EXPLORING GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

History

Established in 1934, Great Smoky Mountain National Park is the most visited national park in the United States. A man by the name of David Chapman was a leader in establishing the park. He, among several others, worked with politicians from both Tennessee and North Carolina to ensure that the beauty of the Smoky Mountains would be preserved for decades to come.

One Park, Two States

Great Smoky Mountain National Park stretches across two states: Tennessee and North Carolina. Each side of the park offers visitors unique opportunities to learn about the past, and to explore the breathtaking mountains within the park. On the North Carolina side, visitors will experience the quieter side of the park. A great place to learn about the history of the park, including the history of the Cherokee Indians from the region, is the Oconaluftee Visitor Center. The North Carolina side of the park is home to the highest point on the Appalachian Trail, Clingmans Dome, a National Scenic Trail which spans over 2,000 miles from Maine to Georgia.

The Tennessee side of the park is often more crowded than the North Carolina side. One of the big attractions that brings visitors to the Tennessee side is Cades Cove. Cades Cove is an eleven mile drive back in time. Visitors can explore old log cabins, churches, cemeteries, and even an old mill. This side of the park also offers beautiful hiking trails, nature walks, and lots of wildlife!

Visit old log cabins along Cades Cove

The two states meet at Newfound Gap, which has an elevation of 5,046 feet. Here visitors will find a stone monument which marks the location where president Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicated the park in 1940.

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Encountering Wildlife

One problem visitors may run into while visiting Great Smoky Mountains National Park is all the bears. The first thing to remember is that the mountains are the bears' home and we are visitors. In order to protect yourself from bears it is important to carry bear spray with you at all times, and to always make noise while hiking (say "Hey, bear"). You should also keep a clean campsite-- always put food in the bear box or your car when you are not around. If you do encounter a bear, stay calm, make yourself known by making noise, and if possible, back away. Most bears will not approach humans, but having bear spray ready to go is important. Also, do not climb a tree because both black and grizzly bears can climb trees.

Weather

Summers in Great Smoky Mountain NP are long and full of heat and humidity. The temperature in the lowlands can get up to the mid-90s, while it is usually much more pleasant in the highlands. Winters are shorter and have moderate temperature. Snow is common in the mountain peaks, sometimes accumulating over two feet per month. The fall and spring bring enjoyable weather to the park with temperatures in the 60s and 70s.

Hiking Mount LeConte

If you are looking for an adventure while visiting the Great Smoky Mountains, then hiking Mount LeConte should be on your to do list. You can begin your travels from several trail heads, but Alums Cove is the fastest (and steepest) route. It should take you around 4 hours to climb to the top, where you can stay for the night at Mount LeConte Lodge. The only way to get to the lodge is by foot. Once you arrive, you can enjoy the views and a delicious dinner. After dinner hikers can relax by the campfire and snack on s'mores.

In the morning you can wake up early to watch the sunrise over the Great Smoky Mountains before having breakfast at the lodge. After Breakfast, it will be time to head back down the mountain. When you are making you way back to your car, be sure to be on the look out for llamas on the trail. The lodge uses the llamas to bring supplies to and from mountain top.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park
107 Park Headquarters Road
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

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Non-Fiction Article

Name _____

Great Smoky Mountains

COMPREHENSION CHECK

Directions: Read each question and circle the correct answer.

1.) Which state is Great Smoky Mountains National Park NOT located in?

a. Tennessee
b. Georgia
c. North Carolina

2.) Great Smoky Mountains National Park was founded in...

a. 1874
b. 1940
c. 1934

3.) Which famous trail runs through the park?

a. Appalachian Trail
b. Continental Divide Trail
c. Pacific Crest Trail

4.) Great Smoky Mountains National Park is...

a. the largest national park.
b. the most visited national park.
c. located in Alaska.

Directions: Read each statement and tell if it is true or false.

5.) Great Smoky Mountains NP is located fully in Tennessee. _____

6.) If you encounter a bear, stay calm and make noise. _____

7.) Cades Cove is a 30 mile road full of historic buildings. _____

Directions: Read each question and answer in the space provided using complete sentences.

8.) Why do you think people enjoy visiting Mount LeConte Lodge?

_____

_____

_____

9.) Describe the weather in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

_____

_____

_____

10.) Would you want to visit Great Smoky Mountains National Park? Why or why not? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

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