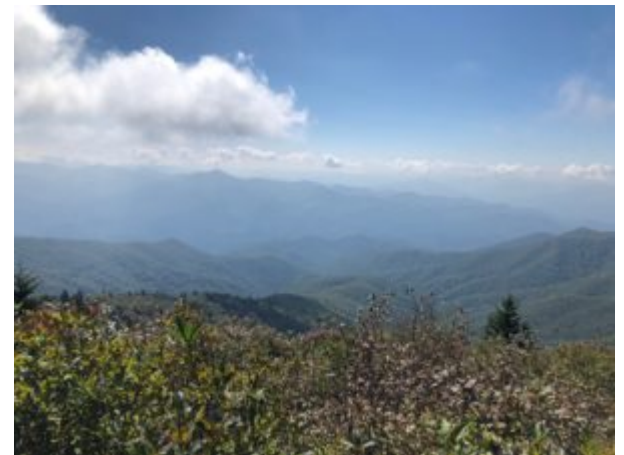


Hike to Smoky Mountains Plane Crash via Waterrock Knob



I heard there were a lot of plane crashes into the Smokey Mountains and I decided to find one and hike to it! Here's the story; on November 24, 1983, a Cessna 414 was flying from West Chicago to the Jackson County Airport here in the NC mountains. It crashed a little before 6pm at about 6,000 feet. Neither the pilot nor passenger survived. The cause of the crash was determined to be a combination of weather conditions/poor visibility and alcohol (the pilot's blood alcohol level was 0.04%).

A flight plan was never filed, which could mean anything (fun, drugs, etc.) certainly the pilot would have been flying by sight and ducking under clouds to avoid radar. As it turned out, the plane could have made it over the mountain if it had been about 150 feet higher! There are no engines at the site as they were salvaged soon after the crash.



Looking at the satellite view it appears the hike to the plane crash is about a 3-mile round-trip hike, first up to Waterrock Knob and then across the ridge to Browning Knob. To get here first drive to the visitor center at Waterrock Knob, (one of our favorite places to bring visitors too. If we hike to the top elevation is 6,300 feet. Most of the trees at the



Trail Marking

higher levels are evergreen and it smells like a Christmas tree farm as you near the top. Look closely before you get to the top and take a side trail to Yellow Face lookout right below Waterrock Knob. Then just before you get to the top you'll notice a small unmarked trail to the left (very easy to miss) watch for it. Looks like a



gap in the tall grass at first, then if you take that trail you will see a tree with a sign that says Browning Knob trail 0.7 on it. It's a tad scary walking thru the yellow dots hap hazardly sprayed by the CSI people mark the way. The first half of the hike is down the ridge and then up the spine of the connecting knobs, you are at Browning Knob as soon as you start to see the views again.

Once you're over to Browning Knob, notice another small unmarked trail to the left. Head down that trail about 100 feet and you should see the plane in the distance down the hill. It's been said not to ever go alone to the crash site, or too close to dark. I'd be amazed if there weren't ghosts there!







Bring lunch and plenty of water!