

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

Drive from Knoxville to Park, visit the Walker Sisters cabin

This itinerary may be modified based on weather and where the wildflowers are best.

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. Dinner tonight is at our lodge and you'll be treated to a typical southern bar-b-que dinner, complete with hush puppies and corn on the cob! (D)

DAY 2

Hike Porters Creek Trail

Our trail today rises at a steady, moderate grade as it passes through a forest of large Eastern Hemlocks and Fraser magnolias and then into a moist, sheltered cove hardwood forest. Well-known for its incredible display of wildflowers in April and May, the forest floor can be carpeted with up to 30 to 40 species of wildflowers. Rich in cultural history as well, Porters Creek trail passes the old Baxter Cabin, stone walls, an old cantilevered barn and the Owenby Cemetery, all remnants of the time that a thriving community lived here. We will hike to Fern Branch Falls and have lunch before turning back. Porters Creek Trail, about 4 miles. Dinner tonight will begin with appetizers and continue with the first of several "home made" meals by your guides, ending with (of course!) dessert! (B, L, D)

DAY 3

Check out Visitors Center, hike to White Oak Sink

Our first stop this morning will be the Sugarlands Visitors Center where we'll take the opportunity to learn more about the park, its history and its natural inhabitants through the orientation film and their natural history museum. Then - back to hiking and the search for wildflowers! Traveling off the beaten path, today's trail leads into a natural limestone sink. White Oak Sink is home to many rare plants, various caves, and a waterfall that flows into a cave, offering unique opportunities to learn about the geology, natural history, and cultural history of the area. Spring wildflowers abound in the sink, coating the trail side with a beautiful variety of colors. Our hike begins on the School House Gap trail, an old roadbed with an easy uphill grade. Shortly we'll turn off the Schoolhouse Gap trail onto the trail to White Oak Sink, an unmaintained trail with occasional steep ascents and descents. Depending on time and energy levels, we will have the option to visit Laurel Falls on the way home. A 2.4 mile walk on a paved trail leads to the most visited falls in the park. After our hikes we'll head back to the lodge for some well-deserved relaxation, and - tonight is pizza night! Also well deserved! White Oak Sink, 5.0 miles (B, L, D)

DAY 4

Hike to Grotto Falls, Clingman's Dome, or take a free afternoon

Today our morning will take us to the Grotto Falls hike - one of the more spectacular waterfalls in the park and the only one you can actually walk behind! The trail is a moderate 2.6-mile hike through a hardwood cove offering great wildflower spotting as well as views across the valley. After our hike, we will return to our condo for lunch and a few choices. The afternoon is free and there are no bad choices! Your guides will offer the opportunity to journey to the highest points of the park -- New Found Gap (with a short walk on the Appalachian Trail) and Clingman's Dome, at 6,643 feet the highest point on the eastern side of the U.S. - to enjoy downtown

Round Gap (with a short walk on the Appalachian Trail) and Clingman's Dome, at 6,643 feet the highest point on the eastern side of the U.S., to enjoy downtown Gatlinburg, or, since it is vacation, you might want to just spend a relaxing afternoon back at the lodge, enjoying the porch or hot tub. Your guides will help you sort out the options and help you get where you want to go. Or, maybe ice cream is in your afternoon - just an appetizer before another meal at the Lodge. Mileage will vary depending on choices made. (B, L, D)

DAY 5

Whitewater rafting on the Pigeon River, visit Bud Ogle's Farm

Ready to give your legs a break and see a completely different part of the ecosystem? We'll enjoy a pancake 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 pay a visit to the historic Bud Ogle's farm where we'll take 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 and a grist mill. Back at the lodge, perhaps the hot tub or just relaxing in rockers on the porch before another homemade dinner! (B, L, D)

DAY 6

Hike Maddron Bald Trail, final dinner in Gatlinburg

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. We will lunch at the beautiful cascades, and then have the option to continue on to Albright Grove, an old growth forest named for Horace Albright who was an advocate for the park and a director for the National Park Service. Here you will experience the sights, sounds, and feel of this home to ancient trees. 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. We'll return to the lodge with plenty of time to "freshen up" and head into Gatlinburg to share our last dinner together at one of the many local restaurants. Albright Grove and Maddron Bald Trail, 6.7 miles. (B, L, D)

DAY 7

Return to Knoxville airport by 11am

It's our last morning in the Smokies but 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 back. We'll fit in a visit to Sugarlands Visitors Center for one last chance for any items you may just have to have and even have time to walk the nature trail to Cataract Falls. After that, we reluctantly head to the Knoxville airport. 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 11:00 am for a flight out after 12:00 noon. (B)