



ROAD SCHOLAR

Schedule ROAD SCHOLAR HIKING ADVENTURE October 8-13, 2017

Sunday, October 8

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| 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 <i>Snack available in the Dining Hall afterward</i> |

Monday, October 9

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| AM | 7:00 | Early Breakfast for Ramsey Cascades group & pack sack lunch |
| | 7:30 | Departure for Ramsey Cascades group |

- **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.

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| | 8:00 | Breakfast & pack sack lunch |
| | 8:45 | Departure for Finley Cane group |

- **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 for Indian Flats Falls group

• **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

7:15 Meet to discuss tomorrow's hikes *Cove Room*

7:30 **Evening Program**

Snack available in the Dining Hall after the program

Tuesday, October 10

AM 6:30 Early Breakfast for Spence Field group & pack sack lunch

7:00 Departure for Spence Field group

• **Spence Field via Lead Cove, strenuous, 10 miles**

We will climb 5 miles up to the Appalachian Trail, gaining 3100 feet in elevation along the way. Spence Field resides less than a half-mile away from the A.T. junction with Bote Mountain Trail. It is considered by many to be the premier spot along the crest of the Smokies. This high mountain grassy bald affords views into North Carolina and is a wonderful, quiet place to spend some time. We will soak up great views of the Smokies while eating lunch and resting for our trip back down the mountain. Good weather days afford views of Rocky Top, Thunderhead Mountain, Fontana Lake and more. Total elevation gain: 3,200 feet over 5 miles. Total elevation loss: ditto.

8:00 Breakfast & pack sack lunch

9:00 Departure for Cucumber Gap and Meigs Creek groups

• **Cucumber Gap Loop (Little River & Jakes Creek Trails), 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, crossing the branch once more. Tree and herbaceous plant diversity is stunning along this section. The final 1.3 miles is downhill. Total elevation gain: 800 feet in 3.3 miles. Total elevation loss: 650 feet over 1.5 miles.

• **Meigs Creek (Sinks to Tremont), moderate, 7.5 miles**

This hike will begin with a shuttle to The Sinks, a popular river attraction along Little River Road, and ends when we walk right back into Tremont. The first 3.5 miles weave through a lovely forest and crosses Meigs Creek about eighteen times. While many creek crossings are small and can be rock-hopped, **bringing a pair of sandals or river shoes is highly recommended.** Old-growth forest comprises the upper reaches of this tributary of the Little River, a real treat. We'll stop for lunch at Buckhorn Gap before following Lumber Ridge Trail for 4 miles through pine-oak and cove hardwood forest back to campus. Total elevation gain: 1,500 in 3.5 miles. Total elevation loss: 1,600 feet over 3.3 miles.

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| | 4:30 | Return to Tremont |
| EVE | 6:00 | Supper |
| | 7:15 | Meet to discuss tomorrow's hikes <i>Cove Room</i> |
| | 7:30 | Evening Program |
| | | <i>Snack available in the Dining Hall after the program</i> |

Wednesday, October 11

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| AM | 6:00 | Early Breakfast & pack sack lunch |
| | 6:30 | Departure for Mt. Le Conte group |

• **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.

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| | 8:00 | Breakfast & pack sack lunch |
| | 8:45 | Departure for Green Camp Gap group |

• **Green Camp Gap, moderate, 6 miles**

A number of trails in the park follow old railroad beds that were used in the early decades of the twentieth century to haul logs miles away to a lumber mill. Our hike begins on one such trail and meanders beside beautiful cascades and rivulets of Lynn Camp Prong. This part of the day

is very easy hiking – wide and only very slightly inclined. After two miles we turn onto an old trail that is virtually unknown and no longer maintained. Natural forest succession is rapidly reclaiming it. There are narrow sections, places to duck below the rich growth of rhododendron, and places to maneuver over logs and debris. We will be traveling through one of the largest trail-less areas in the park where signs of wildlife are often abundant. On the final two mile stretch another overgrown railway bed will guide us back and forth across glorious Sams Creek. **Rock/boulder hopping will be necessary. Be prepared to hike off the trodden path where undergrowth is thick in places.** By the end of the hike you will have gotten a sense of what it feels like to be deep in the woods. Total elevation gain: 1,300 feet over 3 miles. Total elevation loss: ditto.

9:15 Departure for Andrews Bald group

• **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

7:15 Meet to discuss tomorrow's hikes *Cove Room*

7:30 **Evening Program**

Snack available in the Dining Hall after the program

Thursday, October 12

AM 7:00 Early Breakfast for Cove Mountain group & pack a sack lunch

7:30 Departure for Cove Mountain group

• **Cove Mountain, strenuous, 12.4 miles**

Waterfalls bookend this hike starting with Cataract Falls, which appears near the trailhead, and concluding with the extremely popular Laurel Falls near our end point. Views are sometimes possible of the majestic Sugarland Valley and the highest reaches of the Smokies beyond. Cove Mountain Trail follows the border of the park. Here you'll see why the national park is turning into an "island wilderness," and why human impact and development are among the many threats the park faces. Air quality is another threat, as evidenced by a monitoring station near the junction with Laurel Falls Trail. Here we'll pass through an old-growth forest and enjoy the big trees. While the footing on this hike is good, its primary challenge is **eight and a half miles of steady climbing** to the summit of Cove Mountain, before a four-mile descent to the Laurel Falls

parking lot where the van will be waiting for us. Total elevation gain: 2,700 feet over 8.4 miles. Total elevation loss: 1,700 feet over 4 miles.

8:00
8:45

Breakfast & pack sack lunch
Departure for Schoolhouse Gap/ Chestnut Top group:

• **Schoolhouse Gap/Chestnut Top Trail, easy, 6.4 miles**

Schoolhouse Gap Trail was constructed in the 1840s with Cherokee labor to connect East Tennessee with North Carolina for the purposes of commerce and missionary work. Never home to an actual schoolhouse, it may be so-named because school children once used this old wagon road to reach the school in Townsend. The trail joins Chestnut Top Trail after two miles where to the north lies Tuckaleechee Cove (Townsend) and to the south, east, and west lies the national park. A gradual descent along the park's border soon ends and a steady descent takes over, concluding at the Townsend Wye. Pine-oak forest dominates nearly every step of the way, and while the mighty American chestnut trees that once resided here are gone due to the blight that struck in the 1930s, saplings are still visible. Total elevation gain: 800 feet over 3.7 miles. Total elevation loss: 1,200 feet over 2.7 miles.

9:15

Departure for Roundtop group:

• **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 thigh 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
7:30

Supper & Final Announcements
Evening Program

Friday, October 13

AM 7:30

Breakfast & Departure
Come Back And See Us!

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