

Chestnut Branch Trail



The Chestnut Branch Trail is a great Smoky Mountain hike at 4.2 miles round trip.



The trailhead can be found at the Big Creek Ranger Station, 2.3 miles from Interstate 40 exit 451.

Once an old logging road, Chestnut Branch was home to around nine residents before the establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Much of the forest surrounding the trail has since reclaimed those former homesteads, though as you walk along the trail you might see the remnants of rock walls, fence posts, and various metal artifacts.

The plan was to start out at the junction with Big Creek Road and walked until we came to the intersection with the Appalachian Trail and then return back the way we came.

So, that's what we did, the trail started fairly steady and steep, it did level off in a few spots but was mostly an uphill chug!

The forest was beautiful, littered with some giant old growth trees, damp and the rocks were covered in moss. The stream was roaring the whole way up, which was very relaxing.



After see this giant, we decided to go do Joyce Kilmer this Saturday!
if you do find any old artifacts along the trail, remember that these were once home sites and these artifacts are protected by federal law and are to be left untouched.

As the trail parallels a stream, you'll notice many loud cascades flowing into large pools. We thought of how nice to jump in on a hot summer day!



We came across a second switchback as we ascended the ridge. It seemed like our last 1000 feet went on forever, straight up! Finally, I could see the signs marking the AT in the distance - that gave me the energy for a final push to the top!



Look closely, you can see the sign in the distance.
We finally reached the Appalachian Trail at just over 2.5 miles.



The girls were tired!

We decided to split up, Pam and Sheryl went on to the AT to return the 1.9 miles to Davenport Gap where the AT crosses SR1297. That's where I met them - I basically ran down the way we came up, grabbed the truck and searched them out with GPS. They were happy to see me when I finally arrived, I broadcasted my arrival by beeping my horn from a distance.

Later we headed back the long way thru cataloochee on a long winding dirt road and saw some Elk and a great fishing/camp place! It was definitely the scenic route.



