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Hiking Trails of Haywood County North Carolina



7

Art Loeb Trail

Length: 12.3 miles **Rating:** Strenuous

The Art Loeb Trail, 30.1 miles long, is a national recreation trail and named after a local hiking enthusiast. The trail traverses beautiful, but rugged terrain, from some of the lowest, to some of the highest points on the Pisgah District. Most of the Art Loeb Trail is overlapped by the Mountains-to-the-Sea Trail. It begins at the Davidson River and climbs steeply to Shut-in Ridge. Once up, don't expect that the hard part is over. This trail will take you up and down knobs, along ridges and down into several gaps.

Directions: Go 0.2 mile south of Pisgah District Ranger Station on U.S. Highway 276, and turn onto the road to Davidson River Campground. Park in the Art Loeb Trailhead parking lot. The other end of this section is at Gloucester Gap on FS Rd. 471, where overnight parking is not recommended.

7

Art Loeb Trail Section 2

Length: 7.2 miles **Rating:** Strenuous

From Gloucester Gap the trail climbs to Pilot Mountain, a former fire tower site with a 360-degree view. In mid-May the north side of Pilot Mountain is abloom with pinkshell azalea.

There is a shelter and spring at Deep Gap. The trail then climbs to the Blue Ridge Parkway, winding through a mature upland hardwood forest. From the Parkway it is a steep climb to Silvermine Bald where there is a transition from a hardwood forest to a spruce-fir forest. Grass balds and an abundance of catawba rhododendron make this a good spot to hike in late June when these showy shrubs bloom. Near Silvermine Bald the Mountains-to-Sea Trail splits to the west while the Art Loeb Trail follows the ridge northeast to FS Road 816. Blaze: White

Directions: Start from Gloucester Gap, which is 4.5 miles west of the State Fish Hatchery on FS Road 475. (It is not recommended to leave cars overnight here.)

3

Big Fork Ridge Trail

Length: 3.0 miles **Rating:** Strenuous

This low ridge trail links Caldwell Fork and Rough Fork in the middle of Cataloochee Valley. Crossing the low ridge separating these two parallel creeks and trails, you will hike a moderate, 3-mile stretch.

Directions: Take exit 20 off I-40 (Cove Creek) and travel west on NC 276 turn right on Cove Creek road. Stay on Cove Creek Rd. for 6 miles. This will take you 2 miles beyond park boundary. Turn left on Cataloochee Road, go 3.1 miles. Trail will be on the left.

3

Boogerman Trail

Length: 4.2 miles **Rating:** Easy

This moderate, 4-mile trail has an elevation gain of only 900 feet. It is well-known for the variety of magnificent trees. The trailhead is on Caldwell Fork Trail. After leaving Caldwell Fork, the trail ascends a low ridge to a gap, slabs (runs across the mountain slope with only gradual elevation change) the mountainside with only two additional short climbs, reaches a side ridge, and descends back to Caldwell Fork. It is best to do this trail as a day hike from Cataloochee Campground, a 7.5-mile roundtrip.

Directions: Take exit 20 off I-40 (Cove Creek) and travel west on NC 276 turn right on Cove Creek road. Stay on Cove Creek Rd. for 6 miles. This will take you 2 miles beyond park boundary. Turn left on Cataloochee Road, go 3.1 miles. Trail will be on the left.

4

Buckeye Ridge Trail

Length: 5.4 miles **Rating:** Moderate

This trail winds through grassy fields and wooded areas. It provides panoramic views of the countryside in some spots. Cold Springs Creek Flows through dense woods and grassy fields on its way to the Pigeon River. The forest shows hints of its past history-farming, logging, narrow gauge railroads, settlements, and signs of recent forest management. The grassy ridges of Max Patch Mountain near the Tennessee state line crown the area. Trails combined with forest service roads to provide loop opportunities.

Directions: Take Harmon Den Exit off I-40 near the NC/TN state line. Head northeast on FR 148 (Cold Springs Road) about 3 miles to Harmon Den parking area on the left. Parking for trailers is also available at lower junction of FR 148 and 3526.

3

Caldwell Fork Trail

Length: 5.1 miles **Rating:** Easy

This moderate lower creek trail gains 1,300 feet in elevation. It follows a rushing mountain stream for nearly 5 miles and there are log footbridges at every stream crossing. While any section would be suitable for a day hike, the trail is heavily used by horses and is mired in several spots. The prettiest sections are on Boogerman Trail or at the upper end of the trail near the three exceptionally large "Big Poplars," which are believed to be the among the largest yellow poplars in the Park. The largest of the three is eight feet in diameter.

Directions: Take exit 20 off I-40 (Cove Creek) and travel west on NC 276 turn right on Cove Creek road. Stay on Cove Creek Rd. for 6 miles. This will take you 2 miles beyond park boundary. Turn left on Cataloochee Road, go 3.1 miles. Trail will be on the left.

4

Cherry Creek Trail

Length: 1.6 miles **Rating:** Strenuous

This trail features steep rocky sections and some tight switchbacks. Cold Springs Creek Flows through dense woods and grassy fields on its way to the Pigeon River. The forest shows hints of its past history-farming, logging, narrow gauge railroads, settlements, and signs of recent forest management. The grassy ridges of Max Patch Mountain near the Tennessee state line crown the area. Trails combined with forest service roads to provide loop opportunities.

Directions: Take Harmon Den Exit off I-40 near the NC/TN state line. Head northeast on FR 148 (Cold Springs Road) about 3 miles to Harmon Den parking area on the left. Parking for trailers is also available at lower junction of FR 148 and 3526.

4

Cherry Ridge Trail

Length: 1.0 miles **Rating:** Strenuous

This trail is fairly steep and connects to Harmon Den and Max Patch. Cold Springs Creek Flows through dense woods and grassy fields on its way to the Pigeon River. The forest shows hints of its past history-farming, logging, narrow gauge railroads, settlements, and signs of recent forest management. The grassy ridges of Max Patch Mountain near the Tennessee state line crown the area. Trails combined with forest service roads to provide loop opportunities.

Directions: Take Harmon Den Exit off I-40 near the NC/TN state line. Head northeast on FR 148 (Cold Springs Road) about 3 miles to Harmon Den parking area on the left. Parking for trailers is also available at lower junction of FR 148 and 3526.

2

Graveyard Fields Trail

Length: 3.2 miles **Rating:** Easy

This is a popular family hike because of its beauty and ease. This is a moderate climb of almost a mile to the base of an impressive waterfall. A map at the parking area shows the Graveyard Fields trail system. The set of steps to the right of the map is the start of the trail. After crossing the bridge, the main trail goes left and upstream. A 0.25-mile trail to the right will take you to the bottom of the Lower Falls, which is a moderate descent. Rocks around waterfalls are very slippery. The main trail will take you through open, grassy areas, and past nice pools for wading on a hot summer day. Blueberries are abundant in the fall. After one mile, you will see the trail to the Upper Falls. The main trail crosses the Yellow stone Prong and returns to the parking lot.

Directions: This trail begins at the Graveyard Fields Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway. From the U.S. Highway 276 junction with the parkway, turn left or south on the Parkway and continue to milepost 418.8 (about 6 miles).

2

Graveyard Ridge Trail

Length: 3.4 miles **Rating:** Moderate

There are outstanding views of Graveyard Fields and visibility as far as South Carolina on clear days. See nature at its scenic best as you look across Dark Prong and Greasy Cove toward Mt. Pisgah. The first two miles of this trail are for hikers only because of the fragile soils. After leaving the Graveyard Fields Trail, you will climb through a grass bald up to an old railroad grade. These soils are very susceptible to erosion, so please stay on the main trail. Turn left onto the old railroad grade. At Dark Prong Gap the trail will become a road bed which is open to horses and mountain bikes. It is also open seasonally to 4 wheel drives from August through January 2nd. This trail ends at Lvestor Gap. Be aware of changing weather conditions. If visibility is hampered due to fog, it is recommended to avoid this trail, since it is easy to become disoriented in these open areas. Blaze: Orange

Directions: Walk the Graveyard Fields Trail counterclockwise until intersecting the Graveyard Ridge Trail.

6

Groundhog Creek Trail

Length: 2.4 miles **Rating:** Moderate/Strenuous

A 9.5 mile loop can be hiked by combining the Groundhog Creek, Appalachian Trail or Rube Rock Trail.

The trail descends along Groundhog Creek for most its length. Just below the shelter, the trail crosses an old road.

Directions: From Hot Springs, go south on State Road 209 for 7.5 miles to SR 1175. Turn right onto SR 1175 and go 4 miles to SR 1181. Turn right onto SR 1181 and follow it to the intersection of SR 1182. Turn left and take the next right which is Forest Road 148 (Cold Springs Road). Follow FR 148 to the Harmon Den Parking Area. Just past the parking area, turn right onto FR 148A. Follow FR 148A to the top of the ridge where the ridge where the Appalachian Trail crosses the road. Access the trail by going south on the Appalachian Trail 2.9 miles. Forest Road 148 can also be accessed from the Interstate 40 via the Harmon Den Exit.

3

Hemphill Bald: Double Gap Trail

Length: 8.4 miles **Rating:** Moderate

This moderate low ridge trail ascends 1,800 feet in 8.5 miles. The trail starts fairly level at Polls Gap but begins to climb steeply on switchbacks after Maggot Spring and until Hemphill Bald. This trail starts on the Caldwell Fork Trail. There are several superb lookouts, most notably a view east from

Hemphill Bald. The bald was named after a pioneer family. This trail is used extensively by horses but is generally in good condition. There are few water sources along this ridge; the most reliable is a strong spring about 1 mile east of Polls Gap.

Directions to Caldwell Fork Trail: Take exit 20 off I-40 (Cove Creek) and travel west on NC 276 turn right on Cove Creek road. Stay on Cove Creek Rd. for 6 miles. This will take you 2 miles beyond park boundary. Turn left on Cataloochee Road, go 3.1 miles. Trail will be on the left.

3

Little Cataloochee Trail

Length: 5.0 miles **Rating:** Moderate

This moderate lowland trail gains only 900 feet in over 5 miles. The trail follows old roads with only one notable climb over the small ridge that separates the two Cataloochees. There are plenty of water sources and several old home sites where only rock foundations or chimneys remain. A restored church in Little Cataloochee has an interesting cemetery on the ridge slope below. This church is still used for occasional services and family reunions.

Directions: The trailheads are at Palmer Creek, about 1 mile from the end of the paved section of Cataloochee Road at the Cataloochee Horse Camp, and at a signed gate along the gravel Cataloochee-Big Creek Road

5

Little Sam Trail

Length: 4.0 miles **Rating:** Moderate

Start from Black Balsam parking area. Take the Flat Creek Trail out of the southern end of the parking lot. It descends slightly, and then levels out. After approximately one mile, turn right (uphill) on the Little Sam trail. Climb for awhile, and then descend to a stream crossing, and a short, steep uphill climb. Several confusing trails at this junction. Pick one of the two on your right (one's the actual Little Sam Trail; the other's not and is unnamed, but will still get you there). Both of these trails dead-end into the Mountains to Sea Trail. Turn left for a (mostly) gradual ascent. There are a couple of good overlooks just off the right side of the trail. At the junction with Art Loeb Trail, bear left (uphill) for a relatively steep climb. After the trail levels out, you'll pass through a thick forested area and come out at the access road to Black Balsam parking. Follow the road back to the parking area.

Directions: From Asheville, take the Blue Ridge Parkway south. Pass Mt. Pisgah, Pisgah Inn, and junction with US 276. Shortly after you pass Graveyard Fields overlook, turn right on road to Black Balsam parking area. This is also the entrance area to the Shining Rock Wilderness.

3

McKee Branch Trail

Length: 2.4 miles **Rating:** Strenuous

This trail is extremely strenuous and very steep in sections. This creek headwater trail ascends 2.3 miles from Caldwell Fork to Cataloochee Divide, which includes a 1,700-foot climb to the ridge. There are some pretty stands of forest along this trail, but there are no dependable water sources after the second stream crossing.

Directions: Take exit 20 off I-40 (Cove Creek) and travel west on NC 276 turn right on Cove Creek road. Stay on Cove Creek Rd. for 6 miles. This will take you 2 miles beyond park boundary. Turn left on Cataloochee Road, go 3.1 miles. Trail will be on the left.

3

Mt. Sterling Ridge Trail

Length: 1.0 miles **Rating:** Strenuous

This moderate high ridge trail descends 900 hundred feet over 6 miles. The descent is steady from the Mt. Sterling Firetower to Pretty Hollow Gap. The

trail climbs steeply out of the gap and follows the relatively level ridge to Laurel Gap. The campsite near here (Mt. Sterling Campsite #38) is heavily used and there always seems to be a resident bear nearby. The campsite has been recently moved away from the firetower and closer to the water source. If you climb Baxter Creek Trail from Big Creek to Mt. Sterling, the side trail to the water source is about 0.25 miles from the summit.

Directions: On US-276 before it's junction with I-40 (exit 20) in Cove Creek, turn North on Little Cove Rd. (SR-1331). Drive 1.3 miles and turn right on Old NC-284 (SR-1395), also called Cataloochee Rd. Go 1.1 mile up stream from the ranger station.

③ *Pretty Hollow Gap Trail*

Length: 5.0 miles **Rating: Strenuous**

This strenuous creek headwater trail is 5 miles long and rises 2,300 feet, connecting Cataloochee Valley and Mt. Sterling Ridge. The lower end of the trail follows the beautiful Pretty Hollow Creek, which is easily viewed from the old roadway. There is a magnificent stand of huge hemlock at the last crossing (a log bridge), about 3 miles from the trailhead on Cataloochee Road. Local lore say there is a fantastic section of virgin forest up Cook's Creek, but the only trail is a rough fisherman's path. After that last stream crossing, the trail becomes very muddy. There are several 100-yard sections of deep mud that must be conquered before reaching the gap.

Directions: On US-276 before it's junction with I-40 (exit 20) in Cove Creek, turn North on Little Cove Rd. (SR-1331). Drive 1.3 miles and turn right on Old NC-284 (SR-1395), also called Cataloochee Rd. Go 1.1 mile up stream from the ranger station.

Robert Gap Trail

Length: 2.5 miles **Rating: Moderate**

This trail follows old logging roads and offers some views in the winter. Cold Springs Creek Flows through dense woods and grassy fields on its way to the Pigeon River. The forest shows

hints of its past history—farming, logging, narrow gauge railroads, settlements, and signs of recent forest management. The grassy ridges of Max Patch Mountain near the Tennessee state line crown the area. Trails combined with forest service roads to provide loop opportunities.

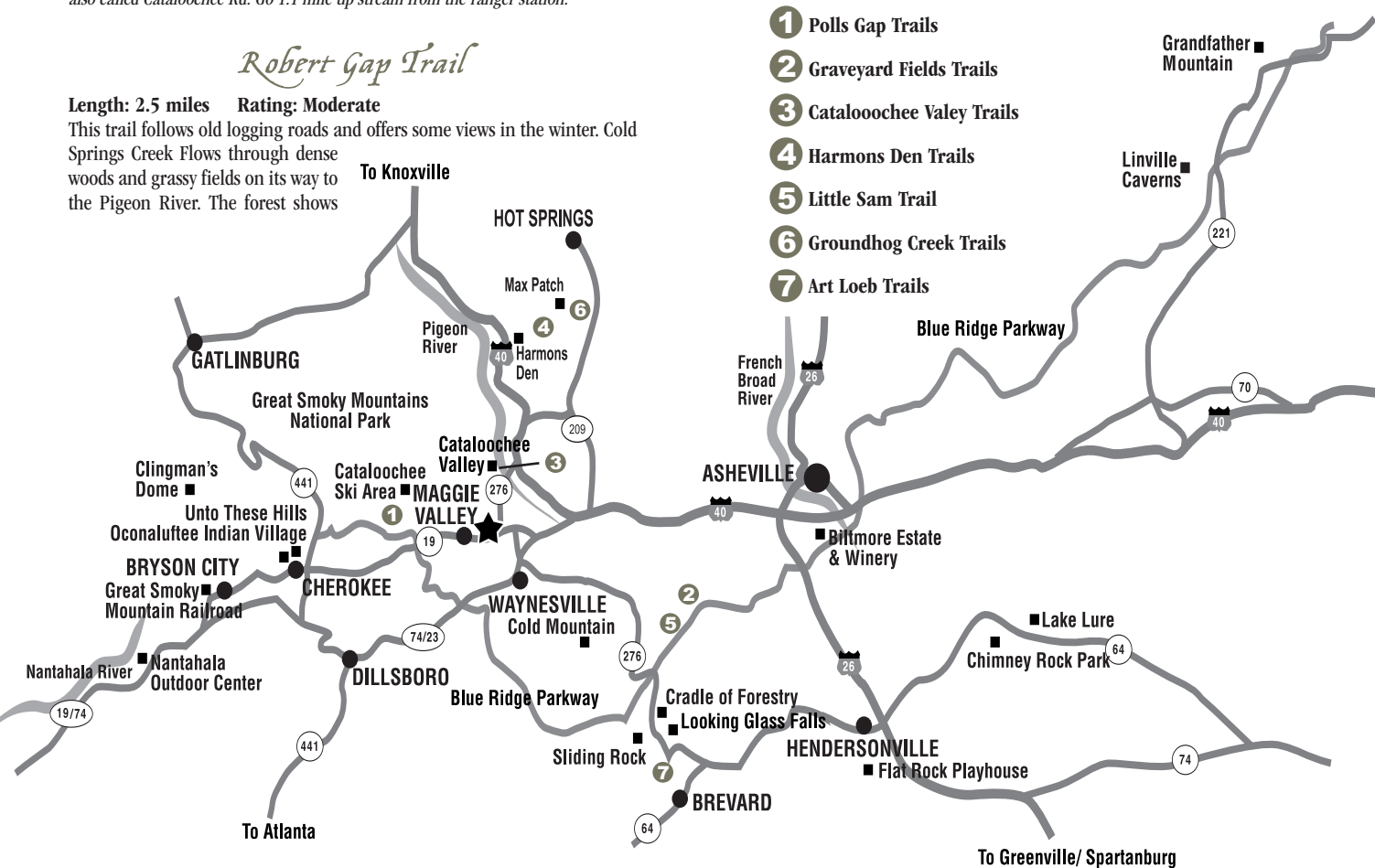
Directions: Take Harmon Den Exit off I-40 near the NC/TN state line. Head northeast on FR 148 (Cold Springs Road) about 3 miles to Harmon Den parking area on the left. Parking for trailers is also available at lower junction of FR 148 and 3526.

④ *Rough Fork Trail*

Length: 6.5 miles **Rating: Easy**

This 6.5-mile lower creek trail begins by following a stream along a gravel road for a couple of miles and then passes several restored farm houses. This trail begins on Caldwell Fork Trail. The middle section of the trail becomes a narrow footpath, travels through impressive forest to a side ridge, and follows a wide railroad grade for several miles to Polls Gap (indicated on older maps as Paul's Gap). The trail near Polls Gap is very gradual and makes a wonderful, short day hike. There is no water after Campsite #40.

Directions: Take exit 20 off I-40 (Cove Creek) and travel west on NC 276 turn right on Cove Creek road. Stay on Cove Creek Rd. for 6 miles. This will take you 2 miles beyond park boundary. Turn left on Cataloochee Road, go 3.1 miles. Trail will be on the left.



- ① Polls Gap Trails
- ② Graveyard Fields Trails
- ③ Cataloochee Valley Trails
- ④ Harmons Den Trails
- ⑤ Little Sam Trail
- ⑥ Groundhog Creek Trails
- ⑦ Art Loeb Trails