

Great smoky mountains national park

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True to its mission of preserving nature and history, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is able to preserve its forests, wildlife, terrain, and history. There are a number of reasons why most tourists flock to this national park.

Two states border the park: Tennessee and North Carolina. There are two main entrance points in Tennessee, which are Gatlinburg and Townsend, and one in North Carolina which is Cherokee. All entrance points are accessible via the I-40 interstate but with different exits. Most drivers are strongly advised to get maps from visitor centers or download the app and 2017 maps as GPS can be unreliable when driving across the mountains. By air, the closest airports are McGhee-Tyson Airport. It is 72 kms from Gatlinburg while approximately 96 kms from Cherokee is the Asheville Regional Airport. Currently, there are no public transportation that service the park. For the eco-friendly traveler, the park offers Electric Vehicle Charging stations at Sugarlands and Oconaluftee visitors centers. If you don't wish to drive or you're unfamiliar with driving in mountainous terrain, sign up for a package tour instead which already includes bus transfers.

The best news to visitors is that there are no entrance fees charged to you when visiting the park. You will only need to pay for activity fees. For example, if you go on camping in the park you may be required to pay camping fees from \$14-\$23 depending on whether you do backcountry, front country, group campgrounds, or horse camps. Picnic pavilions can also be rented in some of the picnic areas. Pavilions are at \$25 except if you are in Twin Creeks with fees at \$40-\$80 and Greenbier, which is at \$12. 50 per use. The park is open 24 hours every day of the year. Roads, trails, facilities, and <https://assignbuster.com/great-smoky-mountains-national-park/>

some spots may be closed though for rehabilitation so check the national parks websites to plan your visit ahead.

Cades Cove is known for its historic homesteads and churches that chronicle Appalachian life. You can also view wildlife from the cove. The valley in itself is very picturesque, with the mountains surrounding the lush valley below. Another valley that is frequented by visitors, even if it is remote, is the Cataloochee valley. Like Cades Cove, Catalochee has kept its celebrated past intact through several buildings. In addition to wildlife watching, you can also fish and hike the Boogerman trail. Clingmans Dome is the park's highest peak. If you visit on a clear day, you will be in for a treat of the park's best panoramic views. You can hike several trails here: Forney Ridge, the Appalachian Trail, and Clingsman Dome Bypass. Roaring Fork, not only has well-preserved historic buildings, but also has a lot of wildflowers and hiking its trails gives you streams, forests, cabins, mills, as if all frozen in time.

There are several waterfalls you can explore in the Smokies. The Laurel Falls is one of the park's most visited sites and it can get quite busy during the summer or on weekends. You can hike to Laurel Falls from the Sugarlands Visitor Center. Other waterfalls are Hen Wallow, Indian Creek, Rainbow, Juney Whank, Ramsey Cascades, and Mingo Falls. All of these water falls have access trails from other areas in the park.

It is best though to explore the park on your own so you will understand why it is elevated as one of the best national parks in the United States.