as you make plans for your visit here with us. Please take a few minutes to look over all material.

### **HOW TO PREPARE:**

You do not have to be a super athlete to be able to hike. You do, however, need to be in good shape. The Smoky Mountains are characterized by rolling hills and steep slopes that are a challenge to any hiker. Attaining access to the more remote areas of the park is one of the more satisfying aspects to backcountry hiking. On your backcountry trip, we will emphasize hiking techniques that should lessen the difficulty and enhance your enjoyment. You can also help to improve the enjoyment of your trip *before arriving* by preparing yourself physically now. Exercise your legs, your heart, and your lungs by hiking around your neighborhood or on hilly terrain. Better yet, wear your hiking boots while you do this to break them in. If you are prepared, you will enjoy our hike together all the more.

### **WHAT TO BRING:**

Having appropriate clothing and equipment while hiking is important for reasons of both safety and comfort. Be sure to read the "[Suggested Items To Bring](#)" link to help you make better-informed decisions on what to bring with you for your hike. The LeConte Lodge web site (see below) also gives good advice on personal clothing and gear to bring. Please do not hesitate to bring items in question. Before leaving Tremont for our hike, you will have an opportunity to review, along with our Tremont staff, what you have packed so that we might minimize excess and unnecessary weight.

It may help you to know that over the past five years the average daily high temperature for May was 78° F. and the average daily low was 50° F. here in Walker Valley. Keep in mind, however, that your hike will take you through higher elevations, which can sometimes mean a difference of 15° F cooler, or more. Come prepared for cool early mornings and potentially warm afternoons. Rain gear is always necessary here in the Smoky Mountains. Make certain to bring it along.

### **ROUTE:**

This is a wonderful opportunity to experience high-elevation forests of red spruce and Fraser fir, spectacular streams and views, and the comfort of having a hot supper and good hospitality waiting for you at the top. We will begin our hike from Newfound Gap. The trails are as follows:

Day 1: An evening at Tremont.

Day 2: Appalachian Trail to Boulevard Trail to LeConte Lodge (8.1 miles).

Day 3: LeConte Lodge to Alum Cave Trail (5.0 miles)

The approach to Le Conte will be rocky and with some steep ascents and descents. We will start early so that we can enjoy our time in the cool spruce-fir forests among beautiful wildflowers and singing Veery. We will learn much about the ecology of this area. After some great food and a good night's sleep we will return to our vehicle via Alum Cave Trail. Plan on lovely views and dramatic scenery.

**ACCOMMODATIONS ON Le CONTE:**

We will be staying in a large three-bedroom cabin while on Le Conte. Each room has two double beds in bunk fashion. Beds have fresh sheets, pillows, and wool blankets. Each cabin also has a washstand but bathrooms are in a separate building. Don't forget that we will be sharing beds so if you don't have a friend coming with you, you will definitely have one when you leave! LeConte Lodge prepares hearty food for supper and breakfast. LeConte Lodge will provide wine with dinner for a fee of \$9.00/person. You can order wine when you check-in at the lodge. Please bring cash or a check to cover the cost. In addition, a Le Conte "I Hiked It" T-shirt is available for sale (\$21.00 - \$24.00) at the lodge, so if you wish to purchase it, bring cash or a check (no credit cards). If you'd like to learn more about LeConte Lodge please visit their web site: [www.lecontelodge.com](http://www.lecontelodge.com).

**ARRIVAL TIME:**

Plan to arrive at Tremont on Friday, May 8 between 3:00 and 5:00 PM. Upon arrival please check-in at our office. We will begin the evening meal at 6:00 PM. Later in the evening, we will get to know each other a little bit, check over personal gear, review the route, discuss backcountry etiquette, and answer any questions that you might have. You will spend your first night in the dorm here at Tremont. Please bring your own bedding (sleeping bag or twin bed sheets and a blanket), towel, washcloth, etc. for this first evening.

**TRANSPORTATION TO TRAILHEAD:**

Tremont will transport participants to the trailhead in a van. You can leave your vehicle parked safely here at Tremont.

**DEPARTURE TIME:**

The program will end at Tremont on Sunday, May 10. You will be hiking about 5 miles on this day, so we expect to return to Tremont by early to mid-afternoon. Upon your return, you are welcome to have a shower in our dormitory and a late lunch with your group before your departure. You can estimate a mid-afternoon departure time.

**WORKSHOP HEALTH & WAIVER:**

A completed medical form is required of each participant. In order that we may better meet your personal needs, we ask that you please fill out and send us the enclosed medical form *prior* to your trip. This information is especially useful in the planning of meals. We will do our best to accommodate any dietary needs, food allergies (including, dried fruit, nuts, dairy, or iodine), or personal preferences.

**PHONE AND ADDRESS:**

If someone needs to reach you, a message can be left at our office number: (865) 448-6709. (The office is closed on Sundays.) For after-hours emergencies, call the National Park Service at (865) 436-1294. There is a telephone available in our activity center for your use while you are here on-site for local calls, or with a calling card for long distance. Our email address is: [mail@gsmitt.org](mailto:mail@gsmitt.org)

We look forward to sharing the wonders of the Smokies with you. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to call. See you soon!

Sincerely,

John DiDiego  
Education Director

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