

## Great Smoky Mountains National Park

### LOC Recommended Destinations and Hikes in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park

Recommended Destination	Driving Time	Brief Description
Sugarlands Visitor Center	1 hr 5 min	One of the Smokies most popular visitor centers. Great to stop in for park information, souvenirs, and hike recommendations
Clingman's Dome/Newfound Gap	1 hr 45 min	Clingman's Dome is the highest point in the Smokies at 6,643 ft above sea level. It is also the highest peak in Tennessee, and highest point along the 2,174-mile Appalachian Trail. It is the third highest point East of the Mississippi River. A short (half-mile), paved hike gets you to the Observatory Tower with one of the best views of the park. Stop by the visitors' center as well! This will be great for October Fall colors! <i>Trailhead: Clingman's Dome Rd to parking Area</i>
Charlie's Bunyon/Newfound Gap	1 hr 30 min.	HIKE [Moderate-Difficult] – Trailhead is in the Clingman's Dome parking area. This moderate-difficult 8.1 mi round trip hike offers great panoramic views (great for October fall colors) and ends at an iconic rock outcrop known as Chariles Bunyon. <i>Trailhead: Newfound Gap Parking Area</i>
Cades Cove Loop	1 hr 30 min.	DRIVING LOOP: A beautiful, if not heavily trafficked, 11-mile loop through the Smoky Mountains most iconic cove. This is probably the most popular destination in the Smokies. Cades Cove is a broad valley surrounded by mountains. Allow yourself at least 2 – 4 hours to complete the driving loop. The sights include old cabins, deer, elk, black bears, and wild turkey.
Abram's Falls	1 hr 30 min	HIKE [Moderate]: Abram's Falls is impressive. While only 20-ft tall, it is the Smokies most voluminous waterfall. The trailhead is off the Cades Cove Loop drive, so be factor that into your travel times. The roundtrip distance is 5.2 mi. Just below the falls, Abrams creek opens up into a broad, deep pool that is popular for swimming. However, caution should be taken as this hike is known for swimming injuries due to strong currents and a persistent undertow. In late October, any swimming in the cold mountain waters will also present a hypothermia risk. <i>Trailhead: Abram's Falls Trailhead 4.8 mi. into the loop</i>

Laurel Falls	1 hr 15 min	<p>HIKE [Easy] – One of the Smoky Mountain’s most popular hikes. This easy 2.3 mi hike is entirely paved and ends at 80-ft waterfall, Laurel Falls. For the adventurous, keep following the now unpaved trail past the falls toward Cove Mountain for a mile and half or two to see the old-growth cedars and tulip poplars . These are some of the largest trees in the Smoky Mountains. Cove Mountain is 4 mi. one-way.</p> <p><i>Trailhead: Laurel Falls Trailhead</i></p>
Rainbow Falls	1 hr 15 min	<p>HIKE [Moderate] – Rainbow Falls is a popular waterfall hike in the Smokies. You reach the falls after a moderate 2.7 mi hike (5.4 mi round trip). Rainbow Falls is the highest single-drop waterfall in the Smokies at 80 ft. Often the mist generated by the falls will create rainbows on a sunny day.</p> <p><i>Trailhead: Rainbow Falls Trailhead</i></p>
Mt. LeConte via Alum Cave Bluffs	1 hr 20 min	<p>HIKE [Very Strenuous] – Alum Cave Bluffs is the most popular route to reach the third highest peak in the Smokies at 6,593 ft. The hike is long (11.0 mi. round trip) and steep (2,763 ft total elevation gain), but very rewarding. This hike provides some spectacular views, the impressive Alum Cave which opens up into a large bluff area, and an inn/lodge near the summit. Plan for an all-day adventure and bring plenty of supplies.</p> <p><i>Trailhead: Alum Cave Bluffs Trailhead</i></p>
Ramsey Cascades	1 hr 20 min	<p>HIKE [Strenuous] – Ramsey Cascades is LOC member Sean Lindsay’s favorite hike in the Smokies. The trail is difficult with a roundtrip distance of 8.0 mi. and 2,190 ft of elevation gain, but it is worth the effort. One the way to the impressive waterfall, you will have plenty of hiking by next to Ramsey Prong, walk across a long narrow wooden bridge that towers 20 ft above the creek below, and cross through old-growth forest seeing some of the Smokies tallest trees. At the end, you will reach Ramsey Cascades, the tallest waterfall in the park, where water falls nearly 100 ft over several teirs and collects are a small pool. Take a minute to look for some rare salamanders in the pool.</p> <p><i>Trailhead: Ramsey Cascades Trailhead</i></p>

The Chimney Tops	1 hr 15 min	<p>HIKE [Strenuous] – A short, but intensely steep hike that is very popular. In 1.6 miles you will climb 1,587 ft to the spectacular Chimney Tops (3.3 miles round trip). The last mile of which is nearly 960 ft of elevation gain. Currently, the final daring climb up the rocky face to the top of the Chimney’s is closed after the 2016 wildfires. The hike still offers a great view from an observation point just below this point.</p> <p><i>Trailhead: Chimney Tops Trailhead</i></p>
Middle Prong Trail	1 hr	<p>HIKE [Easy if only the first few miles; Moderate all the way to Indian Flat Falls] – If you like hikes with water and waterfall, then this is a hike for you. With numerous high-volume waterfalls and most of the trail being along Middle Prong, you are in for some of the best viewing of the watery side of the Smoky Mountains. The LOC recommends following this hike to Indian Flat Falls, which is just 4 miles away from the trailhead. You access that falls on a side trail at one of the switchbacks you encounter shortly after a footbridge near mile 3.75. Indian Flat Falls falls about 60 feet over three tiers. The trail delivers you to the uppermost tier which has a nice spot for your hiking snack.</p> <p><i>Trailhead: Middle Prong Trailhead out of Tremont.</i></p>
Cucumber Gap Loop	1 hr 15 min	<p>HIKE [Easy if only down Little River Trail; Moderate if you complete the loop around Cucumber Gap] – This hike offers some of the best “next to a mountain river” hiking in the Smokies. The recommended direction is starting down the Little River Trail, which follows the broad Little River. The river cascades down as you climb the light incline of the trail. The LOC recommends this hike for casual hikers who enjoy walking, stopping, taking pictures, and relaxing in nature. If you are lucky, you might spot some otter.</p> <p>If you want a more difficult hike, take the Cucumber Gap Trail junction at 2.5 miles, which winds through mountain hollows (pronounced holler around here).</p> <p><i>Trailhead: Little River Trailhead out of Elkmont</i></p>

<b>Notable Stops Worth Seeing</b>		
The Sinks	1 hr	The Sinks is are a very picturesque stop while in the Smokies. The Sinks is a combination of a waterfall (which can be raging when the water is high) and swimming hole. The waterfall spills down into a large pool that is popular for swimming and cliff-diving (this activity is not endorsed by the LOC). The Sinks gets its name from the swirling water below the waterfall, which gives the impression of the water coming out of a faucet and draining down a sink.
Elkmont Campground	1 hr 10 min	Currently a large campground, Elkmont has been everything from a pioneer community, a logging town, to a resort community. This all comes together to make it a fascinating place to spend an afternoon walking around, playing in some of the nearby water, or taking in a small, casual hike. It is also the home to one of the few places in the world that has synchronous fireflies. In early to mid-June, tens of thousands of fireflies at Elkmont begin to flash in unison creating a bucket-list worthy spectacle to behold.