



ROAD SCHOLAR SPRING HIKING ADVENTURE

Tentative Schedule

April 9-14, 2017

Sunday, April 9

PM	3:00 - 5:00	Arrival, registration and move in to the dorm.
	6:00	Supper
EVE	7:15	Welcome & Orientation, Sign Ups for Hikes, Refreshments

Monday, April 10

AM	6:30	Breakfast for Gregory Bald hikers & pack sack lunch
	7:00	Departure:

- **Gregory Bald, strenuous, 10.8 miles**

This is one of the finest hikes in the Great Smoky Mountains. This hike is **strenuous due to length and some steep uphill and downhill portions of the trail**. The journey up Gregory Ridge to Gregory Bald offers you everything that makes the Smokies such a wonderful place: scenic views, wildflowers, and old-growth forest. It is a steady climb to the bald but well worth it. The bald has been a large open field for as long as European settlers have resided in these mountains, starting in the early 19th century. No one is quite sure how grass balds were formed. Theories include use by Native Americans, lightning strikes, and animal grazing. The national park maintains this bald to preserve the historic and biological uniqueness. Total elevation gain: 3,000 feet over 5.4 miles. Total elevation loss: ditto.

AM	8:00	Breakfast & pack a sack lunch
	8:45	Departure:

- **Finley Cane/West Prong Trails, easy, 6 miles**

This short, wonderful hike ends right out our backdoor and provides ample opportunities along the way to discover what's going on in nature. Expect neither giant climbs nor extraordinary views; instead this enjoyable woodland walk is filled with many small surprises. Visit sink holes along Finley Cane Trail, see some big trees and a variety of forest types, enjoy the gurgling waters of the West Prong of the Little River, and finish with a long easy descent right back into Tremont's campus. This pleasant hike features rolling terrain, climbing a total of 700 feet and descending a total of 1,150 feet over 6 miles.

	9:15	Departure:
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- **Indian Flats Falls, easy-moderate, 7.5 miles**

This hike begins at the end of Tremont Road, the original location of "Tremont" back when it was a booming town for the Little River Lumber Company in the 1920s and '30s. The Middle Prong Trail follows an old railroad grade along beautiful Lynn Camp Prong. In places it is somewhat rocky. Lynn Camp Cascades (also called Panther Falls) can be viewed within the first mile. Further on, the trail crosses Indian Flats Prong on a wide bridge. A series of switchbacks, originally created for the railroad, climb the ridge here. Eventually you come to a short side trail leading to Indian Flats Falls, tucked away in the mountain. There are four falls in all that drop 65 feet and run 170 feet. Total elevation gain: 1,100 feet in 3.8 miles. Total elevation loss: ditto.

4:30 Return to Tremont

EVE 6:00 Supper
7:00 Meet in Cove Room to discuss tomorrow's hikes
7:15 Evening Program

Tuesday, April 11

AM 6:30 Breakfast for Mt. Cammerer hikers & pack sack lunch
7:00 Departure:

• **Mt. Cammerer Fire Tower, strenuous, 11 miles**

This historic stone fire tower, modeled after fire towers in Yosemite National Park, was built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Constructed out of native timber and stone, the tower fell into disrepair in the 1970s. With the help of the Appalachian Trail Conference and Friends of the Smokies, it was rehabilitated in 1995. We will begin our hike on Low Gap Trail, out of Cosby campground, which is a short but steep hike to the Appalachian Trail. Once reaching Low Gap, we will venture on towards the fire tower, hiking on the Appalachian Trail for 2.1 miles. Mt. Cammerer Trail leads us to our destination. The views from the fire tower are well worth the effort to reach the top. Total elevation gain: 2,800 feet in 5.5 miles. Total elevation loss: ditto.

8:00 Breakfast & pack a sack lunch
9:00 Departure:

• **Cucumber Gap Loop, easy, 5.3 miles**

This is one of the finest short loops in the park. After passing several old cabins in the Elkmont Historic District the trail follows along the Little River through a beautiful second-growth forest. This section is as flat as it gets in the mountains and offers a wonderful opportunity to meander alongside a beautiful river for several miles. Once the trail crosses rollicking Huskey Branch it meets up with Cucumber Gap Trail and begins to climb, and crosses the branch once more. In places, a lush carpet of spring wildflowers accompanies your ascent to the gap. We will focus on wildflower and tree identification as well as general natural history while walking this beautiful trail. The final 1.3 miles is down hill. Total elevation gain: 650 feet in 1.5 miles. Total elevation loss: 800 feet over 3.3 miles.

9:00 Departure:

• **Rich Mountain Loop, moderate, 8.5 miles**

This clockwise loop provides fine views of Cades Cove starting on the Rich Mountain Loop Trail and ending on the Crooked Arm Branch Trail. The trail begins in woods adjacent to one of the beautiful cove pastures. After meeting up with the John Oliver home place, constructed around 1820, the trail turns away from the old pastures and runs in a series of switchbacks up the side of Rich Mountain. Along this steady rise there are several fine views of Cades Cove. The trail then follows the contour of the ridge close to the northern border of the park on a boulevard that once more grants fine views. **The downward trek becomes steep, rocky and chopped up by use of horses.** Eventually the trail meets up near where you began and concludes with a fairly level half-mile stretch that returns to the starting point. Total elevation gain: 1,800 feet over 4.0 miles. Total elevation loss: 1,800 feet over 3.7 miles.

4:30 Return to Tremont

EVE 6:00 Supper

7:00 Meet in Cove Room to discuss tomorrow's hikes

7:15 Evening Program

Wednesday, April 12

AM 6:00 Breakfast for Le Conte Group & pack sack lunch
6:30 Departure:

• **Mt. Le Conte: Boulevard/Alum Cave, strenuous, 13 miles**

Mount Le Conte, elevation 6593 feet, is the third highest peak in the park. Climbing the mountain is a traditional trip for many enthusiastic hikers but **to make it up and back in a day is very strenuous for those unaccustomed to hiking.** The hike starts on the Appalachian Trail at Newfound Gap; a focal point for most people who visit the Smokies, especially those who have time only to make a few stops and admire the overall beauty of these mountains. This portion of the hike is a steady, gradual climb through the Canadian forest with good views. The Boulevard Trail is a rolling trail following a narrow ridge with steep forested slopes on both sides. **The final ascent to the top is very steep.** Alum Cave Trail is **downhill but fairly strenuous** and the easiest route of return from the summit. The upper portion includes a narrow cleft across a steep open slope with cables for hand-holds. The lower portion includes Alum Cave Bluff and Arch Rock with a pleasant, meandering walk along Alum Cave Creek. Fascinating geological features, great views, rhododendron groves, and a beautiful creek make for a hike full of discoveries. The AT/Boulevard approach to LeConte rolls, climbing uphill for a total of 2,400 feet over 6.5 miles, and descending a total of 800 feet over 1.3 miles. Total elevation loss on descent via Alum Cave Trail: 2,800 feet over 5.5 miles.

8:00 Breakfast & pack a sack lunch

9:00

Departure:

• **Andrews Bald, easy-moderate, 3.6 miles**

This is a beautiful high-country walk to a bald that is more accessible than any other bald in the park. **The slope down to the bald is easy but somewhat rocky.** If raining the rocks can be a bit slippery. You will be walking downhill for the first mile, then across a level saddle with some uphill again to get to the bald. The spruce and fir forest here is characteristic at this 6300-foot elevation when suddenly you come into a grassy, open hilltop. We will spend some time exploring and enjoying the bald along with the views of the national forests of North Carolina and Georgia. **Coming back is a steady climb.** If time and interest allow, we will hike one additional mile up and back to the observation tower at Clingmans Dome, the highest point in the park. Total elevation loss: 1,000 feet over 1.8 miles. Total elevation gain: ditto.

• **Spruce Flats/Lumber Ridge, moderate, 8 miles**

This loop hike will begin and end at right on our campus. We will start out on the Falls Trail which guides us to Spruce Flats Falls, a 40-foot sparkling gem of the Smokies. **This one-mile stretch between the falls and Tremont has some narrow and steep sections and at times requires careful footing.** We will pass by the Greenbrier Fault twice during this part of the hike and see other evidence of the geological forces that formed these mountains. Beyond the falls we'll follow an **unmaintained trail** that used to be a railroad bed. It is now grown over with rhododendrons so **be ready to duck a few times as well as scramble over fallen trees.** It meanders along Spruce Flats Branch, which we may need to **rock-hop across several times with gentle ups and downs in terrain.** We'll stop for lunch at the halfway mark at Buckhorn Gap. The remainder of the hike follows the Lumber Ridge Trail through a second growth hardwood forest. It is mostly downhill from here with an occasional view able to be glimpsed through the trees. We will walk right back into Tremont behind the dormitory. Total elevation gain: 1,500 feet over 5 miles. Total elevation loss: 1,500 feet over 3 miles.

4:30

Return to Tremont

EVE

6:00

Supper

7:00

Meet in Cove Room to discuss tomorrow's hikes

7:15

Evening Program

Thursday, April 13

AM

7:00

Breakfast for Charlies Bunion group & pack sack lunch

7:30

Departure:

• **Charlies Bunion, moderate-strenuous (very rocky), 8 miles**

This is another high country hike with great views. It starts on the Appalachian Trail at Newfound Gap, where President Roosevelt dedicated the national park in 1941. At first, the hike is a steady, gradual climb on a section of the A.T. that gets a good deal of foot traffic. The views are great and the Canadian-zone Spruce-Fir forest you'll experience walking up the slopes of Mount Kephart is a striking difference from what you'll see in the lower elevations of the

park. The **trail is rocky and you need to use caution if it is wet.**
Total elevation gain: 1,600 feet over 4 miles. Total elevation loss:
ditto.

8:00 Breakfast & pack a sack lunch
8:45 Departure:

• **Turkeypen Ridge, moderate, 8.4 miles**

Begin your hike on Turkeypen Ridge Trail and descend into Big Spring Cove, where you will see remnants of early farming. This section of trail undulates gently up and down for the next three miles, as it passes in and out of both dry and moist forests. Good views of Thunderhead Mountain and lovely large chestnut oak trees are your companions on this quiet, intimate hike. Soon you will meet the wide, old roadbed that is Schoolhouse Gap Trail. Descend gradually on this trail until you reach Laurel Creek Road. Here you will cross and begin an ascent up Bote Mountain Trail until it intersects with West Prong Trail. Descend on West Prong until you reach the river and lovely backcountry campsite #18. After leaving the river you will ascend the flanks of Fodderstack Mountain for one mile before beginning the gentle descent to the finish point. Never difficult, this is a great "walk in the woods." West Prong Trail features beautiful wildflowers and ends right here at Tremont – a great conclusion to your week. This hike features rolling terrain, climbing a total of 900 feet over 2.6 miles and descending a total of 1,400 feet over 5.3 miles.

9:15 Departure:

• **Porters Creek, easy, 2 to 4.3 miles**

This "ramble" will take place along a trail with one of the most spectacular wildflower displays in the park – or anywhere in the eastern U.S. We will begin our hike on an old jeep road that follows the Middle Prong of the Little Pigeon River. Wildflowers and old home sites flank our path. Eventually we will come to a dramatic foot-log spanning the river. Upon crossing it we will enter another world – a cover hardwood forest resplendent with flowers and big trees. We'll go as far as Fern Branch Falls before retracing our steps back to the parking lot. Total elevation gain: 550 feet in 1.4 miles. Total elevation loss: ditto.

4:30 Return to Tremont

EVE 6:00 Supper & Final Announcements
7:30 Evening Program

Friday, April 14

AM 7:30 Breakfast & Departure
Come Back And See Us!

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