

Fryingpan Mountain Lookout Tower



The United States Forest Service built the 70-foot tall tower in 1941. It is the tallest USFS lookout tower in Western North Carolina, and it is now on the National Register of Historic Places. A few tall communication towers share the summit, but they only interfere slightly with the panoramic views.

The steel tower atop the 5,410-foot Fryingpan Mountain was built for extensive views to watch for fires until the early 1990s. Today, only hikers enjoy the views from the tower. Although the very top of the tower is locked, you can climb five flights of stairs to just underneath the top platform.



The mountain received its name from neighboring Fryingpan Gap. Pioneers named the gap, but no one is sure why. One story centers on the odd shape of a spring in the gap. Another story tells of a frying pan that was always hanging in a tree in the camp.

The panoramic views include a close-up view of majestic Cold Mountain (peak is just five miles away). Mt. Pisgah is just 2.5 miles north. Looking south is Looking Glass Rock. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is visible northwest and Shining Rock Wilderness area to the southwest.

Directions: Park at the entrance to the Forest Service Road 450, at Milepost 409.6 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The road gate is always closed (do not block it). Just walk around the gate and walk up the gravel road to the summit and climb Fryingpan Tower about 1.5 miles. This section of the Parkway is closed much of the winter due to snow and ice. Best time to visit is April through October.