



By Fran Wallas GREAT HIKES IN TENNESSEE STATE PARKS

Taken From *The Tennessee Conservationist* JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005 Through JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2010

Department Colleagues and Friends Remember Fran Wallas (1952-2010)

Fran had a lot of friends - friends of all sorts. The legal crew, the hiking crew, the symphony crew, the trail building crew - many circles. I was lucky enough to be on the lunch crew. As attorney for Tennessee State Parks, Fran provided the most unique client - legal counsel relationship in the history of such relationships. She absolutely loved parks, nature, the conservation effort and Tennessee State Parks, in particular. Our best interest was always in her heart and mind. Her passion, coupled with her absolute integrity, made her the ideal lawyer for our organization. She knew what we were about and where we were trying to go. She always did her best to try and help us get there.

Jack Gilpin, Tennessee State Parks



Fran was a Friend of Tennessee State Parks before it was even a concept as an organized group...She was a Friend of the Tennessee Trails Association...The Cumberland Trail Conference...The Tennessee Conservationist and many other entities. On many occasions she and I worked out legalities involving a variety of projects regarding state parks. Her dedication to the preservation of the natural and wilderness areas of our state were constant and unflagging. She promoted the purchase of these natural treasures through many sources and means. Her support and expertise was always available when asked for. Always ready to help and make sure things were done right. She was also my Friend. It's difficult to think of not having Fran as a consultant, source of information, an inspiration, but most of all as my Friend.

Fount Bertram, Friends of Edgar Evins and Tennessee State Parks



I miss Fran every day. She was here when I arrived and here when I went home at night. I've never known so much energy and determination to make things happen. Fran was game for any adventure. She was fearless. She was so petite, but such a big presence. We went to a ranger training program, and while I was headed to bed, she was going out to do night time rappelling. Fran never doubted that she could make a difference in the world, and she did so in so many ways. It is my honor to be her friend.

Kim Kirk, TDEC Office of General Counsel

My favorite memories of Fran are when I would bring my son to the office and she would drop everything and play with him. And it didn't matter how long he stayed! She would teach him about nature and let him play with all the little frogs that she collected. I thank God for the privilege of having known her and being able to call her my friend.

Devin Wells, TDEC Office of General Counsel

January 5, 2011

Our department and the community of explorers lost a sharp legal mind, stalwart champion for state parks and tireless trailbuilder with the death of Fran Wallas in October 2010. In Fran's passing, the Tennessee Conservationist family also lost a dedicated and long-time contributor of appreciated hiking articles. From Jan/Feb 2005 through Nov/Dec 2010, Fran authored a series of Great Hikes articles that shared her favorite Tennessee State Park trail experiences. In response to many requests and in honor of Fran, it is our pleasure to compile all 36 of these trail experiences in a one-time, limited edition printing of Great Hikes in Tennessee State Parks.

Fran received the prestigious 2010 Bob Brown Lifetime Achievement Award from the Tennessee Trails Association posthumously on November 13, 2010, at Paris Landing State Park. I believe this well-deserved honor aptly captured Fran's impact on our state as a champion of its parks and trails; an author guiding visitors to its special places; and a builder of the Cumberland Trail.

Fran had a unique gift for bringing or gently leading others to experience nature. We hope this special issue of Great Hikes will introduce you to new outdoor adventures or remind you of an old friend you can meet back out on the trail.

Jam esH .Fyke

Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation

It is believed that Fran possibly knew every hiking trail in every TN state park. A few years ago my family spent a weekend at a Tennessee State Park, on Saturday afternoon my son and I decided to hike one of the park's trails. With map in hand, we began to follow the marked trail. However, after about an hour it began to dawn on us that we were possibly off the trail and lost. We backtracked as best we could and eventually did make our way back to civilization. When I returned to work the following Monday, I saw Fran and told her about getting lost on a park trail. She asked me which park and which trail, and I told her. She asked "Did you come to a large tree where it was maybe a little bit confusing, like it seemed the trail could lead off to the left, but you went straight instead?" I said I did recall that spot. She said, "Yeah, you should have gone left. The markings are kind of faded, and if anybody gets lost on that trail, that's usually where it happens." It is amazing she was able to tell me exactly where we got lost!

Greg Teeple, TDEC Office of General Counsel

Acknowledgements

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation is grateful for the interest and support received from many individuals and locations during the production of this special issue of Great Hikes. We would like to specifically express our appreciation for the following that made the project possible:

David Wallas, Adam Wallas and Rebecca Arce:
Fran's children

Dr. David Goldenberg: Fran's brother

Louise Zepp, Editor, The Tennessee Conservationist

Jeff Law, Art Director, The Tennessee Conservationist

Douglas Printing

Special thanks to **Shirley Ora** for generously providing many photos of Fran out on the trail. Since 1984, Shirley hiked thousands of miles together with Fran across Tennessee and all over the world.



Intermediate Overnight Loop Trail at Mousetail Landing State Park

Scenic views, a cedar glade, highly visible blue blazes in case of snow, and well-maintained trail shelters make Mousetail Landing State Park's eight-mile Intermediate Overnight Loop Trail perfect for a winter hike.

Mousetail Landing is near Linden on the east bank of the Tennessee River.

The trail offers a challenging backpack trail or a moderate day hike for an experienced hiker.

Dedicated park staff lovingly care for this state park and make everything easy to find. You will notice the carved trailhead sign "Eagle Point Backpacking Trail" on your right along the main park road. Continue a little further to the visitor center/office parking.

Registration is required for overnight camping at either of the two shelters. If you are a day hiker, you may want to register for a river campsite or a wooded campsite at the top of the hill near the park office.

Campgrounds are open year round, but the shower and bathroom buildings are closed in the winter.

Take a "Mountain Bike Trail Map" from the kiosk. The map includes all of the park's biking and hiking trails. Backpackers need to carry lots of water because there is no water at the shelters. You also need to be sure the water is protected so that it does not freeze. The good news is that you can leave your tent at home. The shelters will keep you dry and protected.



Now you are ready to hike from the office to the trailhead to begin your wilderness adventure. You enter Kelly Hollow along a creek. Your first surprise is that this hike has a lot of steep ups and downs through the woods. The next surprise is that you come to broad areas of flat open fields. When you get to a field, just look straight across and you will see the blaze and trail on the other side. Soon you will start seeing some big cedar trees. There in the middle of this West Tennessee forest, you will discover a Middle Tennessee type cedar glade.

In about two miles, you reach the beginning of a loop. The trail to the right leads to shelter one. The trail to the left leads to shelter two. Both shelters are only about a mile from this junction. The wooden shelters are screened and have sleeping platforms for eight people. Shelter two is on a bluff with a scenic view of the Tennessee River. This shelter is a wonderful place to watch sunset. Shelter one is tucked in the woods and gives you a real feel of wilderness. When you are ready to complete the loop, you will enjoy scenic views of the creeks, river, and an occasional white tail of a fleeing deer. Although the last part of the trail is a repeat of the first part, you will have a chance to notice what you missed before. You will complete the hike and start thinking of seven people to invite along the next time.

For information, call the park at 731-847-0841.



The backpacking trail through the cedar glade at Mousetail Landing State Park.

Below, left: A campsite near the Tennessee River at Mousetail Landing State Park.

Directions

The park is about halfway between Nashville and Memphis. If you are coming from the east, take I-40 to exit 143 and go south on Highway 13 to Linden. Turn right and go west on Highway 412 to Highway 438. If you are coming from the west, take I-40 to exit 126 and go south on Highway 69. Turn left on Highway 412 and go east to Highway 438. Now that you have found Highway 438, go about two miles, and you will notice a sign with arrows pointing left to the primitive camping area and boat ramp and an arrow pointing straight ahead to the main park entrance. Day hikers may choose to stop now to select a campsite along the Tennessee River. If you are anxious to begin your hike, don't make that turn and continue until you get to the clearly marked entrance to the state park.

Mousetail Landing State Park



Beginner Backpacking Hike to Horsepound Falls



Horsepound Falls in South Cumberland State Recreation Area near Monteagle. Below: The Collins River in South Cumberland State Recreation Area near Monteagle.

Directions

Finding the trail is part of the fun. Take highway 24 to the Pelham/Winchester exit 127. Follow highway 50 east toward Altamont for about 11 miles as you wind up to the top of the Cumberland Plateau. Make a right turn on highway 108 South and go about 10 miles to the community of Gruetli-Laager. Gruetli and Laager were two communities settled by the Swiss in the 1860s and the city of Gruetli-Laager was formed in 1980, when the two communities joined together. You will notice a grocery store just in case you need some extra goodies for your backpacking trip. You will also notice a dairy bar for an emergency ice cream stop.

After about another mile, you will see a brown sign for "Savage Gulf State Natural Area-Collins Gulf Access" with an arrow pointing to a left turn onto 55th Avenue. Go straight on 55th Avenue for about two miles to the trailhead parking lot. There is a kiosk with trail maps and a place to register for your free campsite. As you face the kiosk, you will see a metal gate to your left at the entrance to the trail.

Horsepound Falls



A hike to Horsepound Falls at the South Cumberland Recreation Area near Monteagle is an adventure rewarded by two waterfalls, an overlook, and a wonderful variety of wildflowers.

You can hike the trail in a day, but you will enjoy it more if you spend the night at West Collins Campground.

West Collins is one of the best beginner backpacking hikes. You reach the campsite in less than a half-mile, but you feel like you are out in the middle of a wilderness. You can drop your pack, set up your tent, and fill up water containers at the spring. If you have forgotten anything essential in the car, you can go back for the needed item. You can even carry in a cooler. Remember, though, that there are no alcoholic beverages allowed in Tennessee State Parks.

Now that you have settled in, you can grab a fanny pack with water and food to start your hike. The trails are well marked with white blazes. Although the campsite is very easy to reach, the hikes are rated moderately strenuous. Some new to hiking may want to rest and enjoy the Rocky Point Overlook at the campground. Other hikers wanting a short hike will choose to go to Suter Falls less than a half-mile from the campground. The trail leads to a beautiful rock bluff overhang beside the triple drop waterfall. The area is a wonderful place to



picnic. Pick a boulder and dangle your feet in the water.

If you want a longer hike, you can wade across Rocky Mountain Creek below the falls and continue on toward Horsepound Falls. The hike to Horsepound Falls is one of the best spring wildflower hikes. When you start winding down towards the Collins River, you will begin to notice the spring flowers. Each week the flowers get better. There are waves of white early spring flowers such as toothwort, chickweed, Spring Beauty and hepatica. The next week you might see the mostly yellow colors of Trout Lily, Dutchman's Breeches and trillium. Later in the spring you will enjoy the purples of Fringed Phacelia.

After you descend to the lower part of the trail, you will have a choice of quiet places by the Collins River. The spur trail to Horsepound Falls is clearly marked and blazed in blue. Horsepound Falls is a good snack or lunch spot with lots of large flat rocks to sit on. If you decide to go less than a half a mile further, you can see Fall Creek cascade down the mountain and completely disappear into a sinkhole.

In order to get back to the Collins West Campground, you need to retrace your hike. You will notice that the hike back is uphill all the way to the campground. You will be ready to rest at camp and watch the sunset from the overlook.



Rock Creek Segment of the Cumberland Trail Offers A Shady Hike for a Hot Day

The chance to see eagles and the endangered plant Large-Flowered Skullcap are among the attractions of a hike along the Rock Creek Segment of the Cumberland Trail.

The hike begins on a paved handicapped accessible trail at the parking lot. You will soon come to a sign with many hiking options. Choose the hike that works the best for you depending on when you want to eat, whether you want to play in the creek, or how far you want to hike. The best picnic areas are the Rock Creek Overlook, the Leggett Point Overlook, and shady spots beside Rock Creek.

For a pleasant six-mile day hike, take the connector trail to the Rock Creek Loop. The trail is marked with white blazes. You can listen to Rock Creek most of the hike. If you come back in the winter, you can see the creek most of the hike.

The connector trail ends at the loop trail in 1.2 miles. The sign says "Cumberland Trail" with arrows pointing to the right and left. Take the trail to the left to continue hiking in Rock Creek gorge. There are several chances to explore the creek, cool your feet, and enjoy a scenic snack. In about a mile, you will come to a long bridge made out of natural trees. If your stomach is growling at this point, you may want to go across the bridge to take a short detour to Rock Creek Overlook. If you can wait for an even better

3

lunch spot, don't cross the bridge and continue on the Rock Creek loop. You will climb out of the gorge on a series of switchbacks with beautiful rock outcroppings. At the top, turn right. A short walk brings you to another sign leading you to the Leggett Point Overlook. This side trail has yellow blazes and ends at the overlook in two-tenths of a mile. You may be lucky enough to see the rhododendrons in bloom all along the way. Take time to enjoy the beauty of this special place. You may even see a pair of eagles.

When you get back to the main trail, turn right, and hike about 1.4 miles to complete the loop. As you hike back down into the gorge, keep a lookout for an endangered species of plant called Large-Flowered Skullcap. Contrary to its name, this perennial herb in the mint family has very small but elaborate purple flowers. The trail had to be rerouted to protect these plants. When you finish the loop, you should recognize the sign and turn left on the connector trail back to the lower Leggett parking lot.

Volunteers built this wonderful trail. If you would like to help build connecting trails, sign up for the "Big Dig." You can volunteer as much or as little as you would like from May 22nd- June 25th. No experience is necessary. Detailed information is available on the Cumberland Trail Conference Web site www.cumberlandtrail.org/.

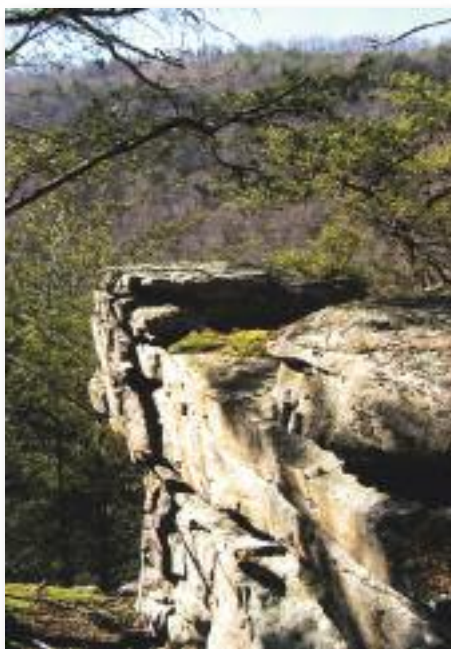


A scene of Rock Creek, next to the trail. There's nothing like cold water on a hot day.



Volunteers Bill Leiper, second from right, and Veronica Greear, right, help build the Cumberland Trail.

Below, left: Leggett Point Overlook is a perfect lunch spot. Below, right: Large Flowered-Skullcap blooms in May. A population of the flower was protected when land was purchased for the Cumberland Trail.



Directions

Directions to the Rock Creek trailhead: From Hwy 40 take Hwy 111 South to Hwy 27 and go east towards Dayton to the town of Sale Creek about 6.2 miles to Leggett Road. Turn left on Leggett Road, a tiny intersection. (You may want to ask for directions to Leggett Road at a service station in Sale Creek.) Drive about 1.6 miles to a paved drive on the left that leads to a large paved parking lot. You will see the sign for the Rock Creek Segment of the Cumberland Trail.

Rock Creek Segment
of the Cumberland Trail



Fall Creek Falls Cable Trail - The Shortest Hard Hike



Above: The start of the Cable Trail at Fall Creek Falls State Park sends you over the edge into the rhododendron. Right: Hiking up the Cable Trail is a different experience than the hike down.

The Cable Trail at Fall Creek Falls State Park near Pikeville is a wonderful summer hike. Rhododendrons shade the whole way. There is no poison ivy, and at the end of your hike is the cool stream.

This trail also offers a chance to see if you are part mountain goat. Have you ever wondered if you would like

4

rock climbing? Now is your chance to find out. At the beginning of the trail, you get the feeling of going over the edge as you hang on to the cable and begin lowering yourself from rock to rock. It is an adventure as you go from one side of the cable to the other carefully choosing your way down. The hike down and back is less than half a mile.

Although this hike is short, you may want to allow several hours to fully enjoy it.

Once at the bottom, there are many places to explore. You may want to choose a rock nearby for that perfect picnic. Take off your shoes and cool your feet in the creek. For a special treat, bring a book, and read to the sound of the waterfall.

If you enjoy rock hopping, try winding your way down the side of the stream. Before you wander downstream, be sure to pile some rocks or leave a piece of clothing to help you find the trail when you return. In late summer, you may see the trees on the bluff above just beginning to turn their fall colors.

The hike up is a totally different experience from the hike down. You will get to know the rocks really well as you look for footholds and knobs to grab onto. When you reach the top, you will want to take one more look back. Yes, you really did it.



A look down to the end of the Cable Trail at Fall Creek Falls State Park.

Directions

From Nashville take I-40 to exit 288 and take Highway 111 South until you get to Spencer. Turn left on Highway 284 East and follow the signs to Fall Creek Falls State Park. From Knoxville, take I-40 to Crossville to exit 322 Peavine Road. Take a left off of the exit and turn right at the light on Highway 101. Take Highway 101 to Highway 30. Turn right on Highway 30. Drive until you get to the entrance to the park on the left. Once you have reached the park, follow the signs to the nature center and park in the picnic area. Trail maps are available at the nature center and at the inn.

You may want to start off your hike by walking towards the Nature Center, but taking the first walkway to the right. At the end of the walkway is a beautiful overlook. There is one, and if you are lucky, two waterfalls depending on flow. Way down at the bottom beside the creek, you will see your hike destination. To get to the trailhead, walk back to Highway 284 and turn left walking past the sign that says, "to 30. A short way up the road, you will see the Cable Trail on your left.

Fall Creek Falls State Park



Big Ridge State Park - A Haunted Hike For the Halloween Season

In Maynardville, a trail in Big Ridge State Park offers something for the Halloween season as it passes a reportedly haunted area. Ranger-led programs through the month of October feature spooky topics.

This five mile moderately difficult hike begins on the Lake Trail. There are two side trails on this first half-mile stretch. You will only want to take the steep climb to the Loyston Overlook if the leaves have fallen so that you can get a view of the lake. Otherwise stay on the main trail to the dam built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the late 1930s. You may want to stop here to enjoy the view of the lake and the fall colors. Although this was once farmland, the area has become a forest of oak and hickory. If you return in the winter, you may see Golden and Bald Eagles and migrating waterfowl.

After you cross the dam, turn to your right and continue on the Lake Trail. At the junction of the Lake Trail and Ghost House Loop, turn left and then bear to your right. The eastern arm of Ghost House Loop will take you to Norton Cemetery. You will find the sunken grave of Maston Hutchinson, who fought in the Civil War. Supposedly his home was haunted, and people have heard eerie sounds in the area. You may want to go to a ranger program to hear about the strange occurrences. These



programs are offered every Friday and Saturday night in October except for Halloween. Call the park office for details.

Continue past the cemetery, and a short connector trail will lead you from Ghost House Loop to Big Valley Trail, which is blazed in red. To complete the loop, turn left onto Big Valley, then turn left on Dark Hollow West Trail.

The Dark Hollow West Trail is now a path, but used to be a county road. You can still see areas of old homesites. Before 1934 when TVA purchased the land, there were 95 houses, two schools and six churches within the park boundary. For those who like to backpack, enjoy the backcountry campsite on your right. Two other backcountry campsites are also available, but you need to check on the condition of the trails. You can tell your own ghost stories and listen for Hutchinson's horses riding down the road.

Be sure to bring lots of water because the water source dries up during parts of the year. The trail crosses a bridge and stays along the edge of the lake back to the dam. Turn right, cross the dam, and follow the trail back to the parking lot.

For those who would like to take a longer steeper hike, from the intersection of Big Valley Trail and Dark Hollow continue up Big Valley Trail all the way to Indian Rock. This side trip adds about

Luke Ashkins



The Norton Cemetery is one of three historic cemeteries you pass on a hike on the Lake Trail and Ghost House Loop in Big Ridge State Park in Maynardville. Below: Trails in Big Ridge State Park wind through hardwood forests. If you miss the fall colors, you will get to see the spectacular views through the winter.

3.5 miles to your hike. Settlers used this route to take their corn to the Norton Mill. The trail runs along the top of Big Ridge. There are views in both directions and wonderful fall colors. There are also the remains of settlements from the 1800s and some very large oak trees. You need to backtrack to the Dark Hollow West junction.

For information, call the Big Ridge State Park office at 1-800-471-5305.

Directions

Directions to the Big Ridge trailhead: take Highway 75 to exit 122. Take Highway 61 east. The brown state park signs will lead you to the park entrance on the left. Follow the signs to the office where you can pick up a trail map. Because of the pine beetle damage, you will need to check at the office about the condition of the trails. The office parking lot is a good place to leave your car for the day. Walk past the ball field to the end of the parking lot and follow the road to the left. You will see the trailhead on your right.

Big Ridge State Park



Geri Reynolds



Wetlands, Wilderness and Wildlife at Big Hill Pond

Fran Wallas



Beech Trees, like this one along the trail at Big Hill Pond State Park in Pocahontas, are among the last to lose their leaves in fall.

At Big Hill Pond State Park in Pocahontas, you don't have to hike very far from your car to sense that you are in a very special place.

This is a park where you can find solitude and the feel of wilderness. When you explore the wetlands you may be lucky enough to spot an otter, muskrat, or mink. You will also see migrating birds in the late fall or early winter. The trail begins at the edge of the Travis McNatt Lake. Begin the hike on the trail to the right. This hike is about five miles and is perfect for a short winter day.

The trail follows the lake with scenic views all along the way and crosses a short boardwalk area on your left. Follow the trail blazes along the other side of the lake until you get to a trail sign leading to the Grassy Point shelter. This is a short detour. Depending on the time of day, you may want to stop here for a snack, lunch, or stay in the shelter for the night. The shelter sleeps six people.

Back track to the trail and turn left. Continue on the trail until you get to an old roadbed/horse trail. There are both white and red blazes on the trees. Turn left and follow the road until you get to a site with signs that give you several choices. One sign leads to the tower and the other sign leads "Back to Dam." This is a good place to sit with your friends to

6

decide which way to go or to wait for friends who decide to hike to the tower. The 70-foot tower is well worth a side trip if you want to get a bird's eye view of the whole area. The hike to the dam goes across the levee with scenic views down the length of the lake.

After crossing the levee, hike up the steep hill to a gate and gravel parking. Turn left on the trail that is just behind the gate. The trail winds for several miles through the woods. Follow the blazes until you come to a beautiful bridge. Cross the bridge and turn left to get back to the starting point of your hike. Check with the ranger and trail map to see how to extend the hike to make a larger loop. If you have more time and energy, you will especially want to add the Dismal Swamp section to your hike.

Fran Wallas



Dismal Swamp at Big Hill Pond State Park in Pocahontas.
Below: Travis McNatt Lake at Big Hill Pond State Park.

Directions

Take Highway 40 to Jackson and follow Highway 45 south toward Corinth. Be careful to follow all of the Highway 45 twists and turns. When you reach the town of Eastview, turn right, and go west on Highway 57 about 10 miles to the entrance of the park. Drive straight on the park entrance road until the road ends at the lake. The trail begins at the lake edge to your right and left. Trail maps are available at the park office.

Big Hill Pond State Park



Fran Wallas



Pickett State Park's Hidden Passage Trail is a Wonderful Winter Trek

When most of Tennessee has lost its greenery, in Jamestown, Pickett State Parks' Hidden Passage Trail is lined with the green of laurel, huckleberry, teaberry, and rhododendron.

There aren't enough adjectives to describe the beauty of this Civilian Conservation Corps built 10-mile loop trail that winds through Pickett State Park and State Forest.

The trail starts at the Sheltoewe Trace sign. Hidden Passage Trail is the southern end of the Sheltoewe Trace National Recreation Trail that runs 278 miles through Kentucky's Red River Gorge. Follow the trail until you come to a split. Don't take the left turn to the group camp. Continue straight ahead following the Hidden Passage sign and the blazes that are either green metal diamonds or green rounds with a silver hiker.

The first fun stop is a bench built in a sandstone hollow not big enough to be called a cave or rock house. You may want to keep hiking until you get to the grand rock houses further along the trail. The rock houses are great shelters from the wind on a cold day. Just at the bench the trail turns right. Further along, you will notice a side trail on your right to Crystal Falls. The side trail is short and steep so be careful if the rocks are iced over. The falls are beautiful anytime of the year so you may want to wait for the thaw.

This bench built in a sandstone hollow is one of the stops along the Hidden Passage Trail in Pickett State Park in Jamestown.



Each time the trail disappears into a rock house, you will follow it until it leaves the rock house on your right. There are two well-marked spur trails for interesting short side trips. One goes to double falls and one goes to an old railroad tunnel that is now closed for safety reasons. Because winter days are short and the trail is long, you may want to save the spur trails for another day.

About half way around the loop you come to the Thompson Overlook. This large sandstone bluff is a great place to enjoy the views in all directions. It is easy to take a wrong turn at this point. Don't start hiking up the dirt road. The trail stays near the bluff and reenters the woods. If you do turn up the road, you will immediately come to a small wood sign that says, "trail." The arrow will point back behind you. Turn around and look for the green diamond blaze.

The trail winds through the woods and leads to an open area under power lines. Walk directly across the open grassy area under the power lines until you get to the continuation of the trail on the other side. The trail eventually comes to a junction with a road and a sign leading left to Rock Creek. Instead you will turn to your right and follow the gravel road past the volleyball net in the group camp. The gravel road ends in a paved road that goes behind the group camp buildings. Continue until you get to a Hidden Pas-



Along the Hidden Passage Trail at Pickett State Park in Jamestown, Crystal Falls is seen in the snow.

sage sign pointing left. You may think that you have passed the scenic part of the trail, but there are still some beautiful rock walls. You even cross a very tiny natural bridge. The trail dead ends back at the sign leading to group camp that you saw when you started your hike. Turn right and follow the trail back to the parking lot. Before you reach the car, you will be planning a return trip in the spring to see the wildflowers and the spur trails that you missed.

Directions

Directions to the Hidden Passage trailhead: Take I-40 to Crossville exit 317. Follow Highway 127 north for 46 miles. Turn right on HWY 154 and go 12 miles to the park entrance. The park office has trail maps. Park campgrounds are open all year. If you want to backpack, you must get a free permit from the park office. In winter, this trail is rated moderate because of the cold, length of trail and possible slippery conditions. The trailhead is a little north of the park office on highway 154. You will see the small parking lot on your right.

Pickett State Park



Radnor Lake State Natural Area Offers an Easy Hike for People Wild About Wildflowers



Fran Wallas

Larkspur decorates the trail for spring at Radnor Lake State Natural Area in Nashville. Below right: These geese were seen on a log at Radnor Lake State Natural Area in Nashville.

Many people love to see Radnor Lake State Natural Area's spring wildflower show in Nashville. If you don't mind sharing the hike with others, you can begin your hike at any time. If you want to have some quiet time in the woods, you may want to come early in the morning or on a beautiful rainy day.

Begin your hike at the visitor center to get a trail map and learn about the history of the natural area. Park rangers can tell you which flowers are blooming and where to find them. The side door of the visitor center leads to the Spillway Trail. You will forget that you are in the middle of a city and feel like you are in a wilderness. In a quarter of a mile, you will see the spillway and lake built in 1914. The spillway is a good place to watch the geese, find turtles, or glimpse the shadows of few big fish. Follow the fairly level Lake Trail and you will begin to see more flowers and maybe a few deer. You may want to stop at one of the benches to listen to the birds. More than 200 different birds have been identified in the area. You can frequently hear the call of a Barred Owl and can see them even in the daytime. This is a good hike to be enjoyed slowly.

8

You will come to a junction with the Ganier Ridge Trail. Since most of the flowers are at the lake level, you may want to save that loop for the winter view. The larkspur are magnificent in the area beginning just after the junction. If you are too early or too late for the larkspur, you may see Spring Beauty, Rue Anemone, Hepatica, Toothwort, Wild Geranium, or Trout Lily. The lake trail ends at Otter Creek Road in about one and a half miles.

Turn right at the road and hike back toward the visitor center. Although you won't see many flowers on this part of the hike, you will pass several wetland areas. This is your chance to see many turtles including sliders, Snapping Turtles, soft-shelled turtles and Mud Turtles. If you are really lucky, you will see the otters and muskrat that live in the area.

As you walk down the road, you will pass a trailhead on your left for the South Lake Trail. This trail is more of a climb, but has trillium, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Celandine Poppies as well as more larkspur. You may want to take this detour that is only a mile. The South Lake Trail climbs the hill and loops back down to the road. In any case, the road leads you back to the visitor center parking lot and you are back in the middle of a big city.

Directions

Take I 65 to Harding Place, Exit 78. Travel west on Harding Place (or Battery Lane) to Granny White Pike. Turn left and travel south to Otter Creek Road and turn left (across from Granny White Market). The road ends at the parking lot.

Radnor Lake State Natural Area



Fran Wallas

Frozen Head State Natural Area Offers an Overnight Hike With Scenic Detours

Waterfalls and over 30 species of wildflowers blooming in May and June are among the highlights of a hike on the eight mile loop trail at Frozen Head State Natural Area in Wartburg.

You can do this hike as a strenuous day hike, but backpacking gives you more time to enjoy the beautiful detours. If you are backpacking, stop at the visitor center to fill out a free backcountry permit. Park staff have trail maps and helpful information about wildlife and wildflowers.

When you leave the visitor center, turn right and drive along the park road until it ends at the trailhead parking lot. The Panther Branch trail begins on an old logging road. As you follow the blue blazes, you will see over 30 species of wildflowers that bloom in May and June. Surveys have identified over 144 species of wildflowers in the natural area. There are also waterfalls on both sides of the trail.

The first detour is to DeBord Falls. Follow the loop trail to the overlook and then follow the trail down to the waterfall. This is one of the best places to have a snack and cool your feet.

Further along Panther Branch Trail, you come to a junction. Keep hiking straight ahead to take the half-mile detour to Emory Gap Falls. This waterfall is much steeper than DeBord Falls. Leave time to savor this site. There are enough big rocks for just the right picnic or resting spot. This cove and Panther Branch Cove are

9

the richest in botanical diversity.

When you are ready to continue the hike, take the trail back to the junction, turn left and follow the blue blazes across the bridge. You begin climbing up Old Mac Mountain. Panther Branch runs besides the trail with scenic cascades, drops and pools. The trail winds through the woods and meets North Old Mac Trail. Turn left and follow the red blazes another mile to another logging road.

Just ahead of you, you will see a sign for the Panther Gap Rock House. You probably are ready to rest anyway so take a side trip down to this grand rock house. If you hiked at a leisurely rate, the sun is probably starting to go down. Climb back up to the logging road and turn left up Frozen Head Mountain to the Tubb Springs campsite. The Civilian Conservation Corps built the stone springhouse and fire-place at the campsite in the 1930s. Water is available year round but needs to be filtered or treated. It's a good idea to hang your pack to keep the mice out.

In the morning, you may want to hike to the fire tower. At the time of this article, the tower is closed for repairs, but the tower site has good views of the surrounding area. To return, take the South Old Mac Trail that is blazed in yellow. The trailhead is just across from the Tubbs Spring campsite. You will cross many seeps so be sure to wear waterproof boots and be careful on the slick rocks.



Mountain Laurel in bloom at Frozen Head State Natural Area in Wartburg. Below, left: A hiker stops at DeBord Falls in Frozen Head State Natural Area in Wartburg.

When you come to the junction with Judge Branch Trail, don't turn left. Continue straight, following the yellow blazes. The trail ends at another logging road. Turn right and follow the logging road. There are many tempting trails that cut off on the right and left. Keep straight on the road until you come to a parking lot and trailhead restroom—a welcome sight. The restroom has a hot shower. Continue to the paved park road and turn right. You have less than a mile to road hike back to your car.

If you enjoyed the hike, you may want to come back on the third Thursday of each month to help build and maintain the trails. You don't need any experience or special tools, just a love for Frozen Head. For information call 423-346-3318.

Directions

Directions to Frozen Head: From Harri-man, take Hwy 27 North to Wartburg. Turn right on Highway 62. Go two miles and turn left on Flat Fork Road. In four miles you will be at the park entrance.

Frozen Head State Park



Fran Wallis

Buggytop Cave—A Cool Hike for a Hot Day



This steep downhill trail leads to Buggytop Cave in the Carter Natural Area in South Cumberland State Park. Right: Cumberland Rosinweed is an endangered plant you might see as you hike on Buggytop Trail in the Carter Natural Area in South Cumberland State Park. Below Right: The entrance to South Cumberland State Park's Buggytop Cave in the Carter Natural Area.

Buggytop Trail in the Carter Natural Area, a 375-acre natural area located in Franklin County in South Cumberland State Park, is a strenuous five-mile hike.

There are some steep ups and downs and an exciting loop through a cave. If you are not an experienced caver, you will enjoy taking a ranger led cave trip for your first visit.

The hike begins with a short steep climb through the woods. The well marked trail winds around some interesting boulders that make good resting spots. The trail levels, and you begin to see summer wildflowers. Hike past the kiosk that has a map of the trail.

When you get to more open sunny spots, you may be lucky to find the rare Cumberland Rosinweed in bloom as well as the Eggert's Sunflower. Watch for lizards sunning themselves on the rocks. In about a mile and a half, the trail splits and you will take the trail to the right. The trail takes a steep climb down as it skirts a rock wall. At the bottom is a cool stream running out of the grand cave entrance shaped like a buggy top.

If you don't want to go through the cave, you can stop beside the stream. This is a great picnic and play spot. You can then return the way you came.

For the more adventurous, follow the ranger into the cave. You will need flashlights, sturdy hiking shoes, jacket

10

and a hard hat if you have one.

When your eyes adjust to the dark, shine your flashlight at the roof of the cave to see it sparkle.

The hike is sometimes a crawl through the winding passages and across several wet areas.

At the other end of the cave is another main entrance called Peter Cave. After this adventure, you will continue along the loop to a large bluff overlook. You are standing above the Buggytop Cave entrance and you'll get a view of the whole valley. This is a good time to soak up the summer heat that now feels great. Just past the bluff, you will get to the trail junction that leads left to Buggytop Cave. Unless you want to take the whole hike again, you will continue straight ahead, back to the parking lot.



Jason Reynolds

Directions

Take exit 134 off I-24 and turn towards Sevierville. Turn left on Highway 56 and go approximately six miles to the parking area on the left. Look for the Carter Natural Area sign. Buggytop Trail begins at the parking lot. Trail maps and the schedule of ranger led cave trips are available from the South Cumberland State Park visitor center in Monteagle. You may want to call the visitor center at 931-924-2956 to find out more information on cave trips.

Carter Natural Area



Allen Reynolds

Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park – A Colorful Woodland Loop

A hike at Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park in Eva is a high point. Literally. The park is home to Pilot Knob, the highest point in West Tennessee, used in navigation by early riverboat pilots.



The best place to begin a hike at Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park is at the visitor center. Park staff members have prepared trail maps that are color coded for the three, five, 10, and 20 mile hikes. The colors on the map match the blazes on the trails. The five-mile hike, outlined in orange, is a perfect introduction to the beauties of the park.

To get to the trailhead, drive through the park to the end of the road at the Tennessee River Folklife Interpretive Center parking lot. You will want to spend time at the folklife center to learn about the history of the area, see some of the wildlife, and enjoy the views of Kentucky Lake. The center is also a good place to bird watch since Bald Eagles have been spotted there as well as other migratory birds. You will learn about life on the river and mussel diving. The center is also a good place to fill up your water bottles and buy a few peppermint sticks.

The trail starts behind the center. Follow the orange blazes. Since the beginning of the five-mile trail is also the beginning of the other trails, you will see several different colored blazes along the way. The first half-mile is along the ridge top with views of the lake and the fall colors. There are

many blueberry bushes on both sides of the trail.

The trail descends steeply. You enter a shady hollow where Paw Paws thrive. There are several small creek crossings, but the water is usually shallow. You soon come to the trail junction where the three-mile trail splits off to your left. A little way past this split, the trail begins to climb up to the top of a large hill. There is an overnight shelter and a campsite at the top. This site is a good place to have a snack or lunch, but there is no water available.

Continue on the trail until you get to the next trail junction. The five-mile trail turns to the left on an old roadbed. Al-

though roadbeds aren't as scenic, they are great if you are with a group. You can enjoy talking with your hiking buddies without going single file. The trail goes over gently rolling terrain and ends at another roadbed. Turn left and follow the trail until you get to a gate and old cabin. Turn left on the roadbed. The trail leads you back to the park road. You can take the road or the trail up to the parking lot. You may want to plan your hike so that you can go to the Folklife Festival in September or attend one of the many ranger programs in the park.

For more information, call the Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park office at 731-584-6356 or visit www.tnstateparks.com/NBForrest.



Travis Stover

Kentucky Lake, seen from Pilot Knob in Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park.

Below left: The five-mile trail in the hollow at Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park.



Travis Stover

Directions

Directions to Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park: Take I-40 to Exit 126 and travel north on Highway 641 for 15 miles to Camden. Do not take the Highway 70 By-pass. Continue instead to the traffic light and turn right on Highway 70 East. Follow the signs to the park.

Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park



Montgomery Bell State Park ~ A Six-Mile Overnight Hike For Beginners of All Ages



Hiker Shirley Ora and Rosie at the Wildcat Shelter at Montgomery Bell State Park.
Below right: The beginning of Creech Hollow Lake at Montgomery Bell State Park.

Montgomery Bell State Park in Burns was one of three parks that were built as recreation demonstration areas by the federal government in the 1930s.

Before you start your hike, notice the small building built by the Works Project Administration in 1936. This building was the original park information office. The yellow stone was quarried on the park.

As you climb the hill at the beginning of the hike, you will see that there are three shelters and the possibility of an 11-mile loop. Wildcat Shelter is the easiest to reach and is only three miles away. You won't need to wear yourself out with a heavy pack. You only need food for one night, camp stove and matches, warm sleeping bag and pad, rain gear, water bottle and flashlight.

The trail climbs to a wooded ridge above a creek. The white blazes are easy to follow as the trail winds along the ridge through the hardwood forest. The trail then drops down and follows a stream. There are a few shallow stream crossings. The Wildcat Shelter is next to the stream so there is plenty of water to use as long as you filter or purify it. The shelter has six bunk platforms built in for your sleeping bags. Winter nights are a great time to stargaze. Although Montgomery Bell is near a populated area, there is not much light pollution. You have the sense of being tucked away in distant woods. Children will be able to experience a bit of wilderness.

12

In the morning, continue your hike crossing the stream a few more times. Watch the blazes. It is easy to miss the second stream crossing.

The trail climbs a steep hill and comes out at a road. Cross the road and follow the trail sign leading you up the road to your left.

The trail continues on an old logging road on your right near a gate. This isn't as confusing as it sounds. Follow the logging road and the blazes for about half a mile. There are several dirt roads and trails leading to your right. Don't turn on any of these. You will come to a clearly marked "M.B. Trail" sign where you need to turn off to the right. The trail becomes fairly level and easy to follow.

You will come to a trail junction with another large trail sign listing several possibilities. The shortest route back is 2.7 miles to the parking area. You begin to see Creech Hollow Lake peeking out through the trees. The trail leads to a grassy knoll beside the lake where you can relax and have a snack. Walk through the grass along the edge of the lake until you get back to the woods and the reassuring blazes.

Before you get to the end of the hike, you will come out near the park's visitor center. The easiest way back to your car is to take the road past the visitor center back to the old park office parking lot. If you want to hike a little more and are interested in the history of the park, stop by the visitor center to ask about other short hikes to historic sites in the area.

Directions

Take I-40 West to Exit 182 (Fairview/Dickson Highway 96). Turn left (West) onto Highway 96 and take it until it ends at Highway 70. Turn right on Highway 70 and go about three miles. The park entrance is on the right.

As soon as you enter the park you will see a small building on the left side of the road. Turn left into the parking lot beside the building. The Montgomery Bell trailhead is on the hill next to the parking lot. Trail maps are available for sale at the park office just down the road. Overnight hikers must register at the park office. You can call ahead in order to get your permit and be sure the shelter is available. The phone number is 615-797-9051.

Montgomery Bell State Park



Three Ways to Hike The Perfect Winter Trail at Long Hunter State Park

This hike at Long Hunter State Park in Hermitage is the best on a winter day. The trail is well marked and easy to find even in the snow. The leaves are gone so you get lots of views of J. Percy Priest Lake. Winter is a quieter time with fewer motor-boats and less noise on the lake.

The trail starts at the parking lot. You will want to take a trail map from the box at the trailhead. If you are a strong hiker trying to speed up your heart rate, you may choose to go to the campground and back as a 12-mile day hike. If you want to slow down and spend a few days in this beautiful park, you may choose to do an overnight hike. The trail to the campground is an easy six-mile hike. The campsites are tucked beside the lake on a wooded hillside. Water is always available, but you need to purify it. You have to get a free camping permit from the park office before beginning your hike. The camping sites are available on a first come basis.

To really enjoy the beauty of the area, you may want to take the four-mile Day Loop Trail that is part of the longer trail. The hike begins as a wide gravel path. Keep a lookout for the wooden footbridge on your right a little further down the path. The footbridge is the start of the Volunteer Trail/Day Loop Trail. Follow the white blazes. You are rewarded quickly with views of the lake. The dirt path leads through and around Ordovician limestone outcroppings. These rocks

13

were deposited when Middle Tennessee was a shallow sea. If you look carefully, you may find fossils of marine life. Common fossils found in these formations include brachiopods, bryzoans, gastropods, and occasionally you may even find parts of a trilobite.

In less than a mile you get to the junction of the Volunteer Trail and the Day Loop Trail. Turn left on the Day Loop Trail. The blazes are now orange and really show up on a snowy day. The trail goes through some sinkholes that are typical of karst topography. At about two miles, you get to a bench right at the lake. This is a great spot to watch for migrating birds, read, think, snack, or rest. You will cross some scenic limestone bluffs along the way. The trail begins to curve and follows the side of a cove.

In about 2.5 miles, you get to the junction with the Volunteer Trail. You will see a kiosk and another bench on your left. If you are ready to end your hike, you will go right instead. The trail sign says "Trail Head" with an arrow pointing the way. The trail is now blazed in white since you have rejoined the Volunteer Trail. Watch for an old stone wall that goes right across the path. You will wind through an oak-hickory forest and pass some interesting rock formations. When you get to the Day Loop/Volunteer junction, go straight unless you want to hike the loop all over again. Remember to turn left at the gravel path to return to the parking lot.



April Weich

The Day Use Trail at Long Hunter State Park in Hermitage offers a spot to sit and enjoy nature. Below, left: Limestone outcroppings are seen along the Day Loop Trail at Long Hunter State Park in Hermitage.

Are you wondering why this trail is called the Volunteer Trail? This trail exists because scouts, school groups, individuals and organizations volunteered many hours to build this trail. If you are interested in helping to maintain a park trail, please contact the state park office at 615-885-2422.



Fran Wallis

Directions

Directions to Long Hunter State Park Trailhead: Take I-40 to the Mount Juliet Exit/Highway 171. Follow Highway 171 south toward Long Hunter State Park - almost six miles - to a small sign for Bakers Grove "Volunteer Trail." Turn right and go a very short distance to the end of the road. Turn left and the road dead ends at the parking lot.

Long Hunter State Park



The Lake Trail's in Bloom at Standing Stone



Spring wildflowers, like this Red Trillium, can be seen along the trail at Standing Stone State Park.



A view along the trail at Standing Stone State Park.

Spring flowers, historic buildings, and a chance you might see eagles and hawks are among what draws folks to hike Standing Stone State Park's Lake Trail in Hilham.

To start the hike, cross the road in front of the office. There is a sign leading you to the Lake Trail. Hike a few switchbacks below the Park Tea Room/Nature Center Building down the steep hill to the road. Walk down the road to the large picnic shelter. The shelter is surrounded by blooming redbuds. Cross the long suspension bridge over Mill Creek. The bridge gives a closer view of the dam built by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. Standing Stone State Park is on the National Register of Historic Places because of the WPA projects such as the cabins, boathouses, and group lodge.

After crossing the bridge, the trail climbs steeply up wooden steps. Follow the white blazes and green hiker medals. The trail flattens out just when you are ready to stop climbing. In early spring before the trees leaf out, you will get scenic views of the dam and picnic shelter far below. Any of these overlooks make a good water and snack break. Eagles, Ospreys, Sharp-shinned Hawks, and Cooper's Hawks have been spotted in the park. Any hikers who are also birders will enjoy watching and listening along the way. The trail goes through some dead pine trees that have been cleared from the path. Although these are not pretty, they provide good wildlife habitat.

When you get to the road, you will see a representation of the Moses Fisk house. Moses Fisk was an early Overton County educator and founder of Hilham, Tenn. The town of Celina is named after his daughter. The trail begins to descend through a beech oak forest. As you climb up and down the hills, you will cross several seeps that can turn into beautiful waterfalls with enough rain. There are patches of Hepatica along the way. At the next road, turn to your left and go across the bridge. The trail starts again on the right just after the bridge.

14

The trail begins a long steady climb up to the crest of the hill. There is a great view of the lake curving below. At the end of the downside of the hill, there is a picnic table waiting for you. As you enjoy your lunch or short

break, look at the Overton Lodge across the water. You will need to hike along the road to the lodge to continue the hike.

After you go around the Overton Lodge, walk past the Cooper Mountain Loop trail going off on the right. Stay straight on the Lake Trail that is also part of the Cooper Mountain Trail. You will see both blue and white blazes on the trees. There is a WPA boathouse across the water. Follow the trail about a mile along a branch of the lake until you get to a long footbridge on your left. Cross the bridge and follow the blazes to the next creek crossing that may require wading. You are entering a wildflower haven.

In about a quarter of a mile, you come to a sign that says "To Overton Lodge 2.5 miles; To Dam, 1 mile." Since you don't want to go to either of those places again, turn right and follow the trail up the wooden steps to another sign. This sign gives you the choice of going to the cabin area or to the rec hall. You will eventually want to take the trail toward the rec hall, but now is the time to take a detour towards the cabins.

The highpoint of the hike is the flowered hillside below the cabins. This is the "ooh ah" part of the trail. Depending on when you hike, you may see Trout Lily, Shooting Stars, trillium, hepatica, some leftover Bloodroot, larkspur, and Twinleaf.

When you have had enough flowers, if there is such a time, turn back and follow the trail towards the rec hall. The trail climbs up one last hill and around the guardrail at the park road. Turn left and follow the road back to your car. You should reach your car just as your water, snacks, and energy run out. You may want to come back another time for a ranger-led wildflower hike to find out about the ones you can't identify.

Directions

Take I-40 to Exit 288 (The Livingston/Sparta Exit). Take Highway 111 north to Livingston. Turn left on Highway 52 west to the state park sign. Turn left on Highway 136. The best place to leave your car is at the park office. Park staff can give you trail maps and flower lists. The 4.8 mile Lake Trail is moderately strenuous because of the steep changes in elevation.

Standing Stone State Park



Burgess Falls State Natural Area Offers the Most Waterfalls in the Shortest Distance

In less than two miles, a moderately strenuous hike at Burgess Falls in Sparta has flowers, three waterfalls, overlooks and scenic limestone bluffs.

Burgess Falls became a natural area in 1973 because of the 130-foot waterfall and scenic stream.

As soon as you open your car door, you hear the sound of Falling Water River. The River Trail quickly leads to some cascades and a rock overhang. Although the river is now valued for its scenic beauty, the river was valued in the past as a source of power. In the 1920s, there was a gristmill, sawmill, and powerhouse on this site. You can still see the foundation of the gristmill and an old pipeline bridge that diverted water to the powerhouse.

Cross several beautiful seeps that flow down to the river. There are Foam-flowers, Celandine Poppies, and Dwarf Crested Irises along the way. In less than

15

a quarter mile, you come to the overlook for the first waterfall. Although this is sometimes called "Little Falls," the falls is more than 30 feet high. After taking a few photographs, continue on to the middle falls. This waterfall looks very different from the first one. The cascade spans a wide part of the river and is 70 feet high. As the water cuts down through the rock, you begin a steep climb.

You soon get to the largest waterfall that is shaped like a horseshoe with water cascading off of the sides. There is a trail almost completed to the base of this falls. The trail goes down a metal stairway with 75 steps. Remember that you will have to climb these same steps to get out of the gorge. The spray kicked up from the protruding rocks cools you as you hike down. Once you get to the bottom, you can take off your shoes and socks,



The butterfly garden at Burgess Falls State Natural Area in Sparta has lots of Black-Eyed Susans and coneflowers.

Below, left: Burgess Falls in Sparta.

put your feet in the water, and enjoy the scenery and a snack.

After you climb back to the top, climb a little further on a gravel path turning right onto the Ridge Trail. To complete the loop back, follow the Ridge Trail along the bluff line. There are scenic overlooks of the river far below. The trail curves back to the gravel road. Turn right and follow the road back to the parking lot. You may want to get a butterfly identification book out of your car and walk to the butterfly garden. Look for the Northern Pearly Eye, the Least Skipper, and the Little Glasswing. You can rest, warm up, and enjoy the wild-flowers and the butterflies they attract. You may even decide that you are rested enough to take the same hike all over again.



Fran Wallis

Directions

Directions to Burgess Falls State Natural Area Trailhead: Take I-40 to exit 286. Go South on Highway 135 for about eight miles. Follow the signs to the park. The River Trail begins at the picnic area parking lot. Brochures on the history and geology of the area and trail maps are available at the kiosk.

Burgess Falls State Natural Area



The Obed Wild and Scenic River Segment of the Cumberland Trail



Terry Bonham

The water is cool near the Nemo Bridge. Below right: A lichen-covered sandstone bluff can be seen at the beginning of the Obed Wild and Scenic River Segment of the Cumberland Trail near Wartburg.

A hike at the Obed Wild and Scenic River Segment of the Cumberland Trail near Wartburg takes you to Alley Ford where people crossed the river before there were bridges.

A highlight on the way there as you cross the Obed River is the Old Nemo Bridge built in 1930-1931.

The trail, rated moderate, is 2.5 miles one way with many changing vistas. The hike begins with a gradual climb past the National Park Service campsites up to the first of many sandstone rock-houses. Native Americans used these bluffs for shelter. Later, the long hunters hunted in this area. Now people still hunt in the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area nearby.

A little further, you will see a nature trail leading off to the right. Save this trail for your return trip. You may want to put an arrow made of sticks to mark the turnoff since it is not as obvious on the way back. As the trail gently rises and falls, you can snack on the plump blackberries growing beside the trail. The path curves left. It climbs above the rock-houses into an oak/hickory forest. This part of the trail is fairly level with several

16

small bridges. A small section of the trail is on tailings of an old strip mine that is part of the history of this site. Frogs and other wildlife now enjoy the wet area at the side of the trail.

You will get to the Old Alley Ford Road that looks like a washed out rocky dry stream bed. The hike down to the river is well worth the steep climb. You can backpack and camp at Alley Ford. No permit is required. There is nothing better than sleeping on the soft sand listening to the sounds of the river. If you are doing a day hike, you may want to take your shoes off and wade in the shallow ford area. Some of you water babies may want to jump in clothes and all.

When you decide to climb back up, you will be returning on the same linear section of the trail. Remember to look for the turnoff to the nature trail. You will turn left on the nature trail and climb back down to the river. Your leg muscles will thank you for this wonderful exercise. The trail follows along the river all the way back to the campground. You may want to put on your swimming suit and take one last dunk to cool off before you head home.



Frank Wallis

Directions

Take I-40 to Exit 347. Go north on Highway 27 to Wartburg. Follow the green signs in downtown Wartburg to the Obed Wild and Scenic River and Nemo Bridge. Drive left and wind along the Nemo/Catoosa Road for seven miles to the Obed River. Just after crossing the bridge, turn right into the Rock Creek Campground. Park at the kiosk and walk down the campground road a short distance to the trailhead. The National Park Service, the Cumberland Trail Conference, and Tennessee State Parks jointly manage this trail.

Obed Wild and Scenic River



Roan Mountain State Park's Hike For Athletes-In-Training

One of the most strenuous hikes in Tennessee State Parks is the Chestnut Ridge Trail, a 4.1-mile linear trail, at Roan Mountain State Park in Roan Mountain.

This is a trail for those who want an aerobic workout or for those strong hikers who love a challenging woodland experience. The trail has many steep climbs and descents with almost no switchbacks. The trail starts to climb steeply at the very beginning of the hike. Do not take the trail leading off to the left that looks level and a lot easier. Instead keep climbing until you believe you have reached the top. There is only a moment to enjoy your accomplishment before starting down to the seep at the very bottom. You soon figure out that this is a pattern that keeps repeating.

When you get to a descent with an arrow on the tree that says "Trail," you will find that a lower trail joins the trail on the left. Continue on the main trail down the mountain to your right. If you slow down enough to savor this trail and also to breathe, you will sense the many differences within the overall pattern. Sometimes you are in a colorful maple/oak/hickory hardwood forest. Sometimes you are enjoying a dark hemlock woods. You will hike through marshes, past ferns, and enter tunnels through rhododendron thickets.

You will come to a sign leading to the cabins, an overlook and the park headquarters. You can quit at this point. If you are still eager to get to the bald, the sign warns "Difficult Terrain-experienced hikers." After another major climb, you will hike

17

up and down along a narrow ridge with views to both sides. Happily, you stop hearing traffic noise as the trail winds away from the road. This is the prettiest part of the trail. There are rocks covered with rock tripe, an ugly yet edible plant. Washington's troops at Valley Forge ate rock tripe to survive. Naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton warned, "It must be very carefully cooked or it produces cramps." Explorer Samuel Hearne, in *A Journey From Prince of Wales's Fort*, describes rock tripe. "It is so palatable, that all who taste it generally grow fond of it. It is remarkably good and pleasing when used to thicken any kind of broth, but it is generally most esteemed when boiled in fish-liquor," Hearne says.

You will come to another trail split, but keep following the main trail up to your right. There will be many times when you think you have to be at the bald only to find that you mysteriously head all the way down to the bottom.

When you get to Strawberry Bald, there is a beautiful overlook. The interpretive sign names each mountain and gap of the Roan highlands visible from the platform. You have now survived half of the hike. The overlook is one of the best places to rest while deciding whether you want to take the same trail back. Returning on the trail is like taking a new trail. The ups are now downs and the downs are now ups.

Another alternative is to go up the steps to the road and turn left. You will come to the Dave Miller Homestead that was built in 1908 for the great sum of \$350. Mrs. Miller lived on this site until 1962. Check with the visitor center before taking the hike to see if the house is open for

Roan Mountain State Park featured as the Rave Run in May 2007 Runner's World

Runner's World features a unique, world-class location each month as a distinctive destination for runners. For May 2007 the magazine showcased a trail run across the Roan Highlands that included Roan Mountain State Park. The awe-inspiring photo highlighted the Appalachian Trailhead at Carver's Gap that is 8.5 miles south of Roan Mountain State Park. From there, runners can follow the Appalachian Trail along rolling peaks called "balds," know for their pink rhododendron blooms.

tours. In any case, there are picnic tables in the front yard if you prefer to eat lunch here instead of the overlook. You can walk down the road to the bottom, turn left and follow the narrow winding road back to the visitor center. Although this way seems shorter and is all downhill, this way is not recommended. The road does not have a shoulder, and you need to be constantly alert to traffic. The safest way is to continue your adventure through the woods on the trail. When you get back to the parking lot, you can cool your feet in the Doe River and pat yourself on your back.

Directions

Directions to the Chestnut Ridge Trailhead at Roan Mountain State Park: Take I-26 through Johnson City and get off at Highway 321/67 Elizabethton/Roan Mountain State Park exit. Take Highway 67 through Elizabethton. Turn right on Highway 19-E south. In Roan, turn right on Highway 143 and follow it to the park visitor center. Leave your car at the visitor center parking lot. The trailhead to Strawberry Bald is located in the small field across the street from the entrance to the parking lot.

Roan Mountain State Park



One of the more difficult trails in Tennessee State Parks is the Chestnut Ridge Trail at Roan Mountain State Park in Roan Mountain.

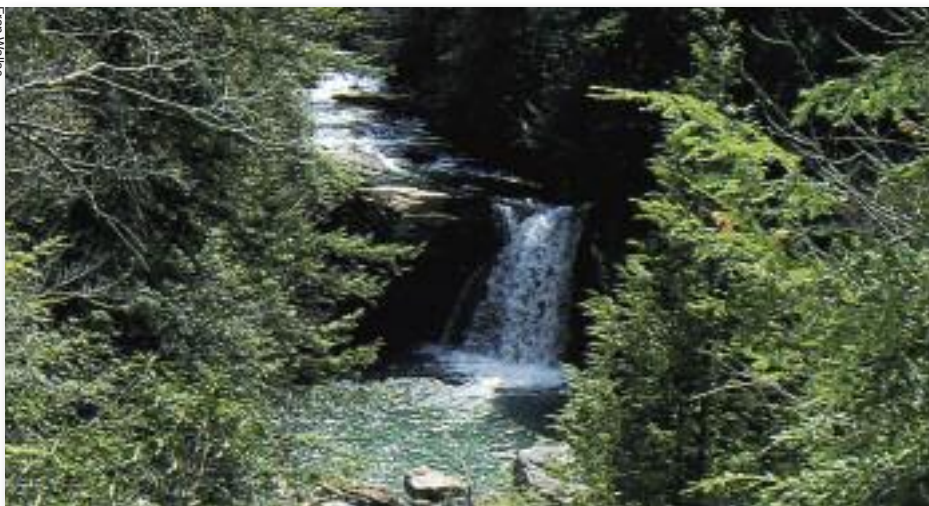


Fran Volias

Savage Gulf ~ A Winter Hike for Scenic Views



The suspension bridge at Meadow Creek on the North Rim Trail in Savage Gulf. Below: A view from the Savage Creek Overlook in Savage Gulf.



Directions

Take I-24 to Exit 127 (Pelham/Winchester) and take Highway 50 East. Turn right on South 108. Follow the brown signs to "Savage Gulf State Park" about 13 miles and turn left on Highway 399. Go five miles to the park entrance on the left. The trail starts at the ranger station. Trail maps are available at the ranger station and kiosk.

Savage Gulf State Park



An overnight hike to the Dinky Line Campsite area in Savage Gulf State Natural Area near Palmer, part of the South Cumberland Recreation Area, is like an elastic waistband. The hike can expand or contract depending on the size of your energy and breadth of your skills.

By following the trail map, you can choose shorter or longer routes to your destination. If you are going to camp overnight, you need to fill out a permit at the ranger station. The permits are free. If you are day hiking, you need to register at the kiosk.

Start the hike on the Savage Day Loop Trail. The first mile of the trail is an easy stroll. There are wooden footbridges and a beautiful suspension bridge so you won't get your feet wet. In a mile, you

18

North Rim Trail to the left. You will come to another suspension bridge over Meadow Creek. Just before the bridge is your last place to filter water to refill your water bottles. There may not be water at the campsite. To be extra careful, start the trip with enough water for the whole hike.

After you cross the bridge, there is a wide junction. The North Rim Trail goes left. The North Plateau Trail goes right. If you have had enough hiking or the light is starting to fade, you can take the North Plateau Trail and be at the campsite in another 1.4 miles. If you are ready for more overlooks, continue on the North Rim Trail. Savage Creek Overlook provides a view of the creek and a large area of the gulf. There are many overlooks for lunch, snacks and rest stops. The views of the gulfs and steep bluffs are spectacular.

If you are a hardcore hiker and lucky enough to get a space at Hobbs Cabin, you may want to go another 3.5 miles past the turnoff to the Mountain Oak Trail to Hobbs Cabin where there is a spring for your water refill. The rest of us will turn right on Mountain Oak Trail. Keep watching for deer and turkeys often found in this area. After a total of six miles you will arrive at the Dinky Line camp area. There are only four campsites, and each is tucked in the woods away from the other sites. There is a primitive toilet but you need to bring your own toilet paper. This camp area is not used as frequently as the popular Hobbs Cabin. You will experience the joys of being alone in the wilderness with no light other than the stars and the moon.

Your return to the ranger station is a very easy four-mile hike. Notice that part of the trail is on the route of the old Dinky Line narrow gauge railroad that was used to transport timber out of the wilderness. If you want a longer hike on your return, you can take the South Rim Trail and hike down to the bottom of Savage Falls. After experiencing this taste of wilderness, you will understand why it has been designated as a National Natural Landmark.

will come to a sign with several choices. Go to the left following the arrow to "North Rim Trail 1.2 miles." Follow the trail and do not turn left on the South Rim Trail. At 1.5 miles you will see a short spur trail with blue blazes. This is the first overlook and the best view of Savage Falls. In winter, the flow is at its fullest. The hardwoods have shed their leaves so you get the best views.

After returning to the main trail, you will soon come to "Rattlesnake Point Overlook." A fun part of hiking in the winter is no rattlesnakes, no ticks, and no chiggers. At 2.2 miles, you begin the



- 1 Intermediate Overnight Loop Trail at Mousetail Landing State Park
- 2 Beginner Backpacking Hike to Horsepound Falls
- 3 Rock Creek Segment of the Cumberland Trail Offers A Shady Hike for a Hot Day
- 4 Fall Creek Falls Cable Trail - The Shortest Hard Hike
- 5 Big Ridge State Park - A Haunted Hike For the Halloween Season
- 6 Wetlands, Wilderness and Wildlife at Big Hill Pond
- 7 Pickett State Park's Hidden Passage Trail is a Wonderful Winter Trek
- 8 Radnor Lake State Natural Area Offers an Easy Hike for People Wild About Wildflowers
- 9 Frozen Head State Natural Area Offers an Overnight Hike With Scenic Detours
- 10 Buggytop Cave—A Cool Hike for a Hot Day
- 11 Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park – A Colorful Woodland Loop
- 12 Montgomery Bell State Park – A Six-Mile Overnight Hike For Beginners of All Ages
- 13 Three Ways to Hike The Perfect Winter Trail at Long Hunter State Park
- 14 The Lake Trail's in Bloom at Standing Stone
- 15 Burgess Falls State Natural Area Offers the Most Waterfalls in the Shortest Distance
- 16 The Obed Wild and Scenic River Segment of the Cumberland Trail
- 17 Roan Mountain State Park's Hike For Athletes-In-Training
- 18 Savage Gulf – A Winter Hike for Scenic Views



- 19** Cumberland Mountain State Park – A Hike That Sparkles
- 20** Three Trails Make One Great Hike at Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park
- 21** Hike Back in Time at Old Stone Fort
- 22** Take a Quiet Hike on the Gilbert Gaul Trail at Fall Creek Falls
- 23** Take a Heavenly Fall Hike On Devil's Backbone Trail at Warriors' Path State Park
- 24** Cumberland Trail State Park's Black Mountain Loop Trail
- 25** Fort Pillow State Historic Park's Chickasaw Bluff Trail
- 26** Edgar Evins State Park – Views, Flowers, and Lots of Hiking
- 27** Fine Swimming Holes Along the Piney River Section of the Cumberland Trail
- 28** See Rare Flowers at Long Hunter State Park's Couchville Cedar Glade
- 29** Pinson Mounds State Archaeological Park
- 30** Warm Up With a Long Winter Hike at Tims Ford
- 31** Shuttle Hike-Stone Door to Greeter Falls
- 32** Take Wildflower Stroll on TVA's River Bluff Trail at Norris Dam State Park
- 33** Cedars of Lebanon's Hidden Springs Trail
- 34** South Cumberland Recreation Area's Foster Falls
- 35** Possum Creek Segment of the Cumberland Trail
- 36** Rock Island's Downstream Trail



Cumberland Mountain State Park ~ A Hike That Sparkles

An historic bridge and lots of icicles are highlights of what you might find during a winter hike at Cumberland Mountain State Park in Crossville.

Begin this easy five-mile hike to the right on the Pioneer Short Loop Trail blazed in white (Trail #5 on the map). The fairly level trail hugs Byrd Lake and Byrd Creek. There are a few very large pine trees and an interesting rock outcropping on your left. In about a mile, you will come to a junction. Keep hiking straight on the Pioneer Trail blazed in green (Trail #6 on the map).

In a short distance the trail turns left over a drainage and up a small rise. You get a preview of the sculpted rocks ahead when you get to the first rock house on your right. In about two miles, the trail seems to end at a road. Turn left on the road, cross the bridge and go a short distance. You will see the trail begin again on your left. Take time to enjoy the bridge built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the late 1930s.

You are now on the section of the trail that is an icicle wonderland. The rock houses on both sides of the creek are beautiful any time of the year, but especially in the winter. This is a good time to stop hiking, take pictures, and enjoy the views. The rocks you are looking at are sandstone of the Rockcastle Conglomerate that formed about 300

19

million years ago give or take a few years. This layer of rock is resistant to erosion, but has been sculpted by wind and water. In about three miles the trail seems to end at a large boulder. When you get up to the rock, you will find a narrow passage. This small opening is a fun part of the trail and adds to the adventure.

The trail skirts the edge of the golf course but stays in the woods. You will come to a confusing junction. Look down the hill to your left. You will see that the end of the wooden bridge is blazed in green and that is the way to go. If you are daydreaming and go straight, you will find that the trail ends very quickly. Once you have figured this out, the rest is easy.

The trail continues through the woods and rhododendron thickets. You will enjoy the level trail especially if it is snowy and icy. In four miles you come to a clearly marked junction. Go straight and you will be on the other part of the Pioneer Short Loop Trail blazed in white. The trail follows the edge of Byrd Lake except that now you are on the other side. When you see the red roof of the boating dock, you know that you are near the end of the hike. Cross Byrd Lake on the bridge to your left and walk up the steps to the parking lot. You will be glad to see the historic CCC restroom building and boat dock as a perfect place to end your hike.



The Civilian Conservation Corps built this bridge on South Old Mail Road in Cumberland Mountain State Park in Crossville. The trail comes out on one side of the bridge, crosses the bridge, and continues on the other side. Below, left: The narrow passage on the Pioneer Trail at Cumberland Mountain State Park in Crossville.



Directions

Take I-40 to Exit 317. Follow Highway 127 South for nine miles. The park entrance is on the right. Drive through the park following the signs to the boat dock and park in the boat dock parking lot. Because of renovation work on the dam, a detour may be required. Hikers can get information about the detour from the park office. The trail starts from the parking lot. Trail maps are available at the park office. (It helps you get oriented if you hold the map upside down and look for the "P" and outline of the parking lot.)

Cumberland Mountain State Park



Three Trails Make One Great Hike at Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park



Cypress knees can be found in the middle of the Pioneer Springs Trail at Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park near Millington. Below: Before the climb to the Woodland Trail Shelter, the trail at Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park near Millington winds through Horsetails.

Beeman-Shelby Forest State Park, located in Shelby County 13 miles north of Memphis near Millington, offers more than 20 miles of hiking trails.

The best way to begin this seven-mile moderate hike is to come the day before and camp in the Dogwood Ridge Campground. If you are lucky, you will find the dogwoods in full bloom. If you are a little late, you will see the petals cover the ground like snow. You can even take a practice three-mile hike on the Woodland Trail loop that starts from Campsite 13.

The Pioneer Springs/Chickasaw Bluff trails begin at the four way stop just as you get to Poplar Lake. The best time to take this popular hike is early in the morning. The hike starts as a woodland hike, but you quickly descend into the different world of a bottomland hardwood forest. You will pass a tree on your right with a large burl that looks like a lion's face or whatever you imagine it to be. In the wetland you can experience cypress knees poking up in the trail. Although you are looking down to avoid tripping over the knees, take time to stop and enjoy the size of the old cypress, sycamore, and cottonwood trees.

In a mile and a half, you get to Pioneer Springs. Even during drought, this spring keeps bubbling up in the springhouse and spilling under the trail. The water looks very inviting but is not safe to drink.

20

Now you will be following the white blazes of the Chickasaw Bluff Trail. The trail crosses some deep drainage washes caused by a combination of water and highly erodible soil called loess. This part of the trail is easy and fairly level. A unique part of the trail runs through tall Horsetails.

At a gravel road crossing, you will see a sign to your left that says, "W.T. Shelter .75." What the sign doesn't say is that you will begin a very steep part of the trail that leads back up to the woodlands. Two miles from the spring, you get to the pavement at the top and the shelter.

Walk through the shelter. You are on the red blazed Woodland Trail one-mile loop. Hike down the hill and follow the red blazes to the right when the trail splits off from the Chickasaw Bluff Trail. Cross the narrow land bridge between two washes. Keep looking for a trail going off to the right. If you miss it, as I did, you will get to a well-marked area that says, "Three Mile Loop." Unless you want to add another three miles to your hike, turn back. Look more carefully for the trail you missed. It will be marked "Bike Trail." Follow the trail back to the pavement and hike along the pavement to your right. You will see the Chickasaw Bluff Trail wooden sign on your left. Return to Poplar Lake on the same trail. Of course it is never the same. There are always new birdcalls, a turtle or frog, or a huge twin tree that you don't know how you missed.

Directions

Take I-40 to Exit 2-A (Highway 51). Stay on Highway 51 and turn right. At the sixth stoplight turn left on Watkins Road (Highway 388). When the road ends, turn left and go one mile to a four-way stop at the Shelby Forest General Store. Turn right and go one mile. Turn left into the park. If this sounds confusing, just follow the brown state park signs. You can get a trail map and directions to the trailhead at the visitor center.

Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park



Hike Back in Time at Old Stone Fort

You will want to spend the whole day learning about the history of the area around Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park in Manchester, so plan to take the time to explore the trails and enjoy the scenic vistas.

The best place to start is the museum. The exhibits give the prehistory and history of this site's Native American cultural heritage. There are videos and displays about the archaeological significance of this National Historic Register site. There are trail maps and an informative booklet and guide.

When you leave the museum, walk up the hill and around to your right towards the entrance of the Native American ceremonial enclosure mound. Following the booklet, hike the easy trail clockwise for a mile and a quarter around the perimeter of the mound. You will get a feel for the site, the rock walls and the symmetrical waterfalls. Just as you get back to the museum building, turn left down the path and wood tie steps towards the sound of the water.

You may choose to explore any of the paths either above or below the earthen/rock walls, but the most scenic trails stay near the water of the Duck River. After the spillway dam, you come to Blue Hole Falls and then to Big Falls. Both of these sites provide a quiet place to sit, enjoy the bluffs, waterfalls, and solitude of the area.

Whatever way you hike, you will eventually rejoin the main trail blazed in white and the Hickerson and Wooten

21

paper mill built in 1879. The mill has stone walls and window openings that look out towards the river.

Continue on the main trail.

Just past the bench at the trail junction, go right on the yellow Forks of the River Trail. Take another right at the arrow and you will be on the yellow Forks of the River Trail and the red Little Duck River Loop Trail. At the bottom of the hill along the river are Virginia Bluebells and Trout Lilies.

Stay on the red trail with the river on your right and the bluffs on your left. This part of the trail is mostly flat and easy except for a few eroded spots. At one point, you will need to turn right down into an old dirt road. When the roadway/trail gets to the river, the trail turns left and begins a gradual climb. There is a red blaze and an arrow at this point so it is easy to find your way.

The trail is fairly steep until it reaches a narrow rock ridge and flattens out through a laurel thicket. When you descend from the ridge, you will rejoin the Forks of the River Trail. Turn to your right. When you get to the Moat Trail (green), turn right on what was the old riverbed.

The trail then climbs steeply to the main trail at the top. There are some showy Fire Pinks and red Wild Columbines along the rocks. This climb is strenuous. Turn right on the main trail heading back towards the museum. If you still have some climbing energy, stop when you get to Step Falls (Little Falls) on the



Fran Wallis

Virginia Bluebells in bloom March-May. These are shown at the meeting of the Little Duck and Big Duck Rivers at Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Area in Manchester. Below, left: This waterfall, known as Step Falls or Little Falls, is a good place to stop and have a snack as you hike along the Little Duck River at Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Area in Manchester.

Little Duck River. There is a trail on the right that goes down to the falls and a great picnic spot on the river rocks. Of course you have to climb back up after your lunch or snack. If your hike ends late in the day, there will probably be deer having their grass snack on the ceremonial enclosure.

All of these trails together are only 4.25 miles, but hiking slowly will give you a chance to experience why this place was so special to the Native Americans.

Directions

Take I-24 to exit 110 and take Highway 53 S. Follow the brown state park sign to Highway 41. Turn right on Highway 41 N and in a short distance you will see the park entrance on your left. Drive on the main park road until it ends at the museum/visitor center.

Old Stone Fort State Park



Fran Wallis

Take a Quiet Hike on the Gilbert Gaul Trail at Fall Creek Falls



Pine trees reflected in Fall Creek Lake at Fall Creek Falls State Park. Below: The trailhead of the Gilbert Gaul Trail at Fall Creek Falls State Park.

Directions

From Nashville take I-40 to exit 288 and take Highway 111 South until you get to Spencer. Turn left on Highway 284 East and follow the signs to Fall Creek Falls State Park. From Knoxville, take I-40 to Crossville to exit 322 Peavine Road. Take a left off of the exit and turn right at the light on Highway 101. Take Highway 101 to Highway 30. Turn right on Highway 30. Drive until you get to the park entrance on the left. Once you have reached the park follow the signs to the inn. Just past the turnoff on the right leading to the Fall Creek Falls Gulf, you will come to a silver historical marker about Gilbert Gaul. Turn right on the road just past the marker to the Youth Camp 2. Leave your car at the parking area next to the youth camp gate.

Fall Creek Falls State Park



In the summer when the waterfalls are shrinking and the park crowds are growing, you may want to take the Gilbert Gaul Trail, a less traveled trail at Fall Creek Falls State Park near Spencer.

The Gilbert Gaul loop trail starts at the left of the gate. There is a trail sign giving you a choice of starting the loop toward the cabins or to the right. Begin the trail by going to the right on an old roadbed. The gently rolling trail is a fairly easy hike. You will enjoy the shady walk through the hardwood forest. The trail soon heads downhill to a large open grassy field. This field was part of Gilbert Gaul's home and studio. Gilbert Gaul was a famous artist who moved to this land in 1881 when he inherited the farm from his uncle. He painted scenes of both Confederate and Union soldiers and his work is found in the Smithsonian and other museums.

Follow the mowed path through the field down the woodland road. Pine beetles killed the dead pine trees next to the trail. The downed trees provide habitat for wildlife.

The path goes to Fall Creek Lake and turns left. Hopefully you will begin to get a nice breeze. The trail runs along the lake-side for several miles. Although you are not allowed to swim in the lake, you can sit on a log and cool your feet in the water. You

22

may scare a few ducks and geese resting on shore or be lucky enough to see an Osprey. If you are hiking early in the morning or late in the day, you will probably see deer feeding nearby.

About half way along the trail, you come to the Frazier rain shelter that provides a quiet place to enjoy the view. Nearby are remains of trees that were sculpted by beavers.

The trail crosses areas that look like they may be trails, but stay along the lake until you get to a sign that says "trail" and "cabins." Instead of going to the cabins, you will turn left and start hiking uphill. This is a very steep part of the trail and the only reason to rate the trail as moderate. There are several splits in the trail that go around wooded islands, but all end up together. The easiest way is to always take the main path left around these spots. When you get to the top of the hill, you will be back at the parking area.

Ticks can sometimes be a problem when you are hiking, so take appropriate precautions.

If you want to stay and take other hikes, try the walk-in campsites in campground A, E loop. The campsites are more remote than car camping, but closer to civilization than backpacking. The sites give you the feel of being alone in the woods without really being alone in the woods.



Take a Heavenly Fall Hike On Devil's Backbone Trail at Warriors' Path State Park

The Devil's Backbone Trail at Warriors' Path State Park in Kingsport offers a fall hike that will engage your senses with the sounds of the forest and the sights of ridges and a river.

After you hike about 20 feet along the golf cart path, there is a large wooden trailhead sign tucked in the woods on your right. Devil's Backbone Trail is a strenuous 2.5-mile linear trail with steep ups and downs.

The trail is marked with light blue blazes. As you begin climbing through the shady hardwood forest with brightly colored oaks and maples, watch for deer and listen for birds. You may also hear the sounds of boats on the lake below. Although you cross the edge of the golf course several times, you quickly reenter the quiet of the forest. In a half-mile, you come to the Lone Cedar Overlook. Although cedars once covered much of this limestone ridge, the hardwoods have shaded out the cedars and replaced them. Keep climbing to the top of the ridge and Rocky Point Overlook. What a wonderful place! There is a beautiful view of the South Fork of the Holston River and the colorful ridges on the other side. If you only get this far, the hike is worth it.

The trail starts down a series of turns until you get to the water. The trail then follows the edge of the lake.

23

A tree bearing two blazes indicates that you need to turn left at the rock pile. Follow the trail until it ends at a T-junction. You can hear Fall Creek.

Turn left and hike along the creek. This is a great place for a short detour to cool your feet in the creek and listen to the soothing cascades. Stay on the main trail and ignore any side trails. In about a quarter of a mile, you will see Horsetails (Scouring Rush) growing along the creek and a bridge. When you cross the bridge, the trail climbs up away from the creek.

At the end of Devil's Backbone, you come to the Fall Creek Loop Trail. You can turn around at this point or take the 1.5-mile gently rolling trail. The loop goes through a beginning forest. The cedars are still hanging on, but the hardwoods are moving in. There is still a lingering feel of meadow and wildflowers enjoy the added sunshine.

When you climb up the ridge on your return, notice the interesting limestone vertebrae of the Devil's Backbone. You can tell your fellow hikers that you are stopping to notice the ferns, wildflowers, rocks and large White Oaks. You won't have to admit that you are just trying to make it to the top of the ridge. Rocky Point Overlook will be perfect for that last drink and snack before hiking back to your car.



Maidenhair Fern among autumn leaves along the trail at Warriors' Path State Park in Kingsport. Below Left: Patrick Henry Lake at Warriors' Path State Park in Kingsport.

Marty Silver



Directions

Take Highway 81 to exit 59 State Route 36. Go north 1.4 miles to Hemlock Road. Turn right and continue 1.6 miles to the park entrance. Trail maps are available at the park office, campground and marina. After picking up a trail map, drive out of the park and turn right on Fall Creek Road. There is a golf cart crossing just after the Holston River Bridge. Park your car along the wide shoulder on the right side of the road just past the crosswalk.

Warriors' Path State Park



Cumberland Trail State Park's Black Mountain Loop Trail



Fran Wallas

A narrow passage beside the first overlook at Black Mountain. Below right: Gary Ruetenik of Crossville gets a great view on his hike at Black Mountain.

Bluffs, boulders, and beautiful views are among the features you will encounter on a hike on Black Mountain's Loop Trail in the Cumberland Trail State Park.

In the spring, you have wildflowers. In the winter, you have views. Black Mountain has wonderful vistas of Grassy Cove and Sequatchie Valley. On good days you can see Watts Bar and the Smokies.

Start your hike on the paved trail at the end of the parking lot and cross the road. When you turn on a gravel road, there are white blazes and a small sign that says "Main Trail."

Along the trail on your right is a chimney that was part of the Gill family house built around 1900. In front, you will see the springhouse. If you are going to camp, this is where you have to filter your water since there is no water at the backcountry campsite. The trail continues to the right up the steps to a kiosk with maps and information about the 1.7-mile easy loop trail and the Grassy Cove segment of the Cumberland Trail.

In two-tenths of a mile when you get to the overlook sign, go left. There is a wooden bridge to the Southern Overlook with access to the area below the bridge. Here is the best place to enjoy above and below the bluff views of Little Cove and Grassy Cove.

When you are ready to continue the hike, backtrack to the sign for the main trail and turn left. Follow the white blazes to the next junction. The main

24

trail goes left and the loop trail goes right. (If you are hiking towards the tower, you have taken the wrong right.) Even if you only want to hike the loop trail, take a short detour and continue a little further on the main trail. The trail goes down steep steps through a crack in the rock. At the bottom is a tumble of unusual rock formations and a place that is fun to explore. A little further is the backcountry campsite for those who want to make this hike into a short backpacking trip. You will need to get a camping permit before your trip from the Cumberland Trail State Park Office or the Cumberland Trail Conference. You can register online or by telephone.

Re-climb the steps of the main trail back to the loop trail junction and follow the blazes four-tenths of a mile to another short side trail to the Northern Overlook. Continue following the loop trail. There are views off to your left along this section of the trail.

When you cross the paved road, go up four steps and take the trail on your right. The trail climbs steeply. In a short distance you will see your car peeking through the trees, and soon recognize that you are back near the springhouse. The trail to the parking lot is the same trail as the one you took at the beginning of your hike.

For those who want a longer hike, you can combine this hike with the Brady Mountain Section of the Cumberland Trail.

Directions

The first adventure is finding the trailhead. Take Highway 40 Crab Orchard exit 329. Get off of the ramp on Battown Road. There is no sign identifying the road. Go south away from Crab Orchard. Very soon the road seems to dead end, but you turn right. Continue on the main road about 1.5 miles until you get to an intersection that looks like a turkey foot. Make a left turn here on Owl Roost Road and follow the narrow road to the large trailhead parking lot on the right. Drive slowly and don't give up.

Cumberland Trail State Park



Jim McCullough



Fort Pillow State Historic Park's Chickasaw Bluff Trail

Fort Pillow State Historic Park's linear 4.8-mile round trip Chickasaw Bluff Trail in Henning makes either a great winter day hike or an easy overnight backpacking trip.

Fort Pillow was a significant Civil War Battle site.

To start your hike, walk across the road and turn left back towards the park entrance. In about 10 feet, you will see the Chickasaw Bluff Trail sign in an open field on your right. The trail is blazed in blue and is very easy to follow. If you plan to stay overnight, you will need to get a free camping permit at the park visitor center.

As you enter the woods, you will notice the size and variety of trees. Since most of the trees have lost their leaves, this is a good chance to practice using bark patterns to identify the trees. The flakey Shagbark Hickory and the smooth trunks of the Beech are the easy ones to start with. You can also use other clues such as the straight trunks of the Tulip Poplars or the long black pods under the Locusts. The trail is built on the soft loess soil that makes hiking so easy on your feet.

The trail goes up and down sometimes very steeply until you get to the bottomland hardwoods and Horsetails growing along the side of the trail. After a few more steep rises and descents, you will notice a picnic table on the right. If you are going on an overnight hike, you will want to take a short detour to the picnic table that is actually Campsite 29.

25

This is the last site to fill up all of your water containers.

In about a mile, you will get to the primitive backpacking campsite. There is a grill, benches, and a very clean pit toilet. You may want to set up camp, unload your gear and have a snack.

The next part of the trail is the best part in the winter. You will get views of the Mississippi River. Fort Pillow is on the tightest point, the narrowest curve of the river. The trail follows an old farm road. There are home sites with Daffodils blooming in February. You will see Yucca plants and remains of cemeteries from the 1800s. As the bluff has eroded, many of the home sites and cemeteries have been destroyed. One of the state park ranger houses disappeared over the bluff in the 1980s.

At the end of the designated trail there is a sign that says "trail ends." On the way back, you will have a second chance to notice the very large grapevines on some very large oak trees. You also can slow down and get out your binoculars. The Mississippi Flyway is a one of the best places to observe the migration of many bird species. The park visitor center has handouts with a listing of the birds that have been seen at the park. If you aren't a birder, you may want to use your binoculars to watch the barges and river traffic below. Fort Pillow is a special place historically. You may want to end your hike by going to the visitor center and fort to learn more about this site.



An overnight backpacking campsite in Fort Pillow State Park. Below, left: You can see the river traffic on the Mississippi from the Chickasaw Bluffs Trail at Fort Pillow State Park in Henning.



Directions

Take Highway I-40 to Exit 66/Highway 70 and go toward Brownsville. There are brown Fort Pillow signs that lead you to Highway 19 to Ripley and then to State Highway 51. Turn south on Highway 51 to Henning and then west on Highway 87. Turn right on Highway 207 onto Park Road. Just after you enter the park turn into the large parking lot on your right at the old visitor center that is now closed.

Fort Pillow State Historic Park



Edgar Evins State Park – Views, Flowers, and Lots of Hiking



Vines grow on a tree along the trail at Edgar Evins State Park. *Below right:* Toothwort is one of the white blooms you might see in a spring hike along the trail at Edgar Evins.

At Edgar Evins State Park in Silver Point you can combine hiking the 2.5-mile Jack Clayborn Millennium Trail and the 5.5-mile Merritt Ridge Trail and enjoy a very strenuous eight-mile hike.

The trail has many steep ups and downs and narrow rocky sections. For hikers wanting a shorter and easier hike, the 2.5-mile first loop provides a stroll through a valley filled with early spring wildflowers.

The trail starts downhill and follows an old fence line. The edge of Center Hill Lake peeks through the cedars on your right.

Following the white metal blazes, you come to an old stone wall dating back to the 1800s or early 1900s. Here is the trail's easiest access to a quiet lake inlet. The trail goes up through a break in the wall and turns right. When you get to a junction with blazes on your right and left, you are at the Millennium Trail Loop. Go right at this split to see a wonderful display of wildflowers. The side of the trail is white with Spring Beauty, Rue Anemone, Toothwort, and trillium.

Continue through the narrow v-shaped valley until you get to a sign on your right to the Merritt Ridge Trail. Climb up the switchbacks to the top of the ridge. As you stop to catch your breath, notice the very large oak and maple trees. You are now at the top of one of the narrow ridges that are part of the Highland Rim. Follow the fence line and blazes along the ridge top to another climb leading to a rounded knob. The large flat rock at the end of the knob is

26

a great place to have a snack and enjoy the lake view.

The trail goes straight down until you get to a double blaze where the trail turns right. Follow the trail along a rare level section that shadows the shoreline just above the lake. When you get to a double blaze and just past it another double blaze, you are at the end loop. There is also a mysterious red plastic flower on the tree. Take the right fork that steeply climbs to the top of another ridge.

When the trail flattens out, there is an arrow on the tree that shows you where to turn right. The trail climbs again to another ridge and more views of the lake. As you start down, there is a rock wall on your left. Just when you think the hike is getting easy, the trail climbs to another knob.

When you get back down from the knob, there is a canebrake on your right. This type of cane is a bamboo native to the United States and an important habitat for birds.

Another ridge climb is in your future. While you are trying to figure out if you have been on this ridge before, you will spot lots of yucca at the top. Each narrow ridge has unique features. Of course you will have to climb back down to the lake level to get to the end of the loop.

The rest of the hike is a repeat of the first part of the trail. When you get back down to the wildflower valley, you can go 1.5 miles to complete the first loop or take the mile hike back to the trailhead. It will be hard to convince your feet and knees that you have only hiked eight miles.

Directions

Take Highway 40 to exit 268/State Highway 96. Drive south about four miles until the road stops at Highway 141. Drive straight across the intersection to the park entrance. Trail maps are at the visitor center. As you leave the visitor center, turn right and continue down the main park road. Parking for the trailhead is on the left about three-tenths of a mile past the maintenance shop.

Edgar Evins State Park



Fine Swimming Holes Along the Piney River Section of the Cumberland Trail

The Piney River Section of the Cumberland Trail is a seven-mile linear trail starting as an easy level hike alongside Duskin Creek. It is a route to some good swimming holes.

In a few short turns you come to a metal bridge crossing the creek. Look for Pink Lady's Slippers near the bridge. After crossing the creek, the trail slopes upward, and soon returns to creek level. Try to find the Gaywings, an unusual rosy flower, near the "Main Trail" sign. The trail follows the banks of the creek with lots of swimming holes along the way. You start a steep climb through rhododendron and laurel. In about a mile, you come to the White Pine Cascade where you may want to spend some time.

If you are anxious to get to the campsite to take off your pack, continue to the Spider Den spur trail a half-mile past the cascades. To camp for free in this site or park overnight at the trailhead, you need to register ahead by calling the Cumberland Trail state park office at 423-566-2229 or by going online to the Cumberland Trail Conference Web site www.cumberlandtrail.org.

The spur trail is very steep and winds down into a beautiful cove. Even if you are not going to camp, this side

27

trail is worth the effort. The back-country campsite is one of the best in the state. Someone has built tables and chairs out of rocks so that you can sit comfortably and view the bluffs and creek. You can enjoy exploring the rock house, the creek, and an old railroad stone wall.

If you have arrived at the campsite early in the day, you may want to leave your gear and head back up to the main trail. The hike continues to the bridge over Deep Pool, and a spur trail to Hemlock Falls. The main trail turns right and starts down to a junction with logging camp loop. You will probably not want to take this loop but continue on the main trail.

The hike follows an old Dinky Line railroad bed to a bridge at Rockhouse Branch and then to the 100-foot suspension bridge over the Piney River. There are usually many wildflowers in this area. Switchbacks gradually lead you high above the river. The only difficult part of this trail is the McDonalds Branch crossing, a tricky boulder hop across wide drainage. In about five and a half miles from Spider Den, you reach the Piney River/Twin Rocks trailhead and the picnic area parking lot.



White Pine Cascade on Duskin Creek along the Piney River section of the Cumberland Trail.

Below, left: Gaywings bloom along the trail.

Directions

The hardest part about this hike is finding the trailheads. Take Highway 68 to Shut-In-Gap Road just outside Spring City. Follow the road about a mile to the Piney River Picnic Area. If you are doing a shuttle hike, leave one car here. Continue on Shut-In-Gap Road another four miles until you get to the Stinging Fork Trailhead (see the large brown sign on your right). Drive past this trailhead about another 1.4 miles and turn left on a primitive road called Walden Mountain Road. (There may be no road sign.) As you drive along the road, don't take the first road that veers to the left or the next road angling to the right. Continue straight and the road goes steeply downhill. The road levels out at a culvert and then goes downhill to another culvert. Immediately past the second culvert, pull off on the left and park. The trail starts at the pull off. If you only have one car, this is the best place to start the hike.

Piney River Section of the Cumberland Trail



Mary Silver

See Rare Flowers at Long Hunter State Park's Couchville Cedar Glade



Lisa Powers/Froghaven Farm

A shady nook along the trail at Couchville Cedar Glade. Below right: An Eastern Prickly Pear cactus.

Couchville Cedar Glade is a state natural area managed by Long Hunter State Park in Hermitage and the Division of Natural Areas. The best time to take this hike is during the summer when the rare Tennessee Coneflowers are in full bloom.

You will enjoy this easy level hike with no Poison Ivy. Although the hike is very short, only one mile, you go through three different plant communities: cedar glades, barrens and edge woodlands. A kiosk near the beginning of the trail explains the difference between glades and barrens. This hike is more a learning hike than an exercise hike. Your challenge is to observe when you are leaving one type of ecosystem and entering another. Your other challenge is to recognize the flowers that you may never have seen before except in books.

On entering the trail, you will notice the Eastern Redcedar trees that make up part of the glade community. The loop trail is clearly marked with arrows at each turn. After you make the first turn, the trail enters a woodland of mostly Shagbark Hickory, Hackberry and a few Shumard Oak trees. The Shumard Oak is one of the largest of the "Red Oaks." Along the sides of the trail are fragrant sumac shrubs and St. Johns Wort shrubs.

Soon you will leave the woodland and enter a glade community. You can recog-

28

nize the glade because of the shallow soil and exposed limestone. Tennessee Coneflowers are scattered throughout this open area. These coneflowers are a federal endangered species found only in Middle Tennessee. You will want to photograph the beautiful groupings of glade flowers. There are Leafy Prairie Clovers, also an endangered species, and the glade onions. If you happen to be on the trail in full sun in the afternoon, you may see the Limestone Fameflowers. The rose-colored blooms only stay open for a few hours. The leaves, found around the base of the stem, are thick and succulent and are designed to store water in this dry environment.

After another turn, there seems to be a dry streambed. Water flows along this exposed limestone in the winter and spring, but the area is dry the rest of the year. This dry area is a place to see prickly pear cactus plants that may still be in bloom. As you cross this area, notice the diamond flowers and gumweeds.

The trail enters an area with more soil, more grasses and no visible limestone. You are now in a barrens area. Before you get back to the parking lot, you will hike once more over exposed limestone. Did you sense the transition? To test out your expertise in identifying the different plant communities, you may want to repeat the hike at an even slower pace.

Directions

Take I-40 to Mt. Juliet exit 226 and take Highway 171 South toward Long Hunter State Park, about four miles. Turn left on South Mt. Juliet Road toward Bryant Grove. Go a little under a half-mile to the small parking lot on the right.

Couchville Cedar Glade



Lisa Powers/Froghaven Farm

Pinson Mounds State Archaeological Park

The best way to start this three to six mile hike at Pinson Mounds State Archaeological Park in Pinson is to explore the exhibits in the museum. You will learn about the Native Americans who were here more than 1,500 years ago.

This site, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, is the largest Middle Woodland complex in the Southeast and contains at least 12 prehistoric mounds. The site is also registered as a National Historic Landmark.

The trail begins outside the back door of the museum. Saul's Mound 9 rises in front of you 72 feet high. Walk towards Mound 9 on the path through the open field. Go half way around the mound to the right. If you are feeling energetic, climb the 125 steps to the top. You can view the mound complex and the fall colors of the oak hickory forest along the edges of the field.

When you get back down, take the path leading to mounds 12-15 on your right. There are interpretive signs telling you about each of the mounds. The mounds differ in both shape and purpose.

At the trail junction, go right to the Duck's Nest, a depression that looks like a large nest. The trail then leads to a long boardwalk weaving through a wetland with large cypress trees. There is a secluded resting spot with benches next to the Forked Deer River. You may want to

29

stop here for a snack or sit quietly with your binoculars watching for birds and deer.

When you get to the end of the boardwalk, go up the steps and follow the trail until you see the sign "museum." Go right on the nature trail that is blazed in red and is a footpath only. Then, go down steps and up steps through a grove of beech trees with the wetlands on your right. You will start to understand one of the reasons the Native Americans may have chosen this site. Food would have been abundant. There are still many nut trees, persimmons, blackberries and raspberries as well as fish and waterfowl.

There is another junction just after a bridge. If you go left, you go past the southwestern part of the Eastern Citadel and have a shorter route back to the museum. If you go right you will get to Mound 30, 29, and the northeastern part of the Eastern Citadel. The best way to see the site is to use the map and wander through the mound site. There is no wrong or right way to get a feel for this incredible place. You may choose to walk only a mile around the site or you may choose to spend the whole day exploring the different paths.

The annual event Archaeofest is set for Pinson Mounds on September 19-20. Archaeofest celebrates Native American culture and archaeology. There are craft demonstrations, Native American dances and storytelling.



Fran Wallas

The wetland along the boardwalk at Pinson Mounds. Below, left: Saul's Mound at Pinson Mounds. Note the observation tower on top.



Fran Wallas

Directions

Take Highway 40 to Highway 45S in Jackson. Go south on Highway 45S to the town of Pinson and follow the brown state park signs 2.5 miles to Pinson Mounds. Park in the museum/visitor center parking lot. Trail maps are available at the museum.

Pinson Mounds State Archaeological Park



Warm Up With a Long Winter Hike at Tims Ford



One of the many inlets at Tims Ford Lake. Below right: The evergreen Ground Cedar, of the Clubmoss family, can be seen at Tims Ford.

The Ray Branch Shoreline Trail at Tims Ford State Park in Winchester is a strenuous hike because of its length. If you combine the trail with the Marble Plains ADA trail, the hike is about 14 miles.

Begin on the paved ADA Trail that is perfect for children learning to bike, people pushing baby strollers, and people in wheelchairs. The trail is fairly level with many benches along the way. You can enjoy peeks at the lake, golden beech leaves, and maybe a deer in the early morning. In 1.1 miles the paved trail ends at an overlook with views of Tims Ford Lake and Big Island. Two trails lead v-shaped from the right corner of the overlook. Take the one closest to the lake. The trail goes less than a mile and turns on a dirt road. Follow the road almost to the top of the hill where the trail crosses. If you want a shorter hike, turn right on the trail and take the Marble Plains Loop back to the overlook. If you want to continue on the Shoreline Trail, turn left. The trail travels along the shoreline of the Ray Branch finger of Tims Ford Lake and provides many scenic views of the lake. This section of the trail is multi use for hikers and mountain bike riders.



The trail has a pleasing pattern. You hike a level stretch, descend and cross a lake inlet, and climb to the next level stretch. Although strong hikers and bikers can speed along the trail, you may want to stop at the lake, sit quietly and eat a snack. You can bird watch or just enjoy being surrounded by the oak and hickory forest. If you slow down, you will notice the evergreen Ground Cedars along the trail. They look like bonsai, but are a type of Clubmoss.

Near the end of the trail, the pattern changes, and you start up a switchback. The trail becomes a mowed path through an open grassy area. At this point you come to the Evans Loop that adds an additional 3.5 miles to the shoreline hike. The state park is planning to have a primitive backpacking campsite on the loop in the future. If you are running out of daylight, you need to save the loop for a longer spring day. The hike back to the parking lot is on the same shoreline trail. You can shorten the hike back by about a mile by taking the trail straight across the dirt road and using the short part of the Marble Plains Loop Trail back to the overlook.

Check at the office before taking this hike because a new starting section is being added for hikers only.

Directions

From Nashville: Take I-24 to Manchester exit 111. Turn left on Highway 55 W to Tullahoma. Turn left on Highway 130 S. Follow Highway 130 S. to Awalt Rd. and turn right. Follow Awalt Road until it dead ends at Mansford Road and turn left. The park entrance is 1.6 miles on the right.

From Chattanooga: Take I-24 W to exit 127 and turn left on Highway 64, Veterans Memorial By-pass. Turn right on Mingo Road to a four-way stop. Turn right on Owl Hollow Road. Turn left at Highway 50 and then right onto Mansford Road. Go five miles to the park entrance on left. There is a separate parking lot at the visitor's center next to the trailhead. Please use the trail map available at the visitor's center.

Tims Ford State Park



Fran Wallas



Shuttle Hike-Stone Door to Greeter Falls

Scenic overlooks and beautiful waterfalls are visual perks of a hike from Stone Door to Greeter Falls in Grundy County's South Cumberland Recreation Area.

Begin this six-mile hike by getting a trail map at the kiosk a little way down the paved trail. The map outlines hike details and the area's geological and historical information. The short paved portion of the trail leads to the Laurel Gulf overlook. The trail continues, unpaved, leading to Stone Door. Cross the short bridge at Stone Door to get a spectacular view of Laurel Gorge to the left and Big Creek Gorge to the right. One of the most scenic overlooks in Tennessee, this site is also significant since Native Americans traveled through the crack now called Stone Door as a way to get to and from the gorges. Be sure to experience traveling down the narrow passageway.

After exploring Stone Door, go back a very short way to the trailhead for the Big Creek Rim Trail on the left. The trail is mostly level and goes from overlook to overlook. Each bluff is a place to stop and experience the beauty and whispers of wind and water. In 3.2 miles from Stone Door, you arrive at the Alum Gap back-country campsite.

When you get to the junction with the Laurel Trail and Big Creek Gulf Trail, turn left until you get to Greeter Trail. Follow

31

the Greeter Trail past the Big Bluff Overlook and cross the suspension bridge over Boardtree Creek.

If you only want an easy hike, go right up the steps and follow the logging road left less than a mile to the Greeter Falls parking lot.

If you want a grand finale to your hike, don't go up the steps and go left. You can get a good view of upper Boardtree Falls in the winter if you walk a little further along the trail. The trail becomes more difficult with many rock steps leading down along the bluffs.

There is a split in the trail. Take the left turn that is clearly marked to the lower Greeter Falls. There is a metal spiral staircase leading to the bottom of the bluff. As you climb down the steps, you get good views of the icicles hanging from the rocks.

At the bottom of the steps, the trail goes to the 50-foot high lower falls. There are wood steps leading all the way down to the plunge pool, but these can be very slick in the winter. You don't need to go down the steps to get the best view. When you go back to the top of the staircase, go to the 15-foot upper falls. It is beautiful with a full winter flow.

Ascend to the main trail that runs along the bottom of the bluff line. In less than half a mile you will get back to the parking lot and the shuttle car waiting there for you.



Fran Wallis

Above: Lower Greeter Falls. Below, left: **Upper Greeter Falls.**



Fran Wallis

Directions

Take two cars on this shuttle hike. Take Highway 24 to the Pelham/Winchester Exit 127. Take Highway 50 E towards Pelham and wind up to the top of the plateau. Follow Highway 50 until it ends at Highway 56 in Altamont. Turn left on Highway 56N and go about 1.3 miles to the Greeter Falls park sign. Turn right. The Greeter Falls parking lot is a half-mile further on the left. Leave one car there and drive back out to Highway 56. Turn right and follow Highway 56N until you get to the sign to Stone Door. Turn right on Stone Door Road and follow the road until it ends at the ranger station. The trailhead is in the first parking lot near the bathroom.

South Cumberland Recreation Area



Take Wildflower Stroll on TVA's River Bluff Trail at Norris Dam State Park



Mike Scott

Jack-in-the Pulpit. *Below right:* Yellow Trout Lily.

Featuring lots of wildflowers in spring, the River Bluff Trail has been designated as a National Recreation Trail. The trail is on TVA property adjacent to Norris Dam State Park in Lake City.

This three-mile loop trail has a short steep section and a few eroded rocky sections, but the first mile of the trail is easy to hike. Most of the wildflowers grow on the hillside along this easy section.

The trail starts on old wooded farmland that is in a dry area. In less than a half-mile, you get to the loop split. Take the lower part of the trail nearest to the river on your left. The flower show begins when you drop down to the more moist area with rich soil along the Clinch River. Usually in the last week of March or first week of April there is an amazing variety of wildflowers and ferns. Just after you cross the small bridge there are flowers like Bloodroot, Foamflower, Miterwort, toothwort and Spring Beauty. The hillsides then turn to yellow as you hike through Yellow Trout Lilies that cover both sides of the trail.

The trail follows the riverbank and there are many scenic views. You will notice that beavers have enjoyed gnawing

32

on some of the trees. When you start seeing large rocks on the right, try to find the tiny window in the bluff. You have to stand in just the right place on the trail to see it. Past this point you can see horsetails, Wild

Columbine and a few nodding mandarin. Keep looking and you may also spot the pair of eagles who have moved to the area. The rock bluffs on your right have fantastic shapes and look like castles. This hike would be beautiful even without the flowers. When you get near the weir dam, you start to see Solomon's Seal, Celandine Poppy, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, and Dutchmen's Breeches. If you only want a short easy hike, you may choose to turn back at this halfway point.

The trail turns to the right and climbs steeply through a series of switchbacks. If you look back, you can see Hibbs Island. There are several Pawpaw patches near the top of the loop. The rest of the hike is an easy walk through the woods with only a few wildflowers.

The staff of both TVA and Norris Dam State Park lead spring wildflower hikes on the last Saturday of March and the first Saturday of April. There are trail maps available at the state park visitor center.

Directions

Take I-75 to exit 128. Drive around to the stop sign and turn left on Highway 441 South. Drive 2.5 miles to the first park entrance. Do not turn at this entrance and continue south on Highway 441 about another 1.5 miles. Turn right on Dabney Road. Just after the turn the road splits. Turn left at the split. In about a half mile the road ends at the trailhead parking lot.

Norris Dam State Park



Mike Scott

Cedars of Lebanon's Hidden Springs Trail

Hidden Springs Trail at Cedars of Lebanon State Park in Lebanon is an easy five-mile loop trail. Some highlights of what you might see along the trail include mosses, lichens, sinkholes and glade plants.

It is important to remember how the trailhead looks when you start hiking so that you stop hiking at the same spot. Otherwise, you might end up hiking this loop twice and that could be more fun than you want.

Begin by going to the right following the white blazes. Cedars of Lebanon State Park and Forest have the largest stand of red cedars in the country. Many of these trees were planted in 1935 to replace the forest that was cut down to make pencils. While you are hiking, notice that when you are walking primarily on rock, you will see cedars. When you are walking on mostly soil, you will see oaks and hickories. Each type of forest has a different feel, look, and smell.

It won't take you long to find the first of many sinkholes. Each sinkhole seems to have a path worn by people trying to get a better look. The mosses and lichens shading from gray blues to greens provide color and texture to the area. Reindeer Moss, which is actually a lichen, grows all along the trail. Since it is sensitive to pollution, the Reindeer Moss indicates that the air quality at the park is good.



The trail goes through cedar glades and barrens. The Glade Cress, small white flowers with yellow centers, blanket the limestone glade areas. Look for St. Johnswort, Nashville Breadroot and other special glade flowers. After you pass a small wet pond area, you come to a road. An arrow marks the trail just across from you. The trail is easy to follow, and passes a few old fencerows.

At the long fence row on your right is the largest of some sinkholes. It is at the end of a wide dry streambed. The trail crosses the streambed and makes a tiny loop recrossing the same streambed. There is a rail fence around a hand dug well once used for making whiskey in the connecting cave. There is a spring in the back of that cave leading to the name of this Hidden Spring trail. Any water in the stream during the winter or wet spring disappears quickly down these sinks.

When you start seeing more oaks, there is a sign that says, "Entering Hidden Springs Trail Head." This is not where you first entered. Look to the right to see an oak tree with an amazingly large gall. Keep following the white blazes. You will come to another similar sign. Although this is not the right place to leave the trail, you are getting close. Cross another paved road. In less than a quarter mile, you will see your car in the parking lot. It's time to leave this trail and explore the rest of the park.



A large oak gall seen on a tree along the Hidden Springs Trail at Cedars of Lebanon State Park. *Below left:* Glade Cress, seen along the Hidden Springs Trail.



Directions

Take I-40 to Lebanon exit 238. Go south on Highway 231 (State Route 10) for about seven miles. Turn left at the park entrance on Cedar Forest Road. Trail maps are available at the park office. Drive 1.5 miles past the office. Turn right following the arrows to the Hidden Springs Trail. There is a large parking lot on the right just after the turn. The trailhead is across the street.

Cedars of Lebanon State Park



South Cumberland Recreation Area's Foster Falls



Brianna Millar of Roselle, Ill., spent part of her spring break climbing bluffs on the bolted climbs at Foster Falls. *Below right: Foster Falls seen from the first overlook on the trail.*

Cool waterfalls, gorges and a creekside trail await hikers at Marion County's Foster Falls in South Cumberland Recreation Area.

The trail begins in the woods and quickly gets to an open area with power lines. Turn left at the power lines. Stop at the observation deck for a photo of the falls. Follow the power lines until the trail cuts off on the right. The climb down into the gorge is strenuous descending steeply from rock to rock. The trail is beautifully built with rocks put in just the right places to look natural and be where you need them.

Cross the suspension bridge over Little Gizzard Creek. Turn right towards the pool below Foster Falls. You have gone less than half a mile, but you are in another world. The falls may be slower in the summer, but the water will cool your feet as you sit down to enjoy the view. If someone has already taken this spot, turn around and follow the trail beside the creek. There is a large rock embraced by roots of a dead tree. This is another quiet place to enjoy the cool water.

34

The trail turns right and climbs quickly part way up the bluff. The trail then turns left and runs below the bluff line where all the rock climbers enjoy their sport. Most climbers don't mind if you stop to watch

them attempt these well known bolted climbs. In about a mile, you get to the sign for climber's exit 2 to your right. The climb out of the gorge is difficult. You will rejoice when you reach the wooden steps at the top. The access path ends at the main trail.

Turn left on this level easy part of the hike. There are wonderful views along the way. In about a half-mile, you arrive at the Small Wild camping area. There are six campsites and up to four tents are allowed on a campsite. Water is available in a stream that is just a short way further along the trail. There are also more amazing overlooks nearby where you can see into Laurel Gorge.

Your return hike the next day is easy with a level trail all the way back. In about two miles, you will be back at the parking lot. Be sure to sign out at the kiosk.

Directions

Take I-24 to exit 134. Turn on Highway 41 South toward Monteagle. In less than a mile, the highway turns left at the SCRA/Fall Creek Falls brown sign. Drive about six miles. You will pass the park visitor center and drive through Tracy City to the stoplight where the main road seems to end.

Turn right at the brown sign for Grundy Lakes and Foster Falls. Drive 7.5 miles to the turn off for Foster Falls on your right. The road ends at the trailhead parking lot. The trailhead is right behind the picnic shelter. Sign in at the kiosk. If you are going to camp overnight, you need to fill out a registration form.

South Cumberland Recreation Area's Foster Falls



Possum Creek Segment of the Cumberland Trail

The Possum Creek Segment of the Cumberland Trail State Scenic Trail in Hamilton County is a strenuous trail that begins as an easy hike through a hardwood forest and offers hikers fall colors, waterfalls and gorgeous gorges.

In just a few steps, you come to a pretty waterfall tucked at the side of the trail. You descend a little further and cross a bridge over a branch of Blanchard Creek. The trail parallels the creek as it climbs so you have views of the creek on your right and rockhouses and bluffs on the left. In early fall you will enjoy the showy reds of maples, golds and browns of oaks and the very red sourwood. Later in the fall after the leaves have dropped, you will get the spectacular views of the creeks and the bluffs on the other side of the gorge. The trail descends through rhododendron and a Hemlock forest. In about a mile and a half, you cross a long bridge over Big Possum Creek. The hike to this point and the return would be a nice moderate three-mile day hike.

After crossing the bridge, you climb steeply to an old railroad grade. The trail is

35

only level for a short distance before it turns off on the left and continues to climb up to the rock escarpment. The turnoff on the left is well marked with a sign, but it is easy to daydream and miss it.

There are several switchbacks, but the climb to the top of Hughes Ridge is very steep. There are several rockhouses where you can escape from the rain or hot sun. The trail is wonderfully level at the pine forest at the top of the ridge. When you start another descent, there is a side trail blazed with yellow that leads to a not-to-be-missed overlook. After about a 400-foot descent and about three miles from the trailhead, you come to the backcountry campsite on the left of the trail. You can set up camp and spend the rest of the day exploring the area.

Early the next day, leave your gear at the campsite. Continue on the trail to Stack Rock and climb the stairs beside it. Go an extra two miles beyond Stack Rock to Imodium Falls, a Class V drop named by the paddlers. The falls is the grand finale of this hike. Return to your campsite, pick up your gear and enjoy the hike back to the trailhead.



Fran Wallis

The trail at the base of a rock escarpment on the Cumberland Trail's Possum Creek Segment. Below left: A bridge on the trail over Big Possum Creek on the Possum Creek Segment of the Cumberland Trail.



Fran Wallis

Directions

From the North: Take Highway 40 to Highway 111. Go south on Highway 111 to the Jones Gap Road exit. Turn left at the end of the exit ramp and go back over the highway. Turn right immediately on Heiss Mountain Road and drive past the gas station. In a half mile there is a guardrail on the left near the trailhead. You can park on the side of this dead end road.

From the South: Take Highway 27 to Highway 111. Go north on Highway 111 to the Jones Gap Road exit. At the end of the exit ramp turn right and take the first right on Heiss Mountain Road as described above. There is a trail map on the trailhead kiosk.

Possum Creek Segment of the Cumberland Trail



Rock Island's Downstream Trail



Twin Falls at Rock Island State Park is a popular kayaking spot. *Below right:* The view from a side trail at the end of the loop.

Rock Island State Park's short 1.6-mile trail begins as an easy level trail that follows the Caney Fork River downstream. It is a small hike offering big surprises.

The trail soon splits. If you take the left fork, the trail stays near the river and you get a spectacular view of the 80-foot high Twin Falls, created by the Collins River leaking through the layers of rock and dropping into the Caney Fork River. This is a favorite kayaking spot. Even in the winter, you can watch the paddlers ferry across the wave between a rock and a hole. The trail turns right and rejoins the other section of trail as it continues downstream.

Less than a half-mile downstream, a side trail to Little Falls leads off to the right. It is marked with blue blazes. There are some wooden steps next to the waterfall that climb up to a rock shelter. The rock shelter offers a break from the cold wind. There is a window in the rock and running water inside the shelter most of the year. The water at the top of the falls runs over travertine flowstone.

When you get back to the main trail turn right and continue along the stick

36

of this "lollipop trail." There are several very shallow wet crossings with stepping stones strategically placed. The trail is steep and narrow in a few places with good views of Blue Hole and the river below. The trail gets to the

"lollipop loop" at the end. Go right at the beginning of the loop. Although this is a good wildflower place in the spring, you get the good views in the winter. When the loop begins to turn to the left, keep going straight instead. There is a tree down so the trail looks as though it ends. This is a side trail with blue blazes and leads to a sandy beach. The beach is a great place to snack, look for fossils, and watch the Great Blue Herons fish in the shoals.

Follow the side trail back to the main trail, and continue around the rest of the loop. The last part of the loop follows along the river bluff with views of icicles hanging from the limestone cliffs. Return on the linear part of the trail back toward Twin Falls. If you want to avoid climbing the wooden steps at the end, you can turn left at a directional sign leading up a wide path to the first parking lot. You then walk down the road to the right where your car is waiting.

Directions

Take Interstate 24 to Exit 111 and go east on Highway 55 toward McMinnville. In 28 miles, Highway 55 goes straight into Highway 70S. Take Highway 70S and turn left on Highway 136 North (Rock Island Road). Take Highway 136 North until you cross the bridge over the Caney Fork River. Turn left on Power House Road, which is the first left after the bridge. The road ends at the parking area next to the bridge. The trail starts at the bottom of the many wooden steps.

Rock Island State Park



Remembering our mother, Fran Wallas

Fran Wallas was an inspiration to many with her love of parks and rivers as well as a commitment to protecting natural areas so they could be enjoyed by everyone. A kinship with the outdoors was part of her life from a young age. She probably terrified her parents every time she came inside with torn clothes, scrapes and cuts, or a broken arm from falling out of a tree. The world of nature always called to her and her adventurous spirit was always at home there.

Our mother came from a long line of strong, smart, unstoppable women and had a history of standing up for what she believed in. She was a respected athlete in many sports throughout her school years and might have found her way to outdoor adventures in her early adulthood, but the responsibilities inherent in becoming a mother when she was in her early 20's directed her away from riskier pursuits. As a young woman she participated in lunch counter sit-ins to challenge racial segregation and marched to end the Vietnam War, and later protested against the storage of nuclear waste at Oak Ridge. She became a social worker to assist abused and neglected children and women in domestic violence situations. Her decision to become a lawyer developed from her desire to improve the world through principled action. Her desire to share her love of the diverse natural beauty of Tennessee and to get people out to the state parks led her to write trail reviews.

Fran encouraged a love of nature in her children and allowed them free rein in the woods, creeks and parks that were always nearby. In turn, we'd like to think that our biking, horseback riding, backpacking and spelunking served as an inspiration for her to begin outdoor adventures in her adulthood. Many would be surprised to learn that she didn't start her serious outdoor pursuits until she was in her 40s. Initially, she began biking country roads that skirted the Harpeth River between her house and downtown Franklin, TN with a group of friends who called themselves the Half-Fast Biking Club. As they began to hike and paddle the name evolved into the Wild Asters.

The first time she backpacked was a trek up Mt LeConte with David, who had a college work-study assignment at the Wild Boar Management Program outside Gatlinburg, TN. He invited her to backpack up to the bear shelter, noting the importance of plenty of food and some comfortable shoes. What began as an adventure became an annual event for her and many of her friends, who would stay at the LeConte Lodge for a couple of nights every autumn.

Our mother lived a complete and wonderful life and found a lot of pleasure in cultural pursuits. When she wasn't outside on the weekends then she was at a play, a musical performance, a movie, out to eat with friends, or up late solving a puzzle or crossword. Or, she was on a trip overseas to experience a part of the world that intrigued her. She subscribed to the philosophy of burning one's candle at both ends so as not to miss a moment.

Balancing her natural feistiness was an insatiable curiosity about the world, a light sense of humor and playfulness, and a tremendous heart. She will be missed by many and remembered each time we hike a trail, climb a mountain, paddle a river, and have our face warmed by the sun. She is out there now, heeding the call from nature, and having an adventure.

David Wallas, Adam Wallas and Becky Wallas Arce
December 2010



Fran Wallas, devoted supporter of Tennessee State Parks, dies

By Anne Paine

Frances “Fran” R. Wallas couldn’t resist the call of the trail. The diminutive, 68-year-old state environment department attorney would often leave work in Nashville on a Friday evening and – with or without someone else – travel several hours to the Great Smoky Mountains or a state park to camp and hike. Her walks have come to an end, but the trails she helped build and the joy of hiking she passed on to others remain. Wallas died this morning as a result of a nighttime fall down stairs a few weeks ago in an East Tennessee home.

A member of Phi Beta Kappa who at one time taught English and history, she had gone into social work before changing directions. She received a degree from the Nashville School of Law, taking a job in 1984 as an attorney for the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, where she remained. There she has provided legal advice on management of the state’s parks and the state’s recreational, historic, natural and archaeological areas and worked on boundary encroachment issues and land acquisitions, too.

Since, 2005, the Tennessee Conservationist, a department publication, has featured her articles called “Great Hikes in Tennessee State Parks.” The columns have been cited as a major factor in the magazine winning the 2008 Outstanding Media Award from the American Trails Association. As a volunteer contributor, she focused on a different trail each issue, including writing pieces, for instance, on a walk that offered the most waterfalls in the shortest distance, the bountiful flowers on another trail and a winter hike at Savage Gulf with great views. She might show up anywhere – from the Obed Wild and Scenic River trail to Roan Mountain.

Wallas, a mother and grandmother, held a spot in an elite group as a member of The Great Smoky Mountains 900 Miler Club, meaning she had hiked all 900 miles of maintained trails in the national park. Her devotion to trails included hefting large rocks and doing any clearing work needed to build and maintain hiking byways through the state, including on the Cumberland Trail State Park, an ongoing project to create a trail and linear park across Tennessee and the Cumberland Plateau. She had adopted a segment of trail along it, was a financial supporter and helped each year lead the Cumberland Trail Conference’s program for college students who came to work on the project. “The hiking community has lost a dear friend,” said Tony Hook, manager of the Cumberland Trail Conference.

The Tennessean, Copyright 2010.



