

 Five-Star
Trails

2ND EDITION

Chattanooga

40 Spectacular Hikes in and around the Scenic City



 American
Hiking
Society

JOHNNY MOLLOY



MENASHA RIDGE PRESS

Your Guide to the Outdoors Since 1982



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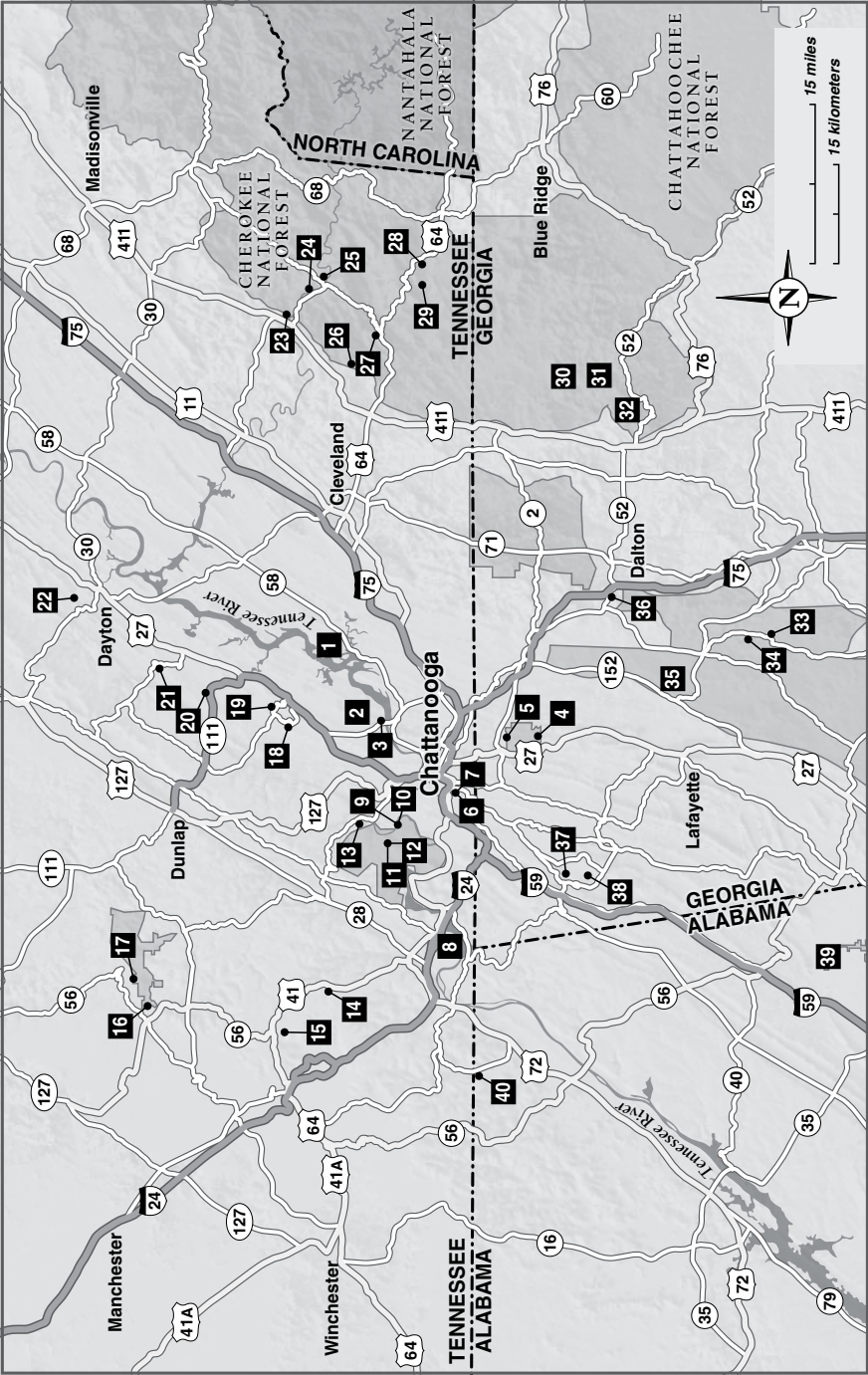
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Five-Star Trails: Chattanooga





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Five-Star Trails Chattanooga: 40 Spectacular Hikes in and around the Scenic City

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DISCLAIMER This book is meant only as a guide to select trails in Chattanooga, Tennessee. This book does not guarantee hiker safety in any way—you hike at your own risk. Neither Menasha Ridge Press nor Johnny Molloy is liable for property loss or damage, personal injury, or death that result in any way from accessing or hiking the trails described in the following pages. Please be especially cautious when walking in potentially hazardous terrains with, for example, steep inclines or drop-offs. Do not attempt to explore terrain that may be beyond your abilities. Please read carefully the introduction to this book as well as further safety information from other sources. Familiarize yourself with current weather reports and maps of the area you plan to visit (in addition to the maps provided in this guidebook). Be cognizant of park regulations and always follow them. Do not take chances.



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Dedication

This book is for all the residents of greater Chattanooga. You are blessed with abundant beauty.



Acknowledgments

Thanks to all the people who have constructed, maintained, and advocated trails and hiking in Chattanooga and beyond.



Preface

WELCOME TO THE SECOND EDITION OF THIS GUIDE. New hikes have been added, and the book has been completely updated. Chattanooga is an outdoorsy town. Consistently rated in surveys as among the best places to live for outdoors enthusiasts, Chattanooga is located within easy reach of a wide array of paddling, camping, and especially hiking destinations. The city's expanding greenways and parks programs have garnered national attention.

The natural setting has been there all along.

Geographically speaking, Chattanooga couldn't be better situated for offering a variety of terrain and trails on which to trek. Centered on the banks of the mighty Tennessee River, just before that waterway enters the Grand Canyon of the Tennessee River, Chattanooga is flanked to the east by the lofty Southern Appalachian Mountains and to the west by the rugged Cumberland Plateau. Historic and noteworthy peaks rise within sight of town.

This nexus of mountain and river is partially responsible for Chattanooga's extensive parklands. The town was an important place of contention between the Union and the Confederacy during the Civil War. The places where they clashed have been preserved as parks to commemorate the history of that time. Today, trails lace these former battlefields.

The Cumberland Plateau, the Tennessee River Valley, and the Southern Appalachians ignore state boundaries and present hiking opportunities not only in Tennessee but also in Georgia and Alabama. The melding of these three physiographic provinces among these three states sets the stage for hikers. And there are many destinations for hikers to ramble on this varied stage. The Cumberland Plateau rises just to the west of Chattanooga. The Plateau, as it is known in these parts, offers distinct terrain with correspondingly unusual hiking experiences. Here, water-carved gorges slice through an elevated tableland, exposing rock walls and creating rock houses, stone arches, sheer bluffs, and other geological features that complement the green expanse of the Southern Appalachians.

Cumberland Plateau hiking destinations include Savage Gulf State Natural Area, Grundy Forest, and the series of steep and magnificent gorges flowing off the east side of the Plateau into the Tennessee River. The most famous gorge may be Laurel Snow, through which Richland Creek carves its canyon from the Plateau



MEMORIALS AND CANNON EMPLACEMENTS TELL THE STORY OF CHICKAMAUGA BATTLEFIELD. (SEE HIKE 5, PAGE 40)

to the lowlands. Lesser-known yet equally scenic places like Possum Creek Gorge also feature the Cumberland Trail winding its way north. Don't forget DeSoto State Park in Alabama, too, with its share of geological features and waterfalls.

To the east rise the magnificent Appalachians. Here, mountain peaks soar for the sky, while rushing streams race for the lowlands. Large and varied tree species carpet rugged ridges, colorful wildflowers thrive in the streamside flats, and bears roam the roughs. In our Southern Highlands, explorers can hike through resplendent wilderness along chilly, trout-filled streams; soak in upland vistas; and escape to the back of beyond. Hike to the falls astride Gee Creek, or along the banks of the ridge-rimmed Big Lost Creek, or grab a view from piney outcrops atop Fort Mountain.

The Tennessee Valley is no flatland itself. Chattanooga can be a hilly town. And with citizens interested in hiking, it is only natural that trails and

greenways aplenty have been created in the greater metropolitan area—making moving your feet even more convenient. Trekking in the Tennessee Valley adds one more spice to the entrée of offerings in addition to the Southern Appalachians and the Cumberland Plateau.

So hiking in Chattanooga can mean a ramble through the backcountry of the Big Frog Wilderness, a trek to a natural bridge on the Cumberland Plateau, or a quick escape on a greenway near your house. It all depends on your mood, company, and desires. Therefore, not only is the “where to hike” component covered in this book, so is “what type of hike.” As to when: You can hike year-round in Chattanooga—whether it be in the heat of summer, when you can escape to the high country, or in the chill of winter, when the trails of the Tennessee River Valley can still be enjoyed no matter the temperature.

That is where this book comes into play. The variety of hikes contained within its pages reflects the variety of opportunities in this region. I sought to include day hikes covering routes of multiple lengths, ranging from easy to difficult. Trail configurations are diverse as well, including out-and-back hikes, loops, balloon loops, and even double loops. Hike settings vary from the city of Chattanooga to secluded gorges to distant mountaintops.

The routes befit a range of athletic prowess and hiking experience. Simply scan through the table of contents, randomly flip through the book, or check out the recommended hikes list. Find your hike, get out there, and enjoy it. And bring a friend too. Enjoying nature in the company of another is a great way to enhance your relationship as well as escape from your smartphone, television, and other electronic chains that bind us to the daily grind.



Recommended Hikes

Best for Dogs

- 1 Harrison Bay State Park: Bay Point Loop (p. 20)
- 8 Little Cedar Mountain Hike (p. 55)
- 21 Rock Creek Gorge Loop (p. 123)
- 24 Benton MacKaye Trail on the Hiwassee River (p. 141)
- 33 The Pocket Loop (p. 189)

Best for Geology

- 7 Sunset Rock Loop (p. 50)
- 11 Snoopers Rock Natural Bridge Hike (p. 70)
- 14 Foster Falls Loop (p. 88)
- 15 Grundy Forest Day Loop (p. 93)
- 23 Gee Creek Wilderness (p. 136)

Best for Human History

- 2 Greenway Farms Park (p. 25)
- 5 North Chickamauga Battlefield Loop (p. 40)
- 6 Cravens House Loop (p. 45)
- 28 Old Copper Road Trail (p. 161)
- 36 George Disney Trail (p. 204)
- 40 Russell Cave National Monument (p. 224)

Best for Kids

- 1 Harrison Bay State Park: Bay Point Loop (p. 20)
- 3 Riverwalk at Chickamauga Dam (p. 30)
- 16 Greeter Falls (p. 98)
- 26 Benton Falls (p. 151)
- 40 Russell Cave National Monument (p. 224)

Best for Scenery

- 11 Snoopers Rock Natural Bridge Hike (p. 70)
- 14 Foster Falls Loop (p. 88)
- 15 Grundy Forest Day Loop (p. 93)
- 27 Falls of the Scenic Spur (p. 156)
- 32 Fort Mountain State Park Loop (p. 184)
- 38 Cloudland Canyon Vistas (p. 214)

Best for Seclusion

- 10 Ritchie Hollow Trail to Blowing Wind Falls (p. 65)
- 12 Overlooks of Mullens Cove and Ransom Hollow (p. 75)
- 13 Lawsons Rock via Indian Rockhouse (p. 80)
- 19 Cumberland Escarpment Hike (p. 113)
- 20 Possum Creek Gorge (p. 118)
- 35 Dicks Ridge Circuit (p. 199)

Best for Views

- 6 Cravens House Loop (p. 45)
- 7 Sunset Rock Loop (p. 50)
- 12 Overlooks of Mullens Cove and Ransom Hollow (p. 75)
- 13 Lawsons Rock via Indian Rockhouse (p. 80)
- 22 Laurel Snow Waterfall and Vista Hike (p. 128)
- 30 Grassy Mountain Tower (p. 174)
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Best for Waterfalls

- 10 Ritchie Hollow Trail to Blowing Wind Falls (p. 65)
- 18 Chickamauga Gulch Hike (p. 108)
- 22 Laurel Snow Waterfall and Vista Hike (p. 128)
- 34 Johns Mountain Keown Falls (p. 194)
- 37 Sitton Gulch Trail (p. 209)
- 39 DeSoto State Park Loop (p. 219)

Best for Water Lovers

- 1 Harrison Bay State Park: Bay Point Loop (p. 20)
- 3 Riverwalk at Chickamauga Dam (p. 30)
- 23 Gee Creek Wilderness (p. 136)
- 24 Benton MacKaye Trail on the Hiwassee River (p. 141)
- 28 Old Copper Road Trail (p. 161)

Best for Wildflowers

- 20 Possum Creek Gorge (p. 118)
- 25 Benton MacKaye Trail on Big Lost Creek Hike (p. 146)
- 27 Falls of the Scenic Spur (p. 156)
- 29 Big Frog Wilderness (p. 166)
- 31 Emery Creek Falls (p. 179)

Best for Wildlife


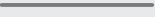





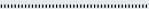


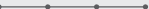
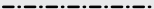
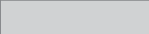

































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- 8 Little Cedar Mountain Hike (p. 55)
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**FOSTER FALLS CHARGES 60 FEET OVER A STONE LIP INTO A MASSIVE PLUNGE POOL.
(SEE HIKE 14, PAGE 88)**





Map Legend

		
Directional arrows	Featured trail	Alternate trail
		
Freeway	Highway with bridge	Minor road
		
Boardwalk	Stairs	Unpaved road
		
Railroad	Power line	Border
		
Park/forest	Water body	River/creek/ intermittent stream wash
		
Amphitheater	Garden	Picnic area
		
Bench	General point of interest	Picnic shelter
		
Boat launch	Golf course	Primitive camping
		
Bridge	Lookout tower	Scenic view
		
Cabin	Marina	Spring
		
Camping	Mine/quarry	Trailhead
		
Cascades	Monument	Viewing platform
		
Cemetery	Overlook	Waterfall
		
Church	Park office	Wetland
		
Dam	Parking	
		
Food service	Peak	



Introduction

About This Book

FIVE-STAR TRAILS: CHATTANOOGA details 40 great hikes in Chattanooga and the immediate region. It presents the reader with an array of treks that reflect the magnificence of the area, ranging from the Cumberland Plateau to the Tennessee River Valley to the Southern Appalachians. Often referred to as the Scenic City, Chattanooga is a great jumping-off point for hikers, where immediate urban and suburban hikes can satiate scenery-hungry residents while the superlative beauty of the adjacent national and state parks is just a short drive away. All this adds up to a hiker's nirvana.

In fact, I firmly believe Chattanooga is one of the best outdoors towns in the United States. To our east and south we have large tracts of national forest, Tennessee's Cherokee National Forest, and Georgia's Chattahoochee National Forest. Hundreds of miles of trails lace these mountain lands. The Cherokee and Chattahoochee also offer camping, hunting, fishing, nature study, and more. The geologically fascinating Cumberland Plateau rises to the west; there you can hike your way past rushing rivers, deep gorges, wild waterfalls, and other rock features. Hikes in this book cover state parks and forests in all four cardinal directions, from the untamed splendor of Prentice Cooper State Forest rising to the west, to the deep gorge of Chickamauga Creek lying north, to view-laden Fort DeSoto in the south, to the Big Frog Wilderness in the east.

And Chattanooga's climate is ideal for hiking; we have four distinct and beautiful seasons. If you like winter, the mountains deliver a surprising amount of snow above 4,000 feet! Yet many mild days occur that are perfect for trail trekkers. The elevation and terrain variations make spring exciting too. Rebirth spreads from the lowlands to the high country, and wildflowers follow. Summer finds many of us escaping to cool waters and to refreshing mountaintops where heat-relieving breezes blow. During fall, Chattanooga's incredible variety of trees explode in their annual color display.

How do you get started? Peruse this book, pick out a hike, and strike out on the trail. The wide assortment of paths, distances, difficulties, and destinations will suit any hiker's mood and company. And try them all—the varied hikes will leave you appreciating the nature of greater Chattanooga more than you ever imagined. Enjoy!

Greater Chattanooga's Geographic Divisions

The hikes in this book are split into four geographic divisions. **Greater Chattanooga** covers hikes within the city limits and the metro area, encompassing both Tennessee and the northwest corner of Georgia. The hikes here include Chattanooga's abundant and expanding greenway system. Here you can make a quick escape for daily exercise or explore historic parks like Chattanooga & Chickamauga National Military Park. This section also includes nearby Prentice Cooper State Forest. Hike along the banks of the Tennessee River through its deep canyon, or explore one of the Tennessee Valley Authority's small wild areas such as Little Cedar Mountain.

Tennessee Cumberlands includes hikes on the Cumberland Plateau within the bounds of the Volunteer State and segments of the Cumberland Trail, Tennessee's master path slated to extend from Signal Mountain north to Cumberland Gap at the Kentucky state line. In this area, you can hike at scenic Savage Gulf State Natural Area, lesser-visited Rock Creek Gorge, or deep into the chasm created by North Chickamauga Creek.

The hikes of the **Tennessee Appalachians** section stretch from the historic trek on the Old Copper Road Trail to the glissading cascades of Benton Falls. Other wild treks take in the Big Frog Wilderness and Benton MacKaye Trail as it wanders along Big Lost Creek. Visit the lonely backwoods of Gee Creek or discover the Falls of the Scenic Spur.

North Georgia and Northeast Alabama comprises the Peach State's remote and unrefined Chattahoochee National Forest, select Georgia state parks, and the northeast corner of the Yellowhammer State. Grab a view of Keown Falls, or loop through The Pocket. The Chattahoochee offers superlative Southern Appalachian scenery and destinations, from wildernesses to waterfalls to overlooks. More highlights bring in area history and beauty from Russell Cave National Monument to the untamed Sitton Gulch. Altogether, the trail-laced geographic regions of greater Chattanooga create a mosaic of natural splendor that will please the most discriminating hiker.

How to Use This Guidebook

Overview Map, Map Key, and Map Legend

The overview map on page ii depicts the location of the primary trailhead for all 40 of the hikes described in this book. The numbers shown on the overview map pair with the map key on the facing page. Each hike's number remains with that hike throughout the book. Thus, if you spot an appealing hiking area on the overview map, you can flip through the book and find those hikes easily by their numbers at the top of each profile page. A legend identifying the map symbols used throughout the book appears on page xiv.

Trail Maps

In addition to the overview map, a detailed map of each hike's route appears with its profile. On this map, symbols indicate the trailhead, the complete route, significant features, facilities, and topographic landmarks such as creeks, overlooks, and peaks.

To produce the highly accurate maps in this book, I used a handheld GPS unit to gather data while hiking each route, then sent that data to the publisher's expert cartographers.

Elevation Profile

This diagram represents the rises and falls of the trail as viewed from the side, over the complete distance (in miles) of that trail. On the diagram's vertical axis, or height scale, the number of feet indicated between each tick mark lets you visualize the climb. To avoid making flat hikes look steep and steep hikes appear flat, varying height scales provide an accurate image of each hike's climbing difficulty. For example, one hike's scale might rise to 200 feet, while another goes to 2,000 feet.

The Hike Profile

Each profile opens with the hike's star ratings, GPS trailhead coordinates, and other key at-a-glance information—from the trail's distance and configuration to contacts for local information. Each profile also includes a map (see "Trail Maps," above). The main text for each profile includes four sections: Overview, Route Details, Nearby Attractions, and Directions (for driving to the trailhead area).

Star Ratings

Following is the explanation for the rating system of one to five stars in each of the five categories for each hike.

FOR SCENERY:

- ★★★★★ Unique, picturesque panoramas
- ★★★★ Diverse vistas
- ★★★ Pleasant views
- ★★ Unchanging landscape
- ★ Not selected for scenery

FOR TRAIL CONDITION:

- ★★★★★ Consistently well maintained
- ★★★★ Stable, with no surprises
- ★★★ Average terrain to negotiate
- ★★ Inconsistent, with good and poor areas
- ★ Rocky, overgrown, or often muddy

FOR CHILDREN:

- ★★★★★ Babes in strollers are welcome
- ★★★★ Fun for anyone past the toddler stage
- ★★★ Good for young hikers with proven stamina
- ★★ Not enjoyable for children
- ★ Not advisable for children

FOR DIFFICULTY:

- ★★★★★ Grueling
- ★★★★ Strenuous
- ★★★ Moderate (won't beat you up—but you'll know you've been hiking)
- ★★ Easy with patches of moderate
- ★ Good for a relaxing stroll

FOR SOLITUDE:

- ★★★★★ Positively tranquil
- ★★★★ Spurts of isolation
- ★★★ Moderately secluded
- ★★ Crowded on weekends and holidays
- ★ Steady stream of individuals and/or groups

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES

As noted in “Trail Maps,” above, I used a handheld GPS unit to obtain geographic data and sent the information to the publisher’s cartographers. In the key information for each hike profile, I have provided the intersection of the latitude (north) and longitude (west) coordinates to orient you at the trailhead. In some cases, you can drive within viewing distance of a trailhead. Other hikes require a short walk to reach the trailhead from a parking area. Either way, the trailhead coordinates are given from the trail’s actual head—its point of origin.

You will also note that this guidebook uses the degree–decimal minute format for presenting the GPS coordinates. The latitude and longitude grid system is likely quite familiar to you, but here is a refresher, pertinent to visualizing the GPS coordinates: Imaginary lines of latitude—called parallels and approximately 69 miles apart from each other—run horizontally around the globe. Each parallel is indicated by degrees from the equator (established to be 0°): up to 90°N at the North Pole and down to 90°S at the South Pole.

Imaginary lines of longitude, called meridians, run perpendicular to latitude lines. Longitude lines are likewise indicated by degrees: starting from 0° at the Prime Meridian in Greenwich, England, they continue to the east and west until they meet 180° later at the International Date Line in the Pacific Ocean. At the equator, longitude lines also are approximately 69 miles apart, but that distance narrows as the meridians converge toward the North and South Poles.

To convert GPS coordinates given in degrees, minutes, and seconds to the degree–decimal minute format, the seconds are divided by 60. For more on GPS technology, visit usgs.gov.

DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION

Distance indicates the length of the hike from start to finish, either round-trip or one-way depending on the trail configuration. If the hike description includes options to shorten or extend the hike, those distances will also be factored here. **Configuration** defines the type of route—for example, an out-and-back (which takes you in and out the same way), a figure eight, a loop, or a balloon.

HIKING TIME

A general rule of thumb for the hiking times noted in this guidebook is 1.5 miles per hour. That pace typically allows time for taking photos, for dawdling and admiring views, and for alternating stretches of hills and descents. When deciding whether or not to follow a particular trail in this guidebook, consider your

FIVE-STAR TRAILS

own pace, the weather, your general physical condition, and your energy level that day.

HIGHLIGHTS

This section lists features that draw hikers to the trail: waterfalls, historic sites, and the like.

ELEVATION

In each hike's key information, you'll see the elevation (in feet) at the trailhead and another figure for the peak height or low point on that route. The hike profile also includes an elevation diagram (see page 3).

ACCESS

Fees or permits required to hike the trail are detailed here—and noted if there are none. Trail-access hours are also shown here.

MAPS

Resources for maps, in addition to those in this guidebook, are listed here. (As previously noted, the publisher and I recommend that you carry more than one map—and that you consult those maps before heading out on the trail in order to resolve any confusion or discrepancy.)

**ENJOY VIEWS LIKE THIS ON THE SOUTH CHICKAMAUGA BATTLEFIELD LOOP.
(SEE HIKE 4, PAGE 35)**



FACILITIES

This section alerts you to restrooms, phones, water, picnic tables, and other basics at or near the trailhead.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS

Paved sections or other areas where one can safely use a wheelchair are noted here.

COMMENTS

Here you'll find assorted nuggets of information, such as whether or not dogs are allowed on the trails.

CONTACTS

Listed here are phone numbers and website addresses for checking trail conditions and gleaning other day-to-day information.

Overview, Route Details, Nearby Attractions, and Directions

These four elements provide the main text about the hike. "Overview" gives you a quick summary of what to expect on that trail; the "Route Details" guide you on the hike, start to finish; "Nearby Attractions" suggests appealing area sites, such as restaurants, museums, and other trails; and "Directions" will get you to the trailhead from a well-known road or highway.

Weather

Each of the four seasons distinctly lays its hands on Chattanooga. Summer can be fairly hot, but that is when hikers head for the mountains. Thunderstorms can pop up in the afternoons. If hiking in Chattanooga city limits during summer, I recommend going early in the morning or late in the evening. Hikers really hit the trails when fall's first northerly fronts sweep cool, clear air across the Scenic City and adjacent environs. Mountaintop vistas are best enjoyed during this time. Crisp mornings give way to warm afternoons. Fall is drier than summer and is the driest of all seasons. Winter can bring frigid subfreezing days and chilling rains—and snow in the high country. However, a brisk hiking pace will keep you warm. Each cold month has several days of mild weather. Spring will be more variable. A warm day can be followed by a cold one. Extensive spring rains bring regrowth, but also keep hikers indoors. But avid hikers will find more good hiking days than they will have time to hike in spring and every other season. To give you an idea of what weather to expect, the chart

FIVE-STAR TRAILS

below details Chattanooga’s monthly averages. Expect cooler temperatures on the Cumberland Plateau and the Southern Appalachians.

MONTH	HIGH	LOW	PRECIPITATION
January	50°F	31°F	4.9 inches
February	55°F	34°F	5.0 inches
March	64°F	41°F	5.0 inches
April	73°F	48°F	4.0 inches
May	80°F	57°F	4.1 inches
June	87°F	66°F	4.1 inches
July	90°F	70°F	4.9 inches
August	90°F	69°F	3.5 inches
September	83°F	62°F	4.0 inches
October	73°F	50°F	3.3 inches
November	62°F	40°F	5.0 inches
December	52°F	33°F	4.9 inches

Source: usclimatedata.com

Water

How much is enough? Well, one simple physiological fact should convince you to err on the side of excess when deciding how much water to pack: a hiker walking steadily in 90-degree heat needs approximately 10 quarts of fluid per day. That’s 2.5 gallons. A good rule of thumb is to hydrate prior to your hike, carry (and drink) 6 ounces of water for every mile you plan to hike, and hydrate again after the hike. For most people, the pleasures of hiking make carrying water a relatively minor price to pay to remain safe and healthy. So pack more water than you anticipate needing, even for short hikes.

If you are tempted to drink “found water,” do so with extreme caution. Many ponds and lakes encountered by hikers are fairly stagnant and taste terrible, plus they present inherent risks for thirsty trekkers. Giardia parasites contaminate many water sources and cause the dreaded intestinal ailment giardiasis, which can last for weeks after ingestion. For information, visit the Centers for Disease Control website at cdc.gov/parasites/giardia.

In any case, effective treatment is essential before using any water source found along the trail. Boiling water for 2–3 minutes is always a safe measure for camping, but day hikers can consider iodine tablets, approved chemical mixes, filtration units rated for giardia, and UV filtration. Some of these methods (e.g., filtration with an added carbon filter) remove bad tastes typical in stagnant water, while others add their own taste. Carry a means of purification to help in a pinch and if you realize you have underestimated your consumption needs.

Clothing

Weather, unexpected trail conditions, fatigue, extended hiking duration, and wrong turns can individually or collectively turn a great outing into a very uncomfortable one at best—and a life-threatening one at worst. Thus, proper attire plays a key role in staying comfortable and, sometimes, staying alive. Here are some helpful guidelines:

- ★ Choose silk, wool, or synthetics for maximum comfort in all of your hiking attire—from hats to socks and in-between. Cotton is fine if the weather remains dry and stable, but you won't be happy if it gets wet.
- ★ Always wear a hat, or at least tuck one into your day pack or hitch it to your belt. Hats offer all-weather sun and wind protection as well as warmth if it turns cold.
- ★ Be ready to layer up or down as the day progresses and the mercury rises or falls. Today's outdoor wear makes layering easy, with such designs as jackets that convert to vests and zip-off or button-up pant legs.
- ★ Wear hiking boots or sturdy hiking sandals with toe protection. Flip-flopping on a paved path in an urban botanical garden is one thing, but never hike a trail in open sandals or casual sneakers. Your bones and arches need support, and your skin needs protection.
- ★ Pair that footwear with good socks! If you prefer not to sheathe your feet when wearing hiking sandals, tuck the socks into your day pack; you may need them if the weather plummets or if you hit rocky turf and pebbles begin to irritate your feet. And, in an emergency, if you have lost your gloves, you can adapt the socks into mittens.
- ★ Don't leave rainwear behind, even if the day dawns clear and sunny. Tuck into your day pack, or tie around your waist, a jacket that is breathable and either water-resistant or waterproof. Investigate different choices at your local outdoors retailer. If you are a frequent hiker, ideally you'll have more than one rainwear weight, material, and style in your closet to protect you in all seasons in your regional climate and hiking microclimates.

Essential Gear

Today you can buy vests that have up to 20 pockets shaped and sized to carry everything from toothpicks to binoculars. Or, if you don't aspire to feel like a burro, you can neatly stow all of these items in your day pack or backpack. The following list showcases never-hike-without-them items:

- ★ *Water:* As emphasized more than once in this book, bring more than you think you will drink; depending on your destination, you may want to bring a water bottle and iodine or a filter for purifying water in the wilderness in case you run out.
- ★ *Map and high-quality compass:* Even if you know the terrain from previous hikes, don't leave home without these tools. If you are versed with a GPS bring that, too, but don't rely on it as your sole navigational tool—batteries can die.
- ★ *A pocketknife and/or multitool*
- ★ *A flashlight or headlamp with an extra bulb and batteries*
- ★ *Windproof matches and/or a lighter,* as well as a fire starter
- ★ *Extra food:* Trail mix, granola bars, or other high-energy foods
- ★ *Extra clothes:* Raingear, warm hat, gloves, and change of socks and shirt
- ★ *Whistle:* This little gadget will be your best friend in an emergency.
- ★ *Insect repellent:* When you want it, you really want it. Bring a small bottle with deet in it.
- ★ *Sunscreen:* Note the expiration date on the tube or bottle; it's usually embossed on the top.
- ★ *Today's handheld devices* have not only a phone that may help you contact help, but also built-in GPS that can help with orientation. However, do not call for help unless you are truly in need, and remember that smartphone batteries can die, though a cell battery pack helps. Additionally, you can use your smartphone to download park maps for reference. However, download maps at home rather than taking chances with reception in the hinterlands. And be sure your device is fully charged before your hike, so you'll have access to your maps for the duration of your hike.

First Aid Kit

Combined with the items above, those below may appear overwhelming for a day hike. But any paramedic will tell you that the items listed here, in alphabetical order, are just the basics. The reality of hiking is that you can be out for a week of backpacking and acquire only a mosquito bite—or you can hike for an hour, slip, and suffer a bleeding abrasion or broken bone. Fortunately, these

items will collapse into a very small space, and convenient prepackaged kits are available at your pharmacy and on the internet.

Consider your intended terrain and the number of hikers in your party before you exclude any item listed below. A botanical garden stroll may not inspire you to carry a complete kit, but anything beyond that warrants precaution. When hiking alone, you should always be prepared for a medical need. And if you are a twosome or a group, one or more people in your party should be equipped with first aid material.

- ★ Ace bandages or Spenco joint wraps
- ★ Antibiotic ointment (Neosporin or the generic equivalent)
- ★ Athletic tape
- ★ Band-Aids
- ★ Benadryl or the generic equivalent diphenhydramine (in case of allergic reactions)
- ★ Blister kit (such as Moleskin/Spenco Second Skin)
- ★ Butterfly-closure bandages
- ★ Epinephrine in a prefilled syringe (for people known to have severe allergic reactions to such things as bee stings; usually by prescription only)
- ★ Gauze (one roll and a half dozen 4-x-4-inch pads)
- ★ Hydrogen peroxide or iodine
- ★ Ibuprofen or acetaminophen

General Safety

The following tips may have the familiar ring of your mother's voice as you take note of them:

- ★ *Always let someone know where you will be hiking* and how long you expect to be gone. It's a good idea to give that person a copy of your route, particularly if you are headed into any isolated area. Let that person know when you return.
- ★ *Always sign in and out of any trail registers provided.* Don't hesitate to comment on the trail condition if space is provided; that's your opportunity to alert others to any problems you encounter.
- ★ *Do not count on a cell phone for your safety.* Reception may be spotty or nonexistent on the trail, even on an urban walk embraced by towering trees.
- ★ *Always carry food and water,* even for a short hike.

FIVE-STAR TRAILS

- ★ *Stay on designated trails.* Even on the most clearly marked trails, there is usually a point where you have to stop and consider in which direction to head. If you become disoriented, don't panic. As soon as you think you may be off-track, stop, assess your current direction, and then retrace your steps to the point where you went astray. Using a map, a compass, a GPS, and this book, and keeping in mind what you have passed thus far, reorient yourself and trust your judgment on which way to continue. Also, see if your smartphone or handheld device has map capability and you can use it for orientation. If you become absolutely unsure of how to continue, return to your vehicle the way you came in. Should you become completely lost and have no idea how to return to the trailhead, remaining in place along the trail and waiting for help is most often the best option for adults and always the best option for children.
- ★ *Be especially careful when crossing streams.* Whether you are fording the stream or crossing on a log, make every step count. If you have any doubt about maintaining your balance on a log, ford the stream instead: use a trekking pole or stout stick for balance and face upstream as you cross. If a stream seems too deep to ford, turn back. Whatever is on the other side is not worth risking your life.
- ★ *Be careful at overlooks.* While these areas may provide spectacular views, they are potentially hazardous. Stay back from the edge of outcrops and be absolutely sure of your footing; a misstep can mean a nasty and possibly fatal fall.
- ★ *Standing dead trees and storm-damaged living trees* pose a real hazard to hikers. These trees may have loose or broken limbs that could fall at any time. While walking beneath trees, and when choosing a spot to rest or enjoy your snack, look up!
- ★ *Know the symptoms of hypothermia.* Shivering and forgetfulness are the two most common indicators of this stealthy killer. Hypothermia can occur at any elevation, even in the summer, especially when the hiker is wearing lightweight cotton clothing. If symptoms present themselves, get to shelter, hot liquids, and dry clothes ASAP.
- ★ *Ask questions.* National forest, state forest, and other park employees are there to help. It's a lot easier to ask advice beforehand, and it will help you avoid a mishap away from civilization when it's too late to amend an error.
- ★ *Most important of all, take along your brain.* A cool, calculating mind is the single-most important asset on the trail. Think before you act. Watch your step. Plan ahead. Avoiding accidents before they happen is the best way to ensure a rewarding and relaxing hike.

Animal, Insect, and Plant Hazards

Black Bears Though attacks by black bears are very rare, they have happened in the Southern Appalachians, even within the radius this guide covers. The sight

or approach of a bear can give anyone a start. If you encounter a bear while hiking, remain calm and never run away. Make loud noises to scare off the bear and back away slowly. In primitive and remote areas, assume bears are present; in more developed sites, check on the current bear situation prior to hiking. Most encounters are food related, as bears have an exceptional sense of smell and not particularly discriminating tastes. While this is of greater concern to backpackers and campers, on a day hike, you may plan a lunchtime picnic or munch on an energy bar or other snack from time to time. So remain aware and alert.

SNAKES Rattlesnakes, cottonmouths, copperheads, and corals are among the most common venomous snakes in the United States, and hibernation season is typically October–April. In greater Chattanooga, you will possibly encounter the timber rattler or copperhead. However, the snakes you most likely will see while hiking will be nonvenomous. The best rule is to leave all snakes alone, give them a wide berth as you hike past, and make sure any hiking companions (including dogs) do the same.



TIMBER RATTLESNAKE

Photographed by James DeBoer/Shutterstock

When hiking, stick to well-used trails and wear over-the-ankle boots and loose-fitting long pants. Rattlesnakes like to bask in the sun and won't bite unless threatened. Do not step or put your hands where you cannot see, and avoid wandering around in the dark. Step onto logs and rocks, never over them, and be especially careful when climbing rocks. Always avoid walking through dense brush or willow thickets. Copperheads are most often found along streams, also looking for a sunny spot atop a rock.

MOSQUITOES These little naggers are found more often in the city of Chattanooga but sparingly in the hillier Plateau and Southern Appalachians. Insect repellent and/or repellent-impregnated clothing are the only simple methods to ward off these pests. In some areas, mosquitoes are known to carry the West Nile virus, so all due caution should be taken to avoid their bites.



DEER TICK Photographed by Jim Gathany/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (public domain)

TICKS Ticks are often found on brush and in tall grass, where they seem to be waiting to hitch a ride on a warm-blooded passerby. Adult ticks are most active April into May and again October into November. Among the varieties of ticks, the black-legged tick, commonly called the deer tick, is the primary carrier of Lyme disease. Wear light-colored clothing so that ticks can be spotted before they make it to the skin. And be sure to visually check your hair, back of neck, armpits,

and socks at the end of the hike. During your post-hike shower, take a moment to do a more complete body check. For ticks that are already embedded, removal with tweezers is best. Use disinfectant solution on the wound.



POISON IVY Photographed by Tom Watson

POISON IVY, OAK, AND SUMAC Recognizing and avoiding poison ivy, oak, and sumac is the most effective way to prevent the painful, itchy rashes associated with these plants. Poison ivy occurs as a vine or groundcover, 3 leaflets to a leaf; poison oak occurs as either a vine or shrub, also with 3 leaflets; and poison sumac flourishes in swampland, each leaf having 7–13 leaflets. Urushiol, the oil in the sap of these plants, is responsible for the rash. Within 14 hours of exposure, raised lines and/or blisters will appear on the affected area, accompanied by a terrible itch. Refrain from scratching because bacteria under your fingernails can

cause an infection. Wash and dry the affected area thoroughly, applying a calamine lotion to help dry out the rash. If itching or blistering is severe, seek medical attention. If you do come into contact with one of these plants, remember that oil-contaminated clothes, pets, or hiking gear can easily cause an irritating

rash on you or someone else, so wash not only any exposed parts of your body but also clothes, gear, and pets if applicable.

Hunting

Separate rules, regulations, and licenses govern the various hunting types and related seasons. Though there are generally no problems, hikers may wish to forgo their trips during the big-game seasons, usually in November and December, when the woods suddenly seem filled with orange and camouflage. Places you may encounter hunters will be the Cherokee and Chattahoochee National Forests and some wildlife management areas through which hiking trails travel, such as Prentice Cooper State Forest.



WHITE-TAILED DEER

Photographed by RT Images/Shutterstock

Tips on Enjoying Hiking in Greater Chattanooga

Before you go, read the hike description in this book and visit the website of the intended hiking destination. Call ahead if you have unanswered questions. This will help you get oriented to the forthcoming hike.

Investigate different destinations. The Southern Appalachians may have the highest elevations, but you can literally expand your horizons with a trip to the Cumberland Plateau, or check out a city greenway. Take a chance and make a new adventure instead of trying to recreate the same one over and over. You'll be pleasantly surprised to see so many distinct landscapes in greater Chattanooga.

Take your time along the trails. Pace yourself. Our area is filled with wonders both big and small. Don't rush past a tiny salamander to get to that overlook. Stop and smell the wildflowers. Go ahead and take a seat on a trailside rock. Peer into a stream to find secretive fish. Take pictures. Make memories. Don't miss the trees for the forest.

Timing your hike. We can't always schedule our free time when we want, but try to hike during the week and avoid the traditional holidays if possible. Trails that are packed in the summer are often clear during the colder months. If you

are hiking on a busy day, go early in the morning; it'll increase your chances of seeing wildlife. The trails really clear out during rainy times; however, don't hike during a thunderstorm.

Trail Etiquette

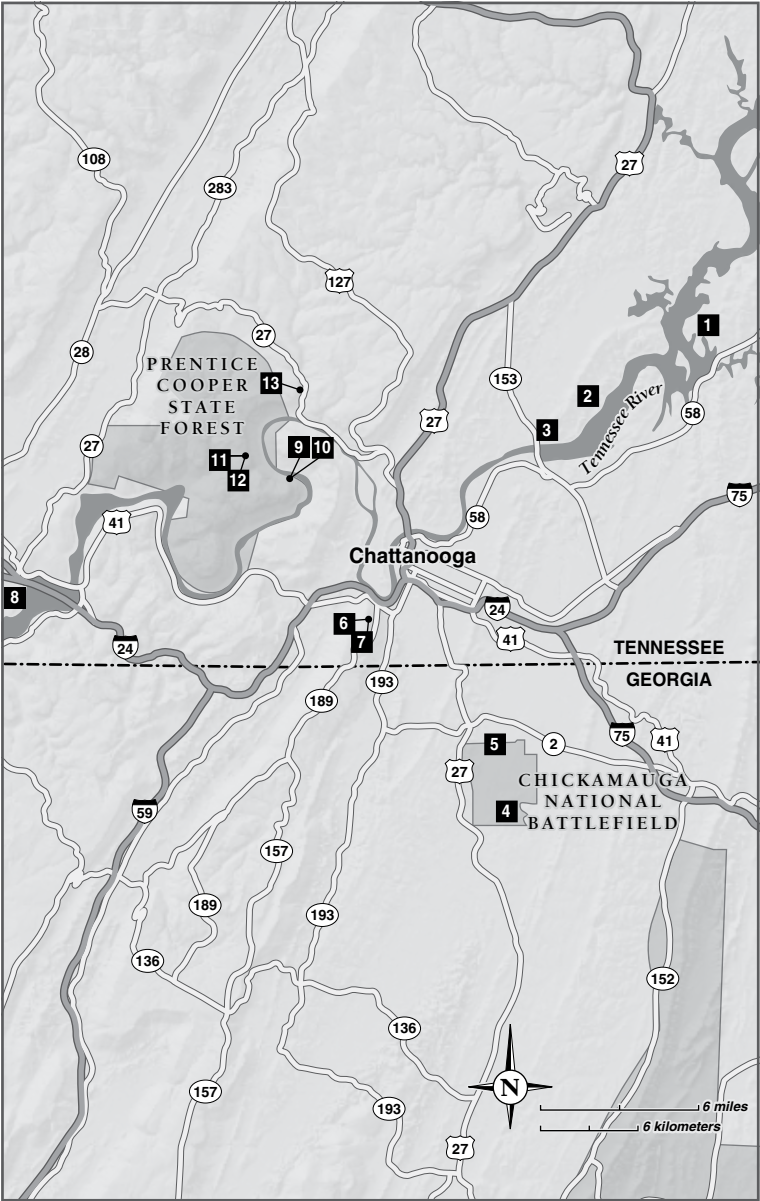
Always treat the trail, wildlife, and fellow hikers with respect. Here are some reminders.

- ★ *Plan ahead* in order to be self-sufficient at all times; carry necessary supplies for changes in weather or other conditions. A well-executed trip is a satisfaction to you and to others.
- ★ *Hike on open trails only.*
- ★ *Respect trail and road closures* (ask if not sure), avoid possible trespassing on private land, and obtain all permits and authorization as required. Also, leave gates as you find them or as marked.
- ★ *Be courteous to other hikers*, cyclists, equestrians, and others you encounter on the trails.
- ★ *Never spook animals.* An unannounced approach, a sudden movement, or a loud noise startles most animals. A surprised animal can be dangerous to you, to others, and to itself. Give them plenty of space.
- ★ *Observe the YIELD signs* that are displayed around the region's trailheads and back-country. They advise hikers to yield to horses and bikers to yield to both horses and hikers. A common courtesy on hills is that hikers and bikers yield to any uphill traffic. When encountering mounted riders or horse packers, hikers can courteously step off the trail, on the downhill side if possible. Speak to the riders before they reach you and do not dart behind trees. You are less spooky if the horse can see and hear you. Resist the urge to pet horses unless you are invited to do so.
- ★ *Leave only footprints.* Be sensitive to the ground beneath you. This also means staying on the existing trail and not blazing any new trails.
- ★ *Be sure to pack out what you pack in.* No one likes to see the trash someone else has left behind.

REWARDING HIKE LEAD TO VIEWS LIKE THIS OF THE TENNESSEE RIVER.



Greater Chattanooga (Hikes 1–13)





Greater Chattanooga



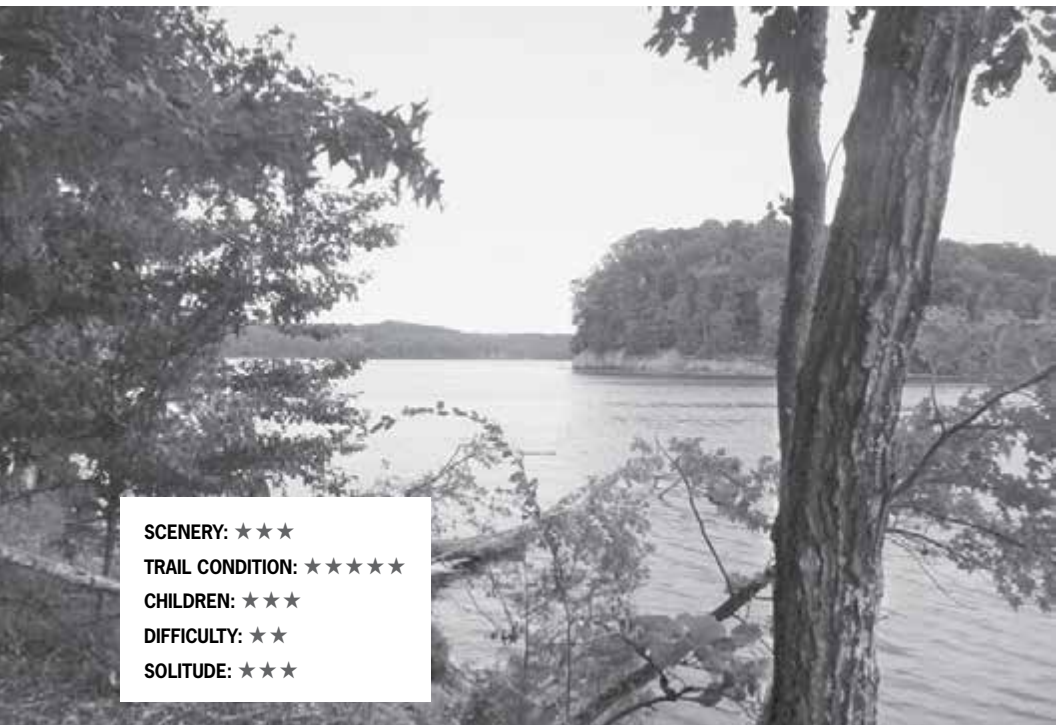
**THIS VIEW AT LITTLE CEDAR MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKS NICKAJACK LAKE.
(SEE HIKE 8, PAGE 55)**

- 1 HARRISON BAY STATE PARK: Bay Point Loop (p. 20)**
- 2 GREENWAY FARMS PARK (p. 25)**
- 3 RIVERWALK AT CHICKAMAUGA DAM (p. 30)**
- 4 SOUTH CHICKAMAUGA BATTLEFIELD LOOP (p. 35)**
- 5 NORTH CHICKAMAUGA BATTLEFIELD LOOP (p. 40)**
- 6 CRAVENS HOUSE LOOP (p. 45)**
- 7 SUNSET ROCK LOOP (p. 50)**
- 8 LITTLE CEDAR MOUNTAIN HIKE (p. 55)**
- 9 POT POINT NATURE TRAIL (p. 60)**
- 10 RITCHIE HOLLOW TRAIL TO BLOWING WIND FALLS (p. 65)**
- 11 SNOOPERS ROCK NATURAL BRIDGE HIKE (p. 70)**
- 12 OVERLOOKS OF MULLENS COVE AND RANSOM HOLLOW (p. 75)**
- 13 LAWSONS ROCK VIA INDIAN ROCKHOUSE (p. 80)**



Harrison Bay State Park:

Bay Point Loop



SCENERY: ★★ ★

TRAIL CONDITION: ★★ ★★ ★

CHILDREN: ★★ ★

DIFFICULTY: ★★

SOLITUDE: ★★ ★

A TRAILSIDE VIEW OF CHICKAMAUGA LAKE

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES: N35° 10.095' W85° 07.189'

DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION: 4.2-mile balloon

HIKING TIME: 2 hours

HIGHLIGHTS: Lake views

ELEVATION: 700' at trailhead, 628' at low point

ACCESS: No fees, permits, or passes required

MAPS: Harrison Bay State Park; USGS Snow Hill

FACILITIES: Restrooms, picnic area, ranger station, restaurant, marina, campground

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: None

CONTACTS: Harrison Bay State Park, 423-344-6214, tnstateparks.com

Overview

This easy, nearly level loop trail at Harrison Bay State Park winds along the shores of Chickamauga Lake amid a series of peninsulas jutting into the huge Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) impoundment. While hiking, you will stay along the shore for most of the route, soaking in scenic lake vistas one after another. While here, consider enjoying the other amenities of this preserve, including paddling, boating, picnicking, and camping.

Route Details

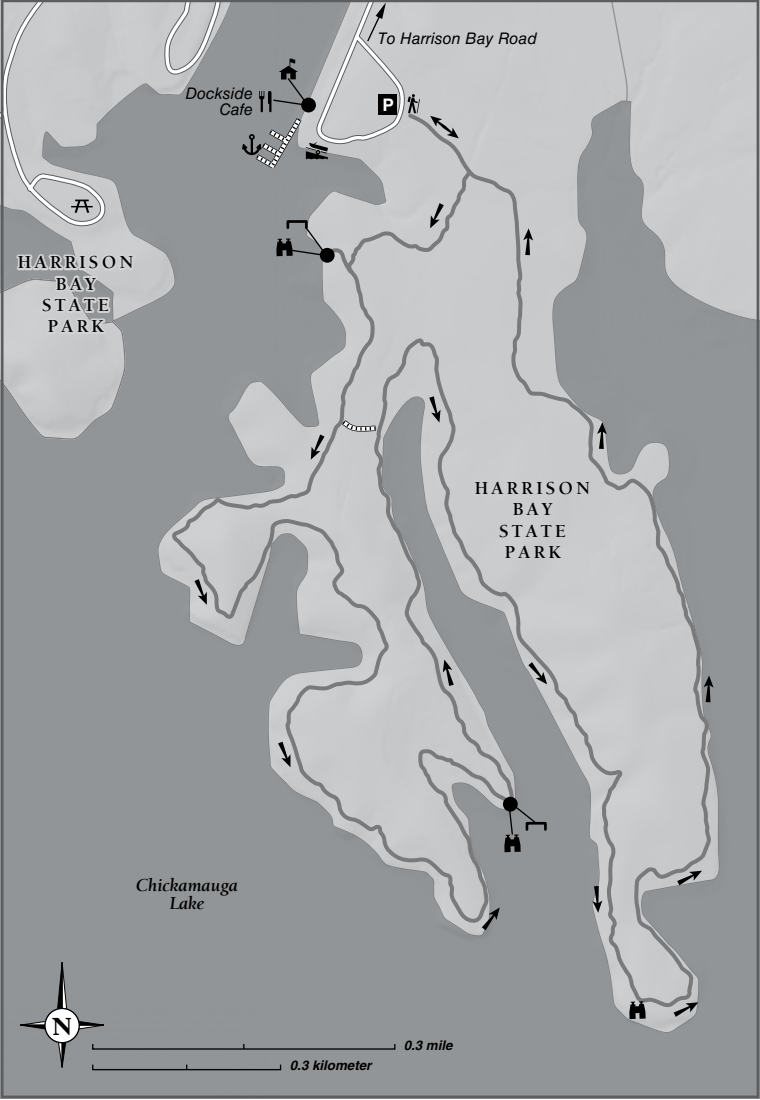
Harrison Bay State Park was Tennessee's first state park, opened in 1937 originally as a TVA recreation area set on the shores of Chickamauga Lake, a dammed portion of the Tennessee River. The name *Harrison Bay* came from the former community of Harrison, which was covered by the lake when it was filled in the 1930s. Where once was Harrison is now Harrison Bay. Parts of the community are still visible, however, in the form of islands rising above the impoundment, and miles of shoreline were created, almost 40 miles in the park alone!

The natural question is this: How do you get 40 miles of shoreline in a 1,200-acre park? Answer: The park is composed of multiple peninsulas jutting into the lake, one after another, and is literally almost all shoreline. You will travel a series of these peninsulas on this hike. These ridges are low, making the hike an easy proposition, especially considering the fine state of the trails, so you don't have to watch every footfall and can enjoy looking at the water, islands, and miles of tan sand beaches.

Although the trail is open to bicycles, you won't find many two-wheelers on the path—the trail is too easy for hardcore mountain bikers, leaving only the occasional bicycling camper to roll through the Bay Point Loop. For hikers, this well-marked and maintained path is excellent for daily exercise, and you can shorten it if desired. Not only will you experience continual views between the trailside trees, but you will also travel to cleared views replete with contemplation benches.

The trailhead signboard displays interpretive information about the natural components of the forest. Pick up the Bay Point Loop, entering woods of cedar, pine, sycamore, and sweetgum. The path quickly splits. Head right,

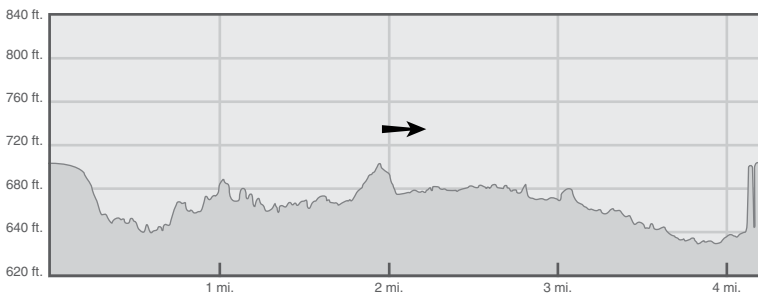
Harrison Bay State Park: Bay Point Loop



making a counterclockwise loop. The woods are level enough here to have vernal pools that form during winter and last into spring before drying out, only to repeat the cycle as the seasons come and go. Curve near a cove of Chickamauga

Lake, viewing the park marina. Ahead you will reach the first cleared view, where you'll also find a shaded bench. Look west into the bay of the marina, as well as at park islands and peninsulas. In season, watercraft from kayaks to johnboats to sailboats, pontoon boats, and yachts will be plying the waters. If you are into kayaking or canoeing, the shore and islands of this state park are fine to explore. Continuing on the path, you will pass unofficial spur trails leading to other overlooks as well as beaches. As the lake recedes after reaching its spring high water, sandier shoreline will be exposed.

At 0.4 mile, pass a shortcut leading left to a boardwalk. By 0.9 mile, you will have circled the first peninsula of the trail. The next peninsula has more vertical variation—a few hills. Continue to enjoy view after view circling this second peninsula. At 1.5 miles, you are at the southern tip of the second peninsula, as pines spill their needles onto the trailbed. At 1.8 miles, you reach another bench and overlook. From there, head north along a long, slim cove. Stay with the cove, reaching the other end of the boardwalk that you passed earlier at 2.2 miles, and head over one of the aforementioned vernal pools, seasonal wetlands that will be high and dry in summer and fall. Curve around to the north end of the cove and reach the third and final peninsula. This third peninsula is the longest and the largest. At 3.1 miles you'll arrive at the most southerly point of this peninsula and a view. Gaze out on Patten Island, TN 58, and the balance of Harrison Bay. Continue curving along the shore while a piney hill rises on the center of this peninsula. By 3.9 miles you have left the lake and are wandering north in thick woods. At 4.1 miles you complete the loop portion of the hike. A backtrack leads to the trailhead and hike's end.



Nearby Attractions

Harrison Bay State Park has a boat ramp; marina; boat, canoe, and kayak rentals; a camp store; a restaurant; a swimming pool; birding; fishing; picnicking; camping; and even golf.

Directions

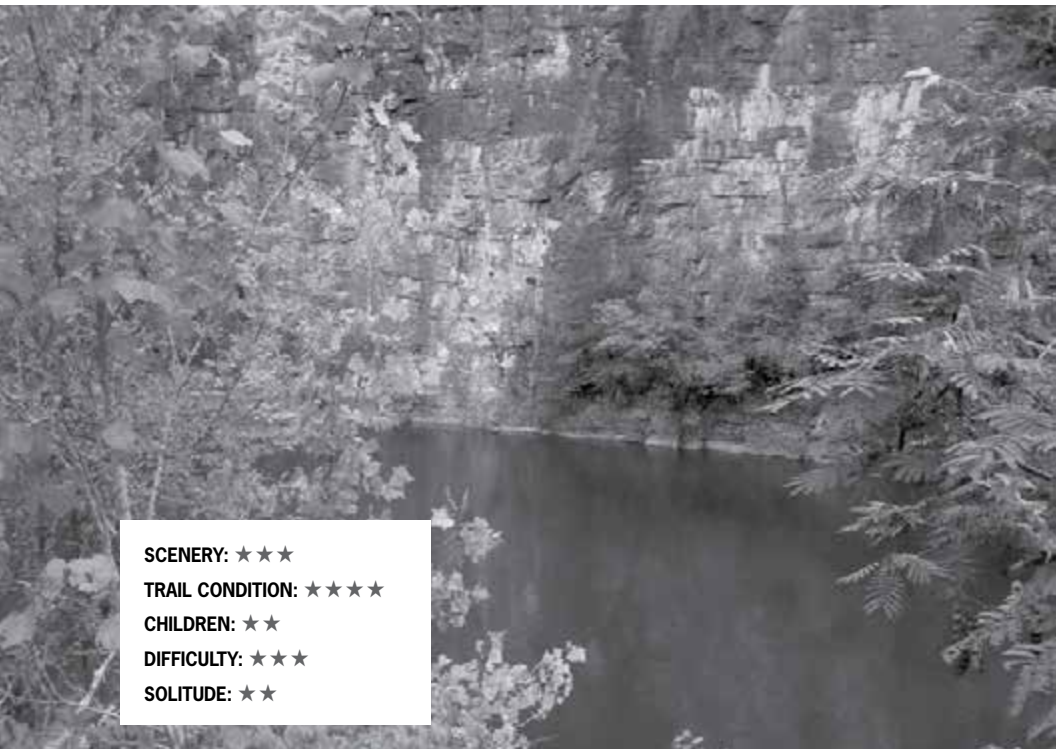
From Exit 11 on I-75 near Ooltewah, Tennessee, take US 11/US 64 west 0.3 mile to turn left onto Hunter Road, then follow Hunter Road 6.1 miles to reach TN 58. From there, turn right and join TN 58 for 1.5 miles to turn left onto Harrison Bay Road. Follow Harrison Bay Road 1.5 miles to enter the state park. From there, follow the signs to the marina/boat ramp to the end of the road near the park office. From the ramp area, curve east into a large parking lot. The signed Bay Point Loop Trailhead is at the east end of the large parking lot.

THIS INVITING TRACK LEADS YOU PAST WATERY VISTAS APLENTY.





Greenway Farms Park



SCENERY: ★ ★ ★

TRAIL CONDITION: ★ ★ ★ ★

CHILDREN: ★ ★

DIFFICULTY: ★ ★ ★

SOLITUDE: ★ ★

BE SURE TO VISIT THE ROCK QUARRY ON YOUR WAY BACK TO THE TRAILHEAD.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES: N35° 07.724' W85° 12.899'

DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION: 6.2-mile triple balloon

HIKING TIME: 3.4 hours

HIGHLIGHTS: TVA Small Wild Area, views, rock quarry

ELEVATION: 680' at trailhead, 1,001' at high point

ACCESS: No fees, permits, or passes required

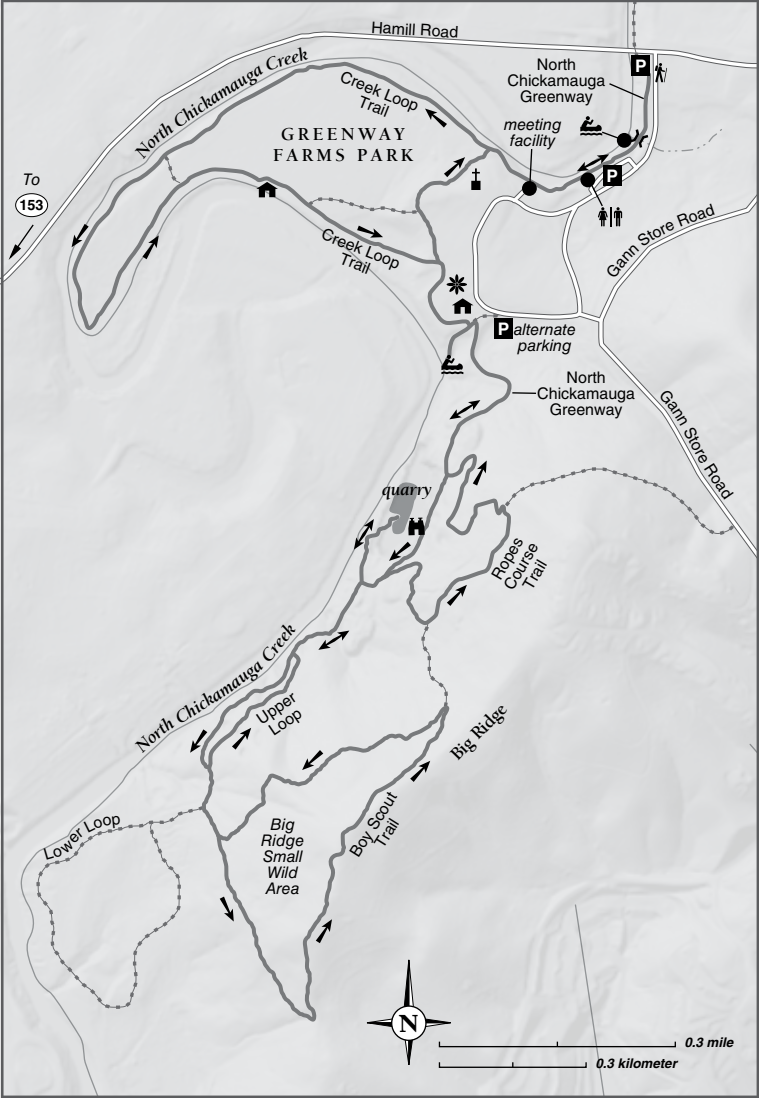
MAPS: *Greenway Farms—North Chickamauga Creek Conservancy, TVA Big Ridge Trail; USGS Daisy, East Chattanooga*

FACILITIES: Restrooms, dog park, paddler accesses, rental facilities

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: Along greenway

CONTACTS: Greenway Farms Park, 423-643-6311, chattanooga.gov

Greenway Farms Park



Overview

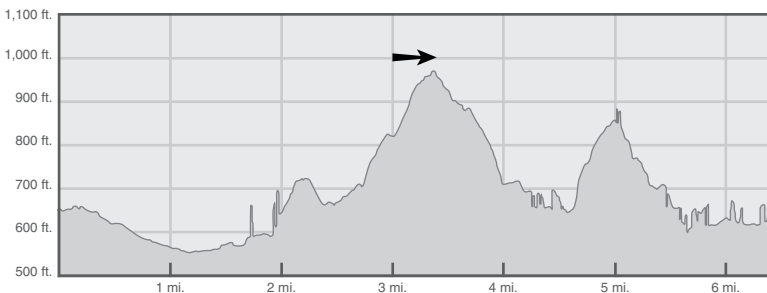
This hike combines a Chattanooga city park and a Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) wild tract to form a fun and interesting trek. Start by walking along North Chickamauga Creek at Greenway Farms Park; enjoy the stream scenes.

Leave the water to climb Big Ridge, where surprising panoramas await. Next, enter TVA's Big Ridge Small Wild Area, climbing to the hike's high point in big woods. Stop by a small lake and rock quarry on your return trip to the trailhead.

Route Details

This hike combines not only two parks in one adventure but also lots of different types of trails. The downside may be the myriad trail intersections, but if you get lost for a minute, just ask for help from your fellow hikers you are sure to see at this popular destination. Take a photo of the map in this guide before you set out. Not only will you take different trails, from singletrack footpaths to paved greenways, but you will also savor streams, a lake, distant views, towering trees, and even an old cemetery. After coming here a few times, you may want to create your own hike within the trail network. However, the suggested hike heads to all the highlights.

The adventure first joins gravel North Chickamauga Greenway, heading south into Greenway Farms Park. You bridge a little tributary, then pass one of the kayak/canoe accesses on North Chickamauga Creek. Walk behind a park restroom before reaching an intersection at 0.3 mile. Here, leave right onto the natural-surface Creek Loop Trail. The flat track traces the bends of North Chickamauga Creek. This flat was prime farmland before the land became a park in 1990. Formerly, crops were grown, cattle were run, and it was once even a dairy farm before being bought by a dentist and then sold to the city. Now forest has reclaimed the fields, while other areas are being cultivated in native grasses and wildflowers.



At 0.8 mile, a spur heads left, shortcutting the Creek Loop Trail. You keep straight, tunneling under trees and passing the other end of the shortcut at 1.3 miles. Ahead, you will view an old cabin by the creek before returning to the North Chickamauga Greenway at 1.7 miles. Turn right onto the now-paved trail, coming near developed gardens and another cabin. At a four-way intersection, first head right at the kayak/canoe access to see the creek one more time, then continue on the greenway. Ahead you will climb Big Ridge. At 2.2 miles, the Ropes Course Trail leaves left, but you stay straight, climbing to discover a view above a water-filled quarry, created when limestone was obtained for the construction of nearby Chickamauga Dam on the Tennessee River back in the 1930s. From the overlook, Walden Ridge forms the western horizon. Ahead, descend past the other end of the Ropes Course Trail and a spur that heads right to the quarry, both of which you will hike upon your return. At 2.5 miles the North Chickamauga Greenway divides; stay with the Lower Loop.

At 2.7 miles, the trail merges, and you enter TVA's 200-acre Big Ridge Small Wild Area. One of 28 special parcels of TVA property, Big Ridge was originally part of the land purchase for the quarry. But the forest here caught TVA's attention, and the tulip trees, shagbark hickory, and oaks were preserved as a place for wildlife and also trails for us.

Pick up the singletrack, natural-surface Boy Scout Trail, climbing from the paved greenway. Stay right, as the Boy Scout Trail divides to fashion a loop. Crest out on Big Ridge, scanning for old-growth trees. At 3.5 miles stay left as a connector trail leaves right for the Ropes Course Trail. Complete the Boy Scout Loop at 3.9 miles, then backtrack the North Chickamauga Greenway, staying right with the Upper Loop. Ahead, the greenway comes together, and you are backtracking again. At 4.6 miles, head left on a spur trail to explore the rock quarry. You may see anglers down here in the still tarn backed by sheer stone walls. Backtrack to the North Chickamauga Greenway, and then head right with the natural-surface Ropes Course Trail (just a hiking trail these days) at 4.8 miles. Wind into woods, meeting the spur to the Boy Scout Trail and then a connector to Gann Store Road before dropping to intersect the North Chickamauga Greenway again at 5.2 miles. From here you descend off Big Ridge, backtracking on the greenway. At 5.5 miles you return to the four-way intersection

where you were earlier, near the gardens and cabin. Keep straight, picking up a new segment of greenway. Walk among open grasses to pass a cemetery on a hill to your right, where the graves of farm families lie. You'll reach the Creek Loop ahead. Make a final backtrack, returning to the trailhead at 6.2 miles, having explored the highlights and highpoints of Greenway Farms Park and Big Ridge Small Wild Area.

Nearby Attractions

In addition to trails, this preserve has a dog park and paddler accesses for plying North Chickamauga Creek, as well as picnic areas and rental facilities for groups.

Directions

From Exit 4 on I-75 northeast of Chattanooga, take TN 153 north 7.8 miles, crossing the Tennessee River. Turn right onto Hamill Road and follow it 1.6 miles. Turn right into Greenway Farms Park, just after bridging North Chickamauga Creek, then continue a short distance to turn right into the first parking area in the park. Here, you join the North Chickamauga Greenway.



Riverwalk at Chickamauga Dam



SCENERY: ★★ ★

TRAIL CONDITION: ★★ ★★ ★

CHILDREN: ★★ ★★ ★

DIFFICULTY: ★★

SOLITUDE: ★

THE RIVERWALK IS IDEAL AS A SCENIC REGULAR WALKING DESTINATION.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES: N35° 06.133' W85° 13.827'

DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION: 3-mile out-and-back

HIKING TIME: 1.8 hours

HIGHLIGHTS: Tennessee River views, trailside art, fishing, picnicking

ELEVATION: 640' at trailhead, 660' at high point

ACCESS: No fees, permits, or passes required

MAPS: *Tennessee Riverpark*; USGS *East Chattanooga*, *Chattanooga*

FACILITIES: Restroom, benches near trailhead

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: Yes

CONTACTS: Tennessee Riverpark, 423-493-9239, parks.hamiltontn.gov

Overview

Enjoy a slice of Chattanooga's nationally renowned greenway—Riverwalk. Start on its eastern end, just below Chickamauga Dam, and walk amid landscaped grounds overlooking the mighty Tennessee River. Along the way, pass through a large green space enhanced with outdoor art. Make a little loop through Fishing Park, with its numerous angling piers extending into the water, before returning to Chickamauga Dam.

Route Details

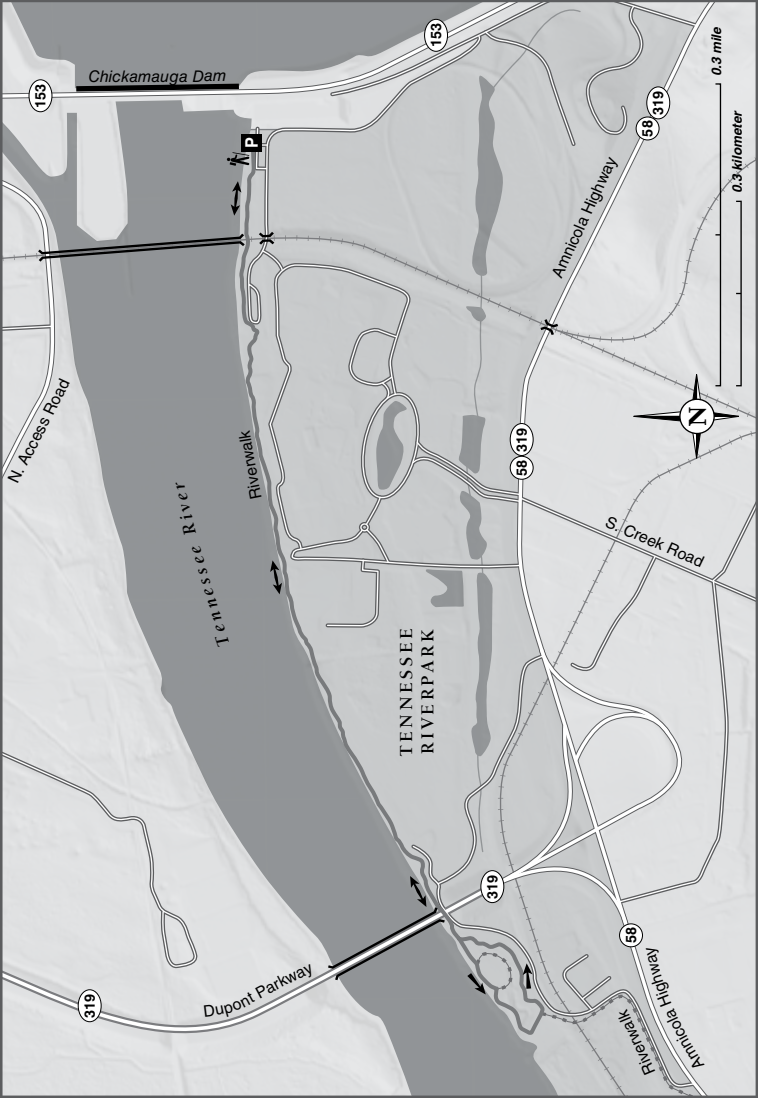
Chattanooga's Riverwalk is a nationally acclaimed model not only as an exercise and hiking destination but also as a way to enhance river frontage and gather the community. Its actual name is Tennessee Riverpark, but the term *Riverwalk* has superseded the original in common nomenclature. In the early 1980s, the idea was born to build a linear preserve along the Tennessee River, extending from Chickamauga Dam to Lookout Mountain. The original plan was unveiled in 1985. Citizens and government personnel all realized the creation of the Riverwalk would come in stages, just as the building of the Appalachian Trail was a section-by-section endeavor.

And so goes Riverwalk. This particular section travels from Chickamauga Dam to Fishing Park, the first section of path to be built. It opened in 1989. The trail currently extends to downtown Chattanooga and Lookout Mountain. It has been an incredible success, so much so that the newest sections are the widest segments of trail yet, built to accommodate a high volume of hikers, joggers, bicyclists, and other outdoors enthusiasts.

As magnificent as the Riverwalk is, it is but one greenway in an ever-expanding system of linear trails coursing through greater Chattanooga. The North Chickamauga Creek Greenway and the South Chickamauga Creek Greenway come to mind. Stay tuned for more expansion while enjoying the current open segments, including this one.

After parking as close to Chickamauga Dam as possible, begin following the Tennessee River on a series of the sidewalks bordered with picnic tables, benches, and more. Absorb the interpretive and historical information about the Tennessee River, the Chickamauga Dam, and the park through which you

Riverwalk at Chickamauga Dam



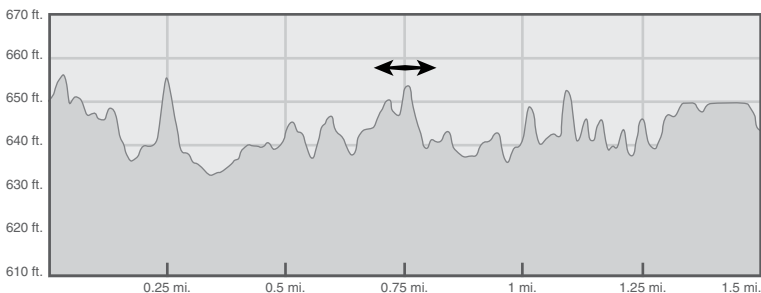
walk. Shortly pass under a railroad bridge, then reach a fishing pier and boat ramp after a quarter mile. This first segment can be busy with all sorts of park enthusiasts rather than just trail users. Beyond here, the path passes a shaded

pavilion, leaving the dam tailwater area, and becomes more of a pure trail-centered greenway.

Here, you continue west, traveling the asphalt track with the river to your right and Chattanooga State Community College to your left. Some trail sections are shaded, and some are not. Note the mileages of the Tennessee River embedded into the trail itself. These measurements are given in quarter-mile increments. Occasional shade shelters and contemplation benches are placed along the path. River views are nearly continuous. Surprisingly, the trail does have a little vertical variation, though the ups and downs are slight.

At 0.8 mile, the Riverwalk bridges a stream and opens onto an expansive green space, dotted with trees and trailside art. These sculptures and designs add a creative element to the park and greenway. See, the Riverwalk isn't simply a nature trail; rather, it is an agglomeration of green space, pathway, and public square. Art enhances the landscape much as other elements of any park. Befitting the scene, many of the art pieces have a water or river theme.

The open green space closes as you pass under DuPont Parkway. However, this is where you enter aptly named Fishing Park. Notice the multiple piers extending into the water to enhance the angling experience. It's fun to just sit awhile and watch the anglers tussle with the finned critters. Beyond the piers, Fishing Park has a central amphitheater along with a network of short interconnected paths and picnic areas that create a gathering space for park users, not necessarily only Riverwalk hikers. The park even has an on-site concessionaire selling food in season. Even though the trails at Fishing Park seem a maze, you can make a loop on your return trip. The Riverwalk continues westerly from Fishing Park but turns away from the river near the boat ramp, at 1.5 miles.



The next greenway section stretches 1 mile to a place called Riverpoint, where South Chickamauga Creek flows into the Tennessee River. From there, it's about 5 miles to the downtown area. Eventually, the South Chickamauga Creek Greenway will connect to Riverwalk near Riverpoint. Enjoy wandering through Fishing Park before backtracking to the Chickamauga Dam Trailhead.

Nearby Attractions

Chickamauga Lake is a water lover's paradise, with swimming, fishing, boating, and other aquatic recreation.

Directions

From Exit 4 on I-75, northeast of downtown Chattanooga, take TN 153 north 5.3 miles to TN 319, Amnicola Highway. Exit north on TN 319 and follow it 6 miles to the right turn to the Riverpark–Chickamauga Dam segment. Follow the entrance road 0.3 mile, then veer left onto another road with a sign that reads RIVERPARK RECREATION. Follow this road to park at the dam tailwater area.



South Chickamauga Battlefield Loop



SCENERY: ★★★★★

TRAIL CONDITION: ★★★★★

CHILDREN: ★★★★★

DIFFICULTY: ★★

SOLITUDE: ★★★

THIS HIKE TAKES YOU BY THE HISTORIC HUNT CEMETERY.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES: N34° 56.364' W85° 15.582'

DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION: 4.1-mile loop

HIKING TIME: 2.5 hours

HIGHLIGHTS: Civil War battlefield, West Chickamauga Creek, rare cedar glades

ELEVATION: 750' at trailhead, 700' at low point

ACCESS: No fees, permits, or passes required

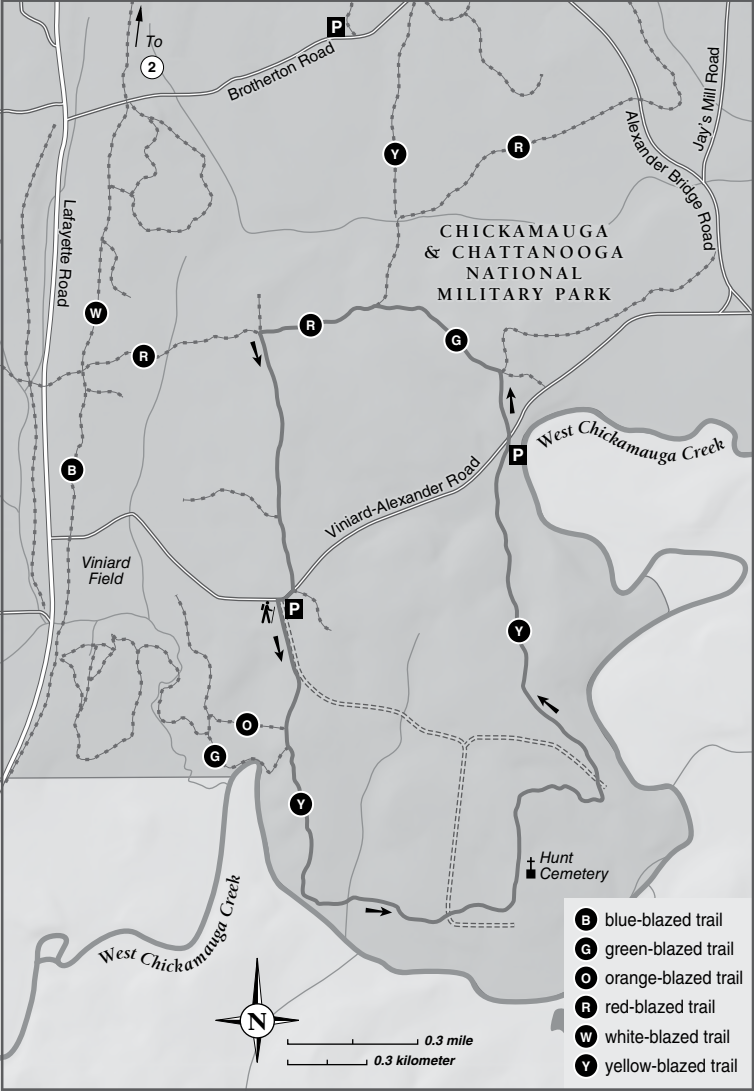
MAPS: *Chickamauga Battlefield Trails*; USGS *Fort Oglethorpe, East Ridge*

FACILITIES: None

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: None

CONTACTS: Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park, 706-866-9241, nps.gov/chch

South Chickamauga Battlefield Loop



Overview

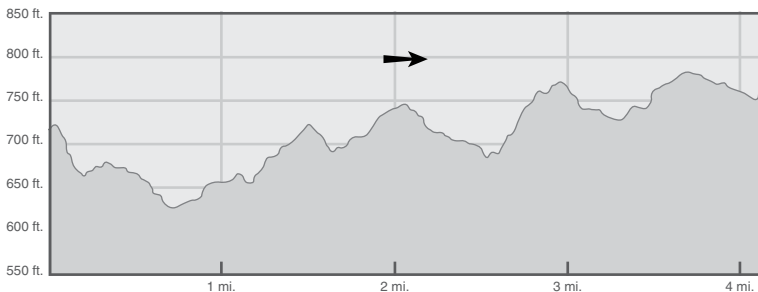
This hike explores the southeastern, wild, and natural side of Chickamauga Battlefield, all within a gigantic bend of West Chickamauga Creek. First, wander through rich woods to come along the attractive stream. The hike then bisects

forest and meadow, passing Hunt Cemetery. Hike along drainages of West Chickamauga Creek, then rise to limestone uplands where open cedar glades form a unique environment with rare flora. Finally, pass some monuments and Civil War history before closing the loop.

Route Details

The most southeasterly part of Chickamauga Battlefield, located just south of Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, seems more like a protected nature park than a place where the Union and Confederacy clashed for control of Chattanooga, a strategic city for transportation and the gateway to the lower South. Even during that eventful September in 1863, when thousands of men risked their lives for their respective causes, this area was a backwater. In fact, when the boundaries of the battlefield were laid out, West Chickamauga Creek made for a convenient line. This big bend added to the acreage, thus protecting some scenic and biologically important woodlands through which we can hike.

Speaking of boundaries, did you know that Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park was the first US national park established to protect a Civil War site? Back in 1888, after the establishment of Yellowstone National Park, people began to see the national park model as a way to preserve significant historical sites, as well as superlatively beautiful natural locations. Just a quarter century after the battle, a pair of generals toured the battlefields and recommended preservation at both Lookout Mountain and Chickamauga. Congressional approval came in 1890, and the park was dedicated on September 18, 1895, 32 years to the day after the clash.



Men who had participated in the campaign helped lay out the memorials and provided strategic information. They are responsible for what we see today not only from a military perspective; preserving large battlefields meant setting aside acreage, which led to the creation of a natural preserve.

The battlefield trails are unnamed but color coded. Red, blue, and white paths are open to horses and hiking, whereas the yellow, green, and orange paths are hiker only. Despite all the twists and turns, the trails are well marked, and the color maps available at the visitor center are very helpful.

Begin your hike by following the roadbed behind a pole gate heading south. Follow the old route through woods before reaching a yellow-blazed trail at 0.2 mile. Turn right here, following a narrower hiker-only track. Hickory, pine, redbud, and cedar, as well as some oaks, rise above the limestone-heavy soil. At 0.3 mile an orange-blazed trail leaves right. Stay with the yellow-blazed trail under bigger trees. This is a quiet part of the park. At 0.7 mile you'll come alongside West Chickamauga Creek. A short spur trail leads to the waterway. Gain a rewarding look at this large creek, which flows quietly at this point. Sycamore, paw paw, and hackberry fill the bottomland. Curve easterly, keeping in the bottoms. This is a good spring wildflower area.

Open onto a field at 1 mile. Stay with the right-hand side of the clearing. Just ahead, briefly pick up a roadbed and look for the yellow-blazed hiker trail, continuing easterly. At 1.3 miles open onto another field. Turn left here, northbound. Come to the wrought iron-encircled Hunt Cemetery at 1.4 miles. Prebattle residents are interred here.

Hickories, pines, and cedars continue to dominate the low hills. At 1.8 miles cross a closed park road and keep north, still with the hiker-only, yellow-blazed trail. The path descends along a tributary of West Chickamauga Creek. Pass through bottoms of beard cane, then cross Viniard-Alexander Road at 2.7 miles. Limestone slabs open in the woodlands.

You soon enter full-blown limestone cedar glades. At first glance, these rare plant communities seem like crumbly old parking lots with a few weeds growing atop them, but in fact they are very rare in Georgia and from a global perspective can be found only in a few places in the southeastern United States, with Middle Tennessee being the heart of their range. In late summer you will see the rare Tennessee coneflower and Tennessee gladecress, among many other plants unique to the community.

These cedar glades are easily the most biologically significant plant communities within the battlefield. Fast-draining, thin soils open to the sun leave these glades to all but a few specialized plants. Even the cedar trees are stunted! At 2.8 miles a large cedar glade appears on your left. Just ahead look left and join a green-blazed trail meandering northwesterly through occasional small glades. At 3.2 miles stay left, joining a red-blazed path, heading west in mature deep woods. Come to a four-way junction at 3.5 miles. Turn left here, back on a yellow-blazed path. Pass more limestone pockets and some battlefield monuments. The level path leads you to Viniard-Alexander Road and the end of your loop. The parking area is within sight to the right.

Nearby Attractions

The 5,300-acre Chickamauga Battlefield offers more miles of hiking and equestrian trails, historical buildings, and a 7-mile auto tour with additional roads for seeing the battlefield. The visitor center has numerous exhibits, a video describing the battlefield, a detailed battlefield map, historical artifacts, and military items, including a special collection of shoulder arms.

Directions

From Exit 350 on I-75 in Georgia, southeast of downtown Chattanooga, take GA 2/Battlefield Parkway west 6.4 miles to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, and Lafayette Road. Turn left on Lafayette Road and follow it 1 mile to reach the visitor center on your right. (You may want to stop in and obtain a trail map.) Continue past the visitor center 2.5 more miles, then turn left on Viniard-Alexander Road. Follow Viniard-Alexander Road 0.7 mile to a parking area on your right.



5 North Chickamauga Battlefield Loop



SCENERY: ★★★★★

TRAIL CONDITION: ★★★★★

CHILDREN: ★★★★★

DIFFICULTY: ★★

SOLITUDE: ★★

CANNON EMPLACEMENTS MARK POSITIONS OF UNION AND CONFEDERATE FORCES.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES: N34° 56.364' W85° 15.582'

DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION: 4.8-mile double loop

HIKING TIME: 3 hours

HIGHLIGHTS: Civil War battlefield, monuments, interpretive signage

ELEVATION: 740' at trailhead, 790' at high point

ACCESS: No fees, permits, or passes required

MAPS: Chickamauga Battlefield Trails; USGS Fort Oglethorpe, East Ridge

FACILITIES: Visitor center, restroom, fountain

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: None

CONTACTS: Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park, 706-866-9241, nps.gov/chch

Overview

This mostly level hike starts at Chickamauga Battlefield visitor center, then explores the hills, creeks, forests, and, of course, the monuments and historical features of this Civil War site. Cross Black Creek, then turn east near Reed's Bridge Road. The trail then passes battlefield lines and monuments before coming to the site of Jay's Mill. Wander through woods to reach Brotherton Road, with interpretive information aplenty. The hike then makes its way through more mixed fields and woods, and human and natural history, before returning to the visitor center. The hike is free of climbs, and the expansive trail network allows you to shorten or lengthen the walk.

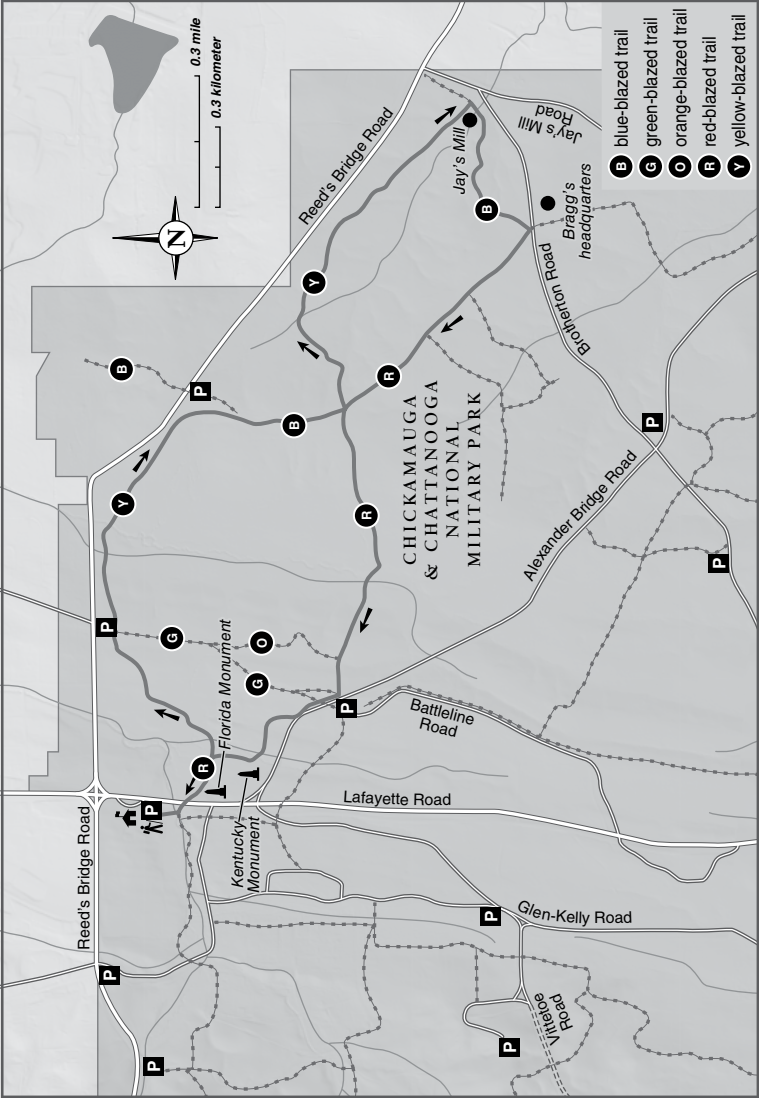
Route Details

During the Civil War both the Union and the Confederacy prized the city of Chattanooga. Strategically located along the Tennessee River and a railroad crossroad, the city was key to the Confederates in defending the lower South and to the Federals in continuing their plan to split the South in two. Chickamauga Battlefield, located just south of Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, was the location of the last major Confederate victory. Later that fall, in Chattanooga, the Union ultimately cracked the Confederate defenses, enabling Sherman's infamous March to the Sea.

During your hike you will see monuments erected to various troops on both sides. You will also see plaques helping to explain the complex movements during the September 1863 clash. However, a trip to the visitor center at the trailhead will give you a much more comprehensive understanding of the battle than you'll get from walking through one particular area of the national military park. So consider it a mixture of enjoying nature as well as history.

The battlefield trails are unnamed but color coded. Red, blue, and white paths are open to horses and hiking, whereas the yellow, green, and orange paths are hiker only. Despite all the twists and turns, the trails are well marked, and the color maps available at the visitor center are very helpful. The hike leaves south from the visitor center parking lot, passing through a grassy field. You'll soon reach an intersection just before a wooden footbridge. Turn left on a red-blazed trail to pass under Lafayette Road at the culvert where Black Creek flows

North Chickamauga Battlefield Loop

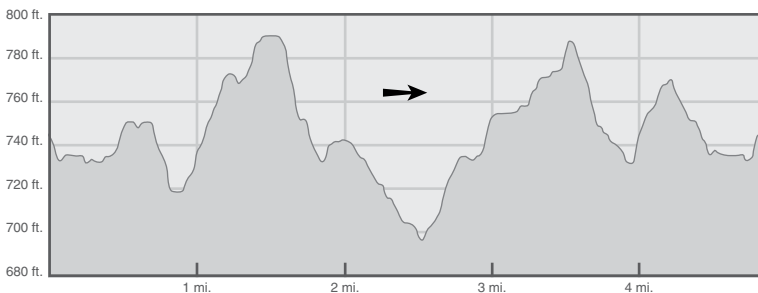


under the road. If the water is high, just cross on the road. At 0.2 mile look left for a yellow-blazed trail. Take this hiker-only path to enter flatwoods of hickory, pine, cedar, and oak. Despite the fact that you are in deep woods, civilization hums in the background. At 0.6 mile reach a four-way intersection. Here, you

can see a parking area to your left at Reed's Bridge Road. Keep straight on the yellow-blazed trail, roughly paralleling the curves of Reed's Bridge Road. Dip to span another tributary of Black Creek at 0.9 mile. At 1.4 miles stay straight on a blue-blazed trail.

Pass your first battlefield monuments before reaching a four-way intersection at 1.6 miles. Turn left here, joining another yellow-blazed, hiker-only trail. You will return to this intersection later. The rocky path continues paralleling Reed's Bridge Road, heading downhill toward the site of Jay's Mill, on West Chickamauga Creek in tall pines. At 2.5 miles make an abrupt right just before reaching Jay's Mill Road. Join a blue-blazed path heading right. Step over a limestone-bedded streamlet and travel sinkhole-pocked land. Cedars, redbuds, and hickories thrive in this limestone soil. At 2.9 miles emerge very near Brotherton Road, not far from Confederate General Braxton Bragg's headquarters. However, this loop does not cross Brotherton Road (but that shouldn't stop you should you wish to detour to the site of Bragg's headquarters). Instead, turn right on a red-blazed trail, heading northwest. Spur trails lead from this path, exploring other monuments and interpretive battlefield information. These spurs can add to your mileage and learning experience.

At 3.5 miles return to the four-way intersection where you were earlier. Stay left, still with the red-blazed trail. At 4 miles step over the headwaters of Black Creek. Keep west in an area with many monuments. Allow ample time for your hike, as you will be attracted to all of this interpretive information. At 4.2 miles you will reach Alexander Bridge Road. Stay with the red-blazed trail as it turns north, staying very close to Alexander Bridge Road. Open onto a field at 4.5 miles. The Florida Monument and visitor center are visible in the distance.



The path stays along the field's edge, effectively half-circling the Florida Monument. The last 0.2 mile of the hike is a backtrack. Finish your trek at 4.8 miles.

Nearby Attractions

The 5,300-acre Chickamauga Battlefield offers more miles of hiking and equestrian trails, historical buildings, and a 7-mile auto tour with additional roads for seeing the battlefield. The visitor center has numerous exhibits, a video describing the battlefield, a detailed battlefield map, historical artifacts, and military items, including a special collection of shoulder arms.

Directions

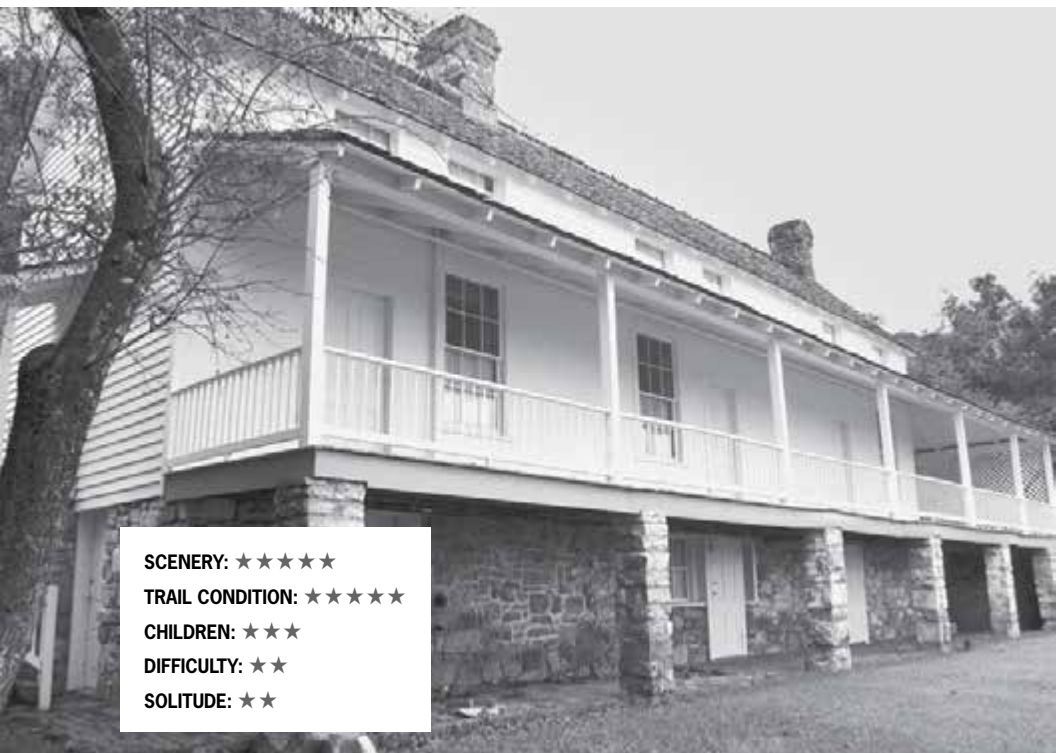
From Exit 350 on I-75 in Georgia, southeast of downtown Chattanooga, take GA 2/Battlefield Parkway west 6.4 miles to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, and Lafayette Road. Turn left on Lafayette Road and follow it 1 mile to reach the visitor center on your right. The large visitor parking area is just south of the visitor center. The hike starts here (if you pass the Florida Monument on your left you have gone just a little too far).

FIELDS ARE KEPT AS THEY WERE IN 1863, WITH INFORMATIVE MONUMENTS ADDED.





Cravens House Loop



SCENERY: ★★★★★

TRAIL CONDITION: ★★★★★

CHILDREN: ★★★

DIFFICULTY: ★★

SOLITUDE: ★★

THE CRAVENS HOUSE IS A HIGHLIGHT OF THIS HIKE.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES: N35° 00.590' W85° 20.626'

DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION: 2.6-mile balloon

HIKING TIME: 1.5 hours

HIGHLIGHTS: Civil War history, expansive vistas, the Cravens House

ELEVATION: 2,110' at trailhead, 1,570' at low point

ACCESS: Entrance fee required

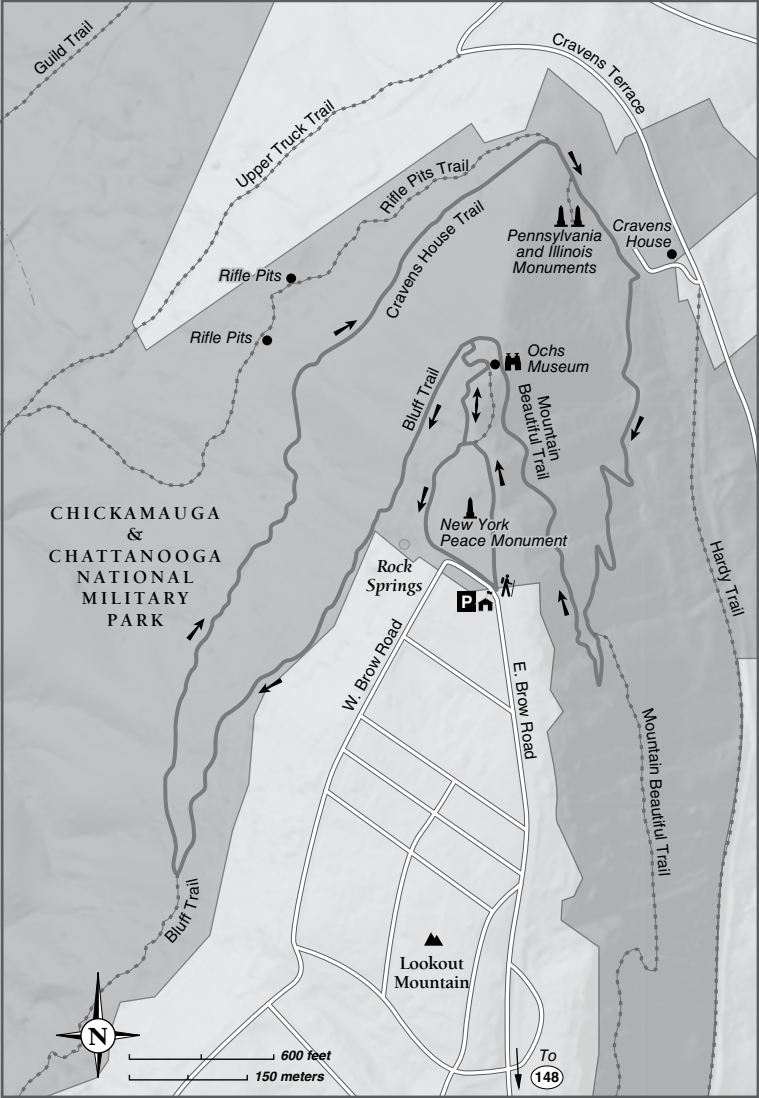
MAPS: Lookout Mountain Trail Map; USGS Chattanooga

FACILITIES: Visitor center, restrooms, picnic area at trailhead

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: On upper part of Point Park

CONTACTS: Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park, 706-866-9241, nps.gov/chch

Cravens House Loop



Overview

This hike starts at view-laden Point Park on Lookout Mountain. Wander through the monuments and cannon formations near inspiring views. Drop to Ochs Museum and incredible vistas of Chattanooga. A steady downgrade takes you to

the Cravens House, an important Civil War site, with its own panoramas. From there, take a narrow foot access up to the Mountain Beautiful Trail, returning to Point Park. The hike's short distance makes the 500-foot elevation change more tolerable to novice walkers.

Route Details

Civil War history can be found all over greater Chattanooga. And it is atop Lookout Mountain that this history mingles with the natural beauty of the Scenic City. The preservation of important Civil War sites as part of the greater Chattanooga and Chickamauga National Battlefield has not only saved these historic sites, but also the hiking trails located on them add up to miles and miles of possibilities for history buffs, hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians, all within easy access for Chattanooga's residents.

This hike combines exploration of Civil War history with the beauty of Lookout Mountain. After making your way to Point Park, take a minute to explore the visitor center and pay your entrance fee. Enter the fortresslike gate of Point Park and take the stone slab path downhill. Incredible views open of the flatlands and hills beyond Lookout Mountain. Cannon ramparts lure you to their overlooks. At the bottom of the green space, take the steps leading down toward Ochs Museum. Stone steps lead to the small museum, located on a rock outcrop with perhaps the finest views anywhere in the region. Below, the Tennessee River makes its Moccasin Bend. Signal Mountain and the Cumberland Plateau rise to the left. Chattanooga stretches across the riverside flats and beyond.

Descend from Ochs Museum on metal stairs past a sheer cliff, at the base of which stands a monument laid into the bluff. This is also the site of the







Appendix A: Outdoor Retailers

ROCK/CREEK NORTH SHORE

301 Manufacturers Road
Chattanooga, TN 37405
facebook.com/rockcreekoutfitters

ROCK/CREEK HAMILTON CROSSING

2200 Hamilton Place Blvd.
Chattanooga, TN 37421
423-485-8775

facebook.com/rockcreekoutfitters

They also have locations in Riverside, as well as downtown Chattanooga and in Cleveland and on the Ocoee.

DICK'S SPORTING GOODS

Hamilton Place Mall
2100 Hamilton Place Blvd., Suite 102
Chattanooga, TN 37421
423-535-9584
dickssportinggoods.com



Appendix B: Hiking Clubs

OUTDOOR CLUB SOUTH—CHATTANOOGA CHAPTER

[meetup.com/Chattanooga-Outdoor-Club-South](https://www.meetup.com/Chattanooga-Outdoor-Club-South)

OUTDOOR CHATTANOOGA

423-643-6888

[outdoorchattanooga.com](https://www.outdoorchattanooga.com)

CHATTANOOGA HIKING CLUB

[chatthiking.com](https://www.chatthiking.com)

CHATTANOOGA HIKING MEETUP

[meetup.com/Chattanooga-Hiking-Meetup](https://www.meetup.com/Chattanooga-Hiking-Meetup)



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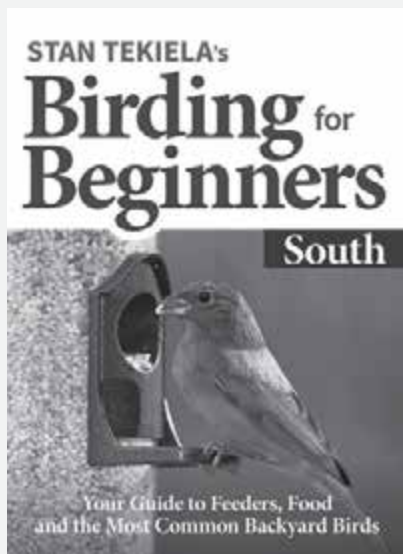
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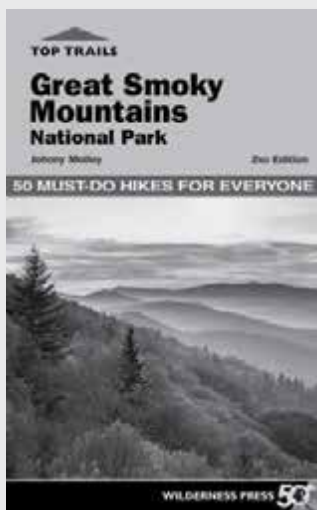
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About the Author

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JOHNNY MOLLOY is a writer and adventurer, based in East Tennessee, who has lived in the shadow of the mountains for more than three decades. His outdoor passion started on a backpacking trip in Great Smoky Mountains National Park with Chattanooga native Calvin Milam. That first foray unleashed a love of the outdoors that has led to his spending countless nights backpacking, canoe camping, and tent camping for the past 30 years. Friends enjoyed his outdoor adventure stories; one even suggested he write a book. He soon parlayed his love of the outdoors into an occupation. The results of his efforts are more than 75 books. His writings include hiking, camping, and paddling guidebooks; comprehensive guidebooks about a specific area; and

true outdoor adventure books. Molloy has also written numerous articles for magazines, websites, and newspapers. He continues writing and traveling extensively throughout the United States, endeavoring in a variety of outdoor pursuits. His other interests include serving God as a Gideon, studying American history, and following University of Tennessee sports. For the latest on Johnny, please visit johnnymolloy.com.

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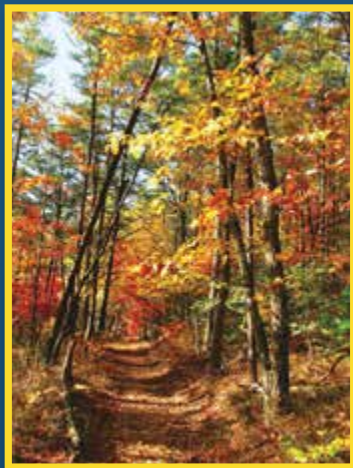
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