

Below is the proposed itinerary for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

Meet at Knoxville airport (TYS), drive to park, visit Walker sisters cabin

If you're flying in, we'll meet you at the Knoxville Airport at noon. After driving to the Park, we start with an introduction to the cultural history of the Smokies by visiting the area once known to early settlers as the Little Greenbrier Community. We'll visit the Little Greenbrier School (first opened in 1882), a pioneer cemetery, and the Walker Sisters cabin and home site. This slightly ascending trail is along an old roadbed. If you are driving, please plan to be at Metcalf Bottoms Picnic parking lot (south side) by 2:00 pm. Little Brier Gap Trail, 2.6 miles. (D)

DAY 2

Cucumber Gap Loop Hike and Elkmont Ghost Town

Our trail today is a wonderful introduction to the variety of hiking in the Smokies. The beginning of the trail is smooth and easy as it follows an old road along the scenic banks of the Little River. The sparkling clean water of the Little River supports a variety of charismatic aquatic life, including the eastern hellbender salamander and the occasional river otter. At 2.4 miles we'll arrive at the junction of the Cucumber Gap trail, and follow it's well-worn single track up and down through peaceful forest to Jake's Creek Trail. Along the way we'll visit the rich cultural history of the area. As you hike you'll notice the remnants of cottages built by affluent citizens of Knoxville in the 1920's, some of which the park has worked to preserve. Following the hike we will return to our lodge for our first home-cooked dinner of the trip. Cucumber Gap Loop, about 5.5. miles. (B, L, D)

DAY 3

Hike Maddron Bald Trail to Albright Grove

Our trek today will take us through Eastern Hemlock and deciduous forests as we hike along the Maddron Bald Trail. Built by the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC), the trail begins as an old roadbed and rises consistently, though moderately, throughout its entire length. Albright Grove was named for Horace Albright, who was an early advocate for the park and a director of the National Park Service. The grove that honors him is an awesome remnant of old growth forest, where you can experience the sights, sounds, and feel of this unique forest environment. We'll have plenty of time to stroll among and admire the grand Eastern Hemlocks, silverbells, Fraser magnolias, tulip trees, and other tree species before returning along the Maddron Bald Trail. Mileage: 6.7 miles. (B, L, D)

DAY 4

Whitewater rafting on Pigeon River, short walk on nature trail

Ready to give your legs a break and see a completely different part of the ecosystem? We'll enjoy a delicious breakfast and then onto the white water of the Pigeon River! Although the rapids are large enough to be exciting, the trip is completely appropriate for novice rafters. Returning to Gatlinburg, we'll head over to Bud Ogle's farm and give our legs a stretch by hiking the 1.2-mile nature hike and explore what a typical homestead was like in this part of the country, including a plume for water, a grist mill and 'drive thru' barn. Mileage: 1.2 miles hiking, many miles rafting! (B, L, D)

DAY 5

Visitor's Center, hike to Laurel Falls, free time in afternoon with options

Now that we've had time to get acquainted with the park, this morning we'll head to the Visitors Center where we'll learn a whole lot more! With the help of an excellent film, we'll hear about the park, its history and its natural inhabitants and maybe even see a few of the places we've already visited. Then the hiking continues - destination, Laurel Falls. Laurel Falls is one of the most visited spots in the park and for good reason! Not only is it a pleasant walk but also one of the most spectacular falls in the Smokies.

After the falls, we'll head back to our lodge for lunch and a little relaxation. For the afternoon, you can choose your favorite way to enjoy the rest of the day: a hike to Grotto Falls (a moderate 2.6-mile hike to the only 'walk behind' waterfalls in the Smokies) with one of the guides; or, since it is vacation, you might want to just spend a relaxing afternoon back at the lodge, enjoying the porch or hot tub. Who knows - even shopping and local crafts could be on the agenda! Your guides will help you sort out the options and you get where you want to go. Mileage will vary depending on choice made. (B, L, D)

DAY 6

Walk to Clingman's Dome, hike on Appalachian Trail to Icewater Shelter

Today will be spent at the highest part of the park - we're headed for Clingman's Dome and the Appalachian Trail at Newfound Gap! We'll stop first at Clingman's Dome where we'll walk the .5 mile paved 'up' to the Dome. Climbing to the top of the Dome will give us a fabulous view of the entire park as well as an amazing display of fall colors! After enjoying the scenery, we'll make our way to Newfound Gap for more gorgeous scenery and to learn about the founding of the park and the work of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). The CCC was a federal work program that operated from 1933 to 1942 in the United States for unemployed men as part of the New Deal. After learning a bit more of the park history, we're going to take a hike on the famous Appalachian Trail! From Newfound Gap we'll head north to Icewater Spring Shelter, an AT shelter for backpackers. Icewater Spring shelter will give us a great spot for lunch with a view. After lunch, we'll head back to the parking lot and make our way back to Gatlinburg and our lodge. We'll have one last chance for that hot tub before getting ready for our last dinner together - out on the town in Gatlinburg! Mileage: .5 - 6 total. Elevation gain/loss: 900/ 900 feet (B, L, D)

DAY 7

Depart after breakfast for Knoxville airport

It's our last morning in the Smokies and we'll continue to savor every minute! We'll take our time this morning, enjoy our last breakfast together and the view from the lodge, before making our way, reluctantly back to Knoxville. If you're driving, you can plan to leave by 10 a.m. If you're flying we'll return you to the Knoxville airport by 11:30am for a flight out after 12:30 pm. (B)