

Big Creek / Mouse Creek Falls



At about 7 miles with a relatively smooth and even surface this moderate hike climbs gradually, this is an outstanding easy hike you could even fish on!

At first the wide path climbs high above the Big Creek Campground, and away from the creek. After roughly 1.3 miles, however, the trail finally makes contact with the creek, and for the rest of this hike you'll never leave the sight or sounds of Big Creek. Wildflowers and rhododendron also line the pathway throughout this section of trail.

As you proceed higher you may notice a boulder field off to the right of the trail. This is just one of the after-effects from the logging days. The erosion caused by stripping the mountainside of trees has exposed these underlying boulders. Unfortunately, logging has left many permanent scars like this throughout the Smokies.

During its peak the mill at Crestmont was able to process up to eighty-thousand board feet a day. However, in the 1930s, when the Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission began purchasing property for the new national park, the lumber company sold its 20,229-acre Big Creek tract to the park for \$5.50 per acre - not a bad price, just over \$10,000 for this beautiful land!

At roughly 1.5 miles the trail passes Midnight Hole, a deep, emerald green pool that lies just below a six-foot waterfall flowing between two large boulders. If you're lucky you may see a trout scooting through the water here. Unfortunately this spot isn't marked by a trail sign. Moreover, you'll pass a couple of smaller waterfalls along the way that might lead some to believe that they've already reached Midnight Hole. On the flip side you can use this an excuse to take your time to explore the many features along this portion of the trail.

At just over two miles you'll see a hitching post on your left. Continue a little bit further beyond the hitching post and you'll see a short side trail that leads to a viewing area of Mouse Creek Falls. Located on the far side of Big Creek, this 45-foot waterfall emerges from the dense forest to tumble over several tiers of moss covered rocks before crashing into Big Creek. This is an outstanding place to drop your backpack, break out the camera, and grab your picnic lunch.

After we've eaten and taken pictures we'll continue along the Big Creek Trail for another two-tenths of a mile to reach a footbridge spanning Big Creek, which offers great views of pools below and just downstream from the bridge. Then continue for another 3 miles beyond Mouse Creek Falls, past an old carriage bridge, to visit Walnut Bottom, the site of an old logging camp. Walnut Bottom, now known for its exceptional displays of spring wildflowers, is located just past Backcountry Campsite 37.