

Alum Cave Trail 5 miles round trip



Falcons, beautiful views. 5 miles round trip.

From the Sugarlands Visitor Center near Gatlinburg, drive 8.7 miles south along Newfound Gap Road to reach the Alum Cave Trailhead. The parking lot will be on your left.

At just over 1.3 miles from the trailhead hikers will reach Arch Rock, the first prominent landmark along the trail. The arch was formed by freezing and thawing, which eroded away the softer rock from underneath the harder rock. The trail actually goes under the arch and requires a climb of several steps etched into the stone before exiting at the top. Roughly two miles from the trailhead hikers will reach the appropriately named Inspiration Point; with its commanding views of Little Duck Hawk Ridge towards the west, and Myrtle Point near the top of Mount LeConte towards the northeast. The Eye of the Needle, a hole in the rock at the top of Little Duck Hawk Ridge, can also be seen from Inspiration Point. A much better view of the Eye can be found a little further up the trail. While descending the trail on our return trip we watched two peregrine falcons as they playfully swooshed through the air near the Eye. In case you didn't know, peregrine falcons are also known as duck hawks.

At 2.5 miles hikers will reach Alum Cave, which really isn't a cave, but is actually a concaved bluff, about 80 feet in height, and roughly 500 feet in length. During the warmer months of the year water drips off from the ledges above. In the winter these droplets turn into large icicles.

Alum Cave has some interesting history behind it as well. The Epsom Salts Manufacturing Company was established at Alum Cave in 1838. Until it was sold in 1854, the company mined epsom salt, which was used by mountain folk to dye homespun clothing a reddish brown.

Of course the Alum Cave Trail continues up to the summit of 6593-foot Mount LeConte.

Bring snacks, water, and something to cook!