

ROAD SCHOLAR

Schedule

ROAD SCHOLAR HIKING ADVENTURE

~ September 3-8, 2017 ~

Sunday, September 3

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, September 4

AM	6:30	Breakfast for Ramsay Cascades group & pack sack lunch
	7:00	Departure:

- **Ramsey Cascades, strenuous, 8 miles**

This is a popular walk alongside the Ramsey Prong of the Little Pigeon River. **This hike is strenuous due to length and rocky terrain.** It is a steady climb starting out along an old jeep trail and becomes a footpath surrounded by a wide variety of plant life. Moss and lichen cover everything. Between the first and second of the log bridges you'll see some of the largest trees in the park. This trail also passes through some impressive boulder fields, climbing steadily as it winds back and forth across streams (most have footbridges or should be easy to rock-hop) until the Cascades are reached. These are the highest falls in the park accessible by trail. Total elevation gain: 2,250 feet over 4 miles. Total elevation loss: ditto.

AM	8:00	Breakfast for Alum Cave group & pack sack lunch
	9:00	Departure:

- **Alum Cave Trail, easy-moderate, 4.6 miles**

One of the most popular trails in the national park, Alum Cave Trail is the shortest route to the top of Mt. LeConte, though we won't be going that far today. Instead we'll hike as far as Alum Cave Bluff (emphasis on the bluff; there's no cave). Along the way we'll cross Styx Branch, pass through Arch Rock, catch our breath at Inspiration Point, and view the two rock arches on Little Duck Hawk Ridge. A steady climb will lead us to our destination at the bluffs before we return via the same route. Though the length of this hike is short, the going is **somewhat steep and rocky in places.** Total elevation gain: 1,200 feet in 2.3 miles. Total elevation loss: ditto.

	4:30	Return to Tremont
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EVE 6:00 Supper
7:00 Meet in Spruce-Fir Room to discuss tomorrow's hikes
7:15 **Evening Program TBA Spruce-Fir Room**
Snack available in the dining hall after the program

Tuesday, September 5

AM 6:30 Breakfast for Mt. Cammerer group & 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 for Roundtop group & pack sack lunch
9:00 Departure:

• **Roundtop Trail, moderate, 7.5 miles**

Enjoy the solitude of one of the least-used trails in the national park. Roundtop is a beautiful, classic Smoky Mountains hike that will lead us around Roundtop and Little Roundtop Mountains. Shady coves, pine-oak forests, views of Wear Valley, and interesting rock outcrops add to this pleasant hiking adventure. The end of the hike may be more exciting than the beginning. Roundtop Trail emerges on the opposite side of the Little River from the Townsend Wye parking lot. To get to the parking lot hiking participants will need to ford the river. Depending on the water levels, this ford could be ankle or hip deep – a refreshing way to end a wonderful day. **Bringing a pair of sandals or river shoes is highly recommended.** As always, hot coffee will be waiting for you when you get back to Tremont. Total elevation gain: 1,250 feet over 3 miles. Total elevation loss: 1,800 feet over 4.5 miles.

4:30 Return to Tremont

EVE 6:00 Supper
7:00 Meet in Spruce-Fir Room to discuss tomorrow's hikes
7:15 **Evening Program TBA Spruce-Fir Room**
Snack available in the dining hall after the program

Wednesday, September 6

AM 6:00 Breakfast for Mt. 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 for Andrews Bald group & pack 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.

4:30 Return to Tremont

EVE 6:00 Supper
7:00 Meet in Spruce-Fir Room to discuss tomorrow's hikes
7:15 **Evening Program TBA Spruce-Fir Room**
Snack available in the dining hall after the program

Thursday, September 7

AM 6:30 Breakfast for Brushy Mountain group & pack sack lunch
7:00 Departure:

• **Brushy Mountain, strenuous, 11.5 miles**

This hike begins on Trillium Gap Trail which leads through a majestic old-growth forest. The way is **muddy** in places due to llamas that carry supplies to Mt. LeConte Lodge. The journey is worth it

however, for after hiking three miles you'll reach Grotto Falls. Later on, at roughly the halfway mark, you'll reach Trillium Gap where an **eroded and rocky spur trail** leads along the spine of Brushy Mountains through a rhododendron tunnel. Brushy Mountain is a heath bald with thick shrubs blocking many views, though spotting Mt. LeConte to the south is no trouble at all. The second half of the hike descends Brushy Mountain Trail through more old growth forest, and eventually passes through Porters Flat where a collection of three 19th century buildings stand, including a cantilever barn. One mile later we reach journey's end. Total elevation gain: 2,900 feet in 5.6 miles. Total elevation loss: 3,100 feet over 5.9 miles.

8:00 Breakfast for Spruce Flats/Lumber Ridge group & pack sack lunch
9:00 Departure:

• **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 & Final Announcements
7:30 **Evening Program TBA**
Snack available in the dining hall after the program

Friday, September 8

AM 8:00 Breakfast & Departure
Come Back And See Us!

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