

GSMNP Walnut Bottom Campsite 37



To get to the turn to Big Creek by auto from I-40 going west, as soon (and I mean as soon) as you see the North Carolina Tennessee line get in the right lane to take the Waterville exit 451. Cross the Pigeon River pass an old paper mill converted into a Duke energy power plant curve right and then turn left. The park entrance is about 2 miles away - you'll see this sign:

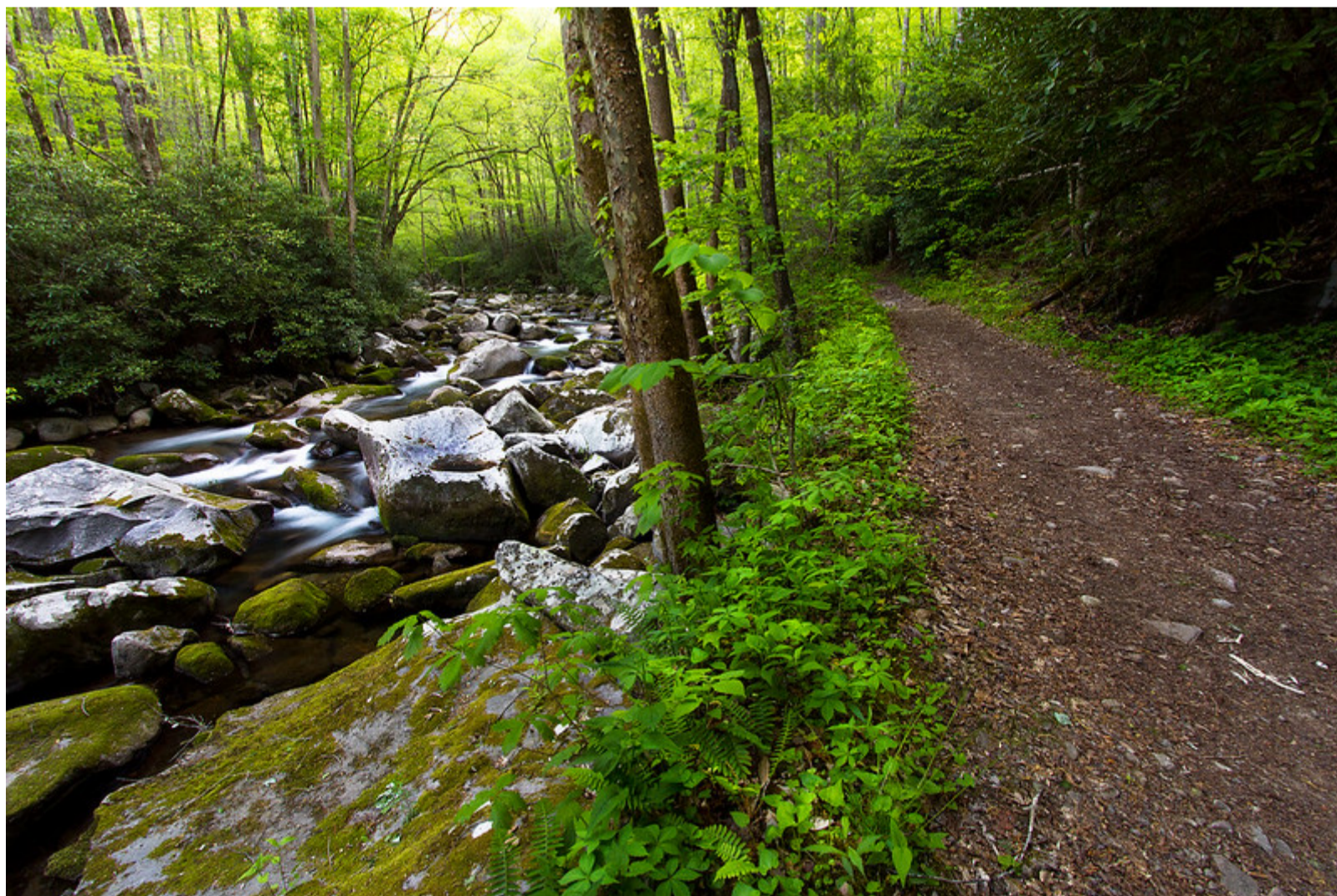


Take the gravel road upstream .2 miles to the Big Creek Ranger Station. The stream stays close to the road for the half mile or so to the campground parking area comfort center complete with bathrooms.

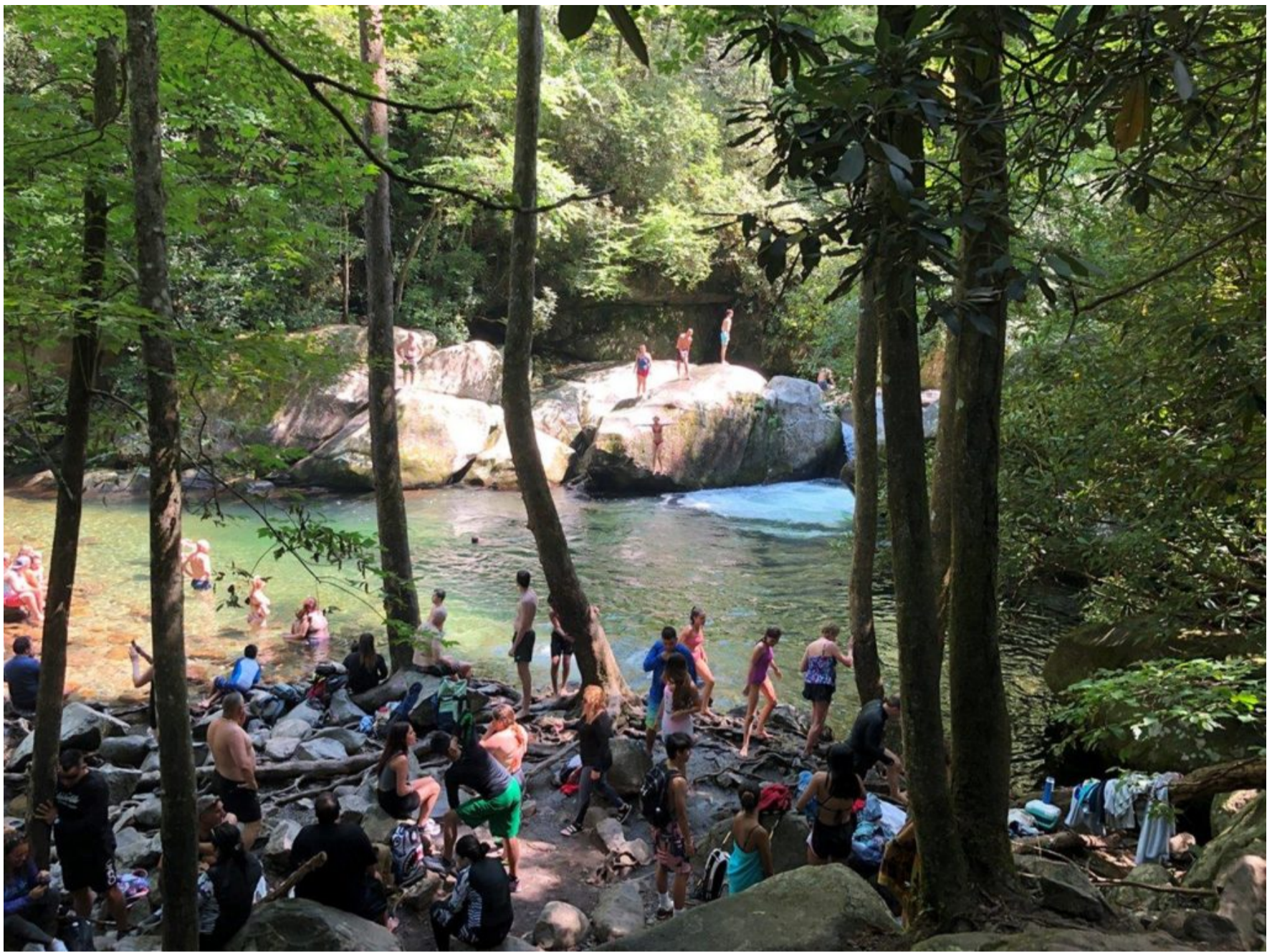
We parked and started back the way we just drove in and entered the Big Creek trail at the sign making the entrance.



As we started off we noticed how well groomed the trail was, and how wide, making it an easy, slight uphill, walk. However, the rocks on the trail make it easy to bend an ankle - I recommend you wear mid or high-top boots. We took the Big Creek trail, know the sign says 5.2 miles - it's really 5.2 to the junction of Swallow Fork and 5.6 miles to the Walnut Bottom Campsite 37.



At 1.5 miles we walked past Midnight hole, a favorite spot for campers and locals on a hot day. We found close to 50 people jumping, swimming and cooling off in the brisk water and deep pool of this gorgeous hole. If you look closely you can see a woman in a red bikini swimsuit mid air about to plunge into Midnight Hole.



Midnight Hole

At 2 miles or so we saw a pull off to the left, after walking up and looking across the creek we saw a beautiful double waterfall called mouse creek falls. We enjoyed the view and took a selfy. Notice the pool between the upper and lower falls - just amazing!





At 5.2 miles we came upon Swallow Fork, the sign indicated a hike to Mount Sterling could be made from here to the ridge trail in 4 miles, making this the easiest (grade wise) way to get there. However, the total distance to the fire tower would be 11.2 since the fire tower is 2 miles more on the ridge trail. Here is a link to an alternate way to get to the Sterling Mountain Fire-tower in only 2.5 miles: ***Mount Sterling Hike***



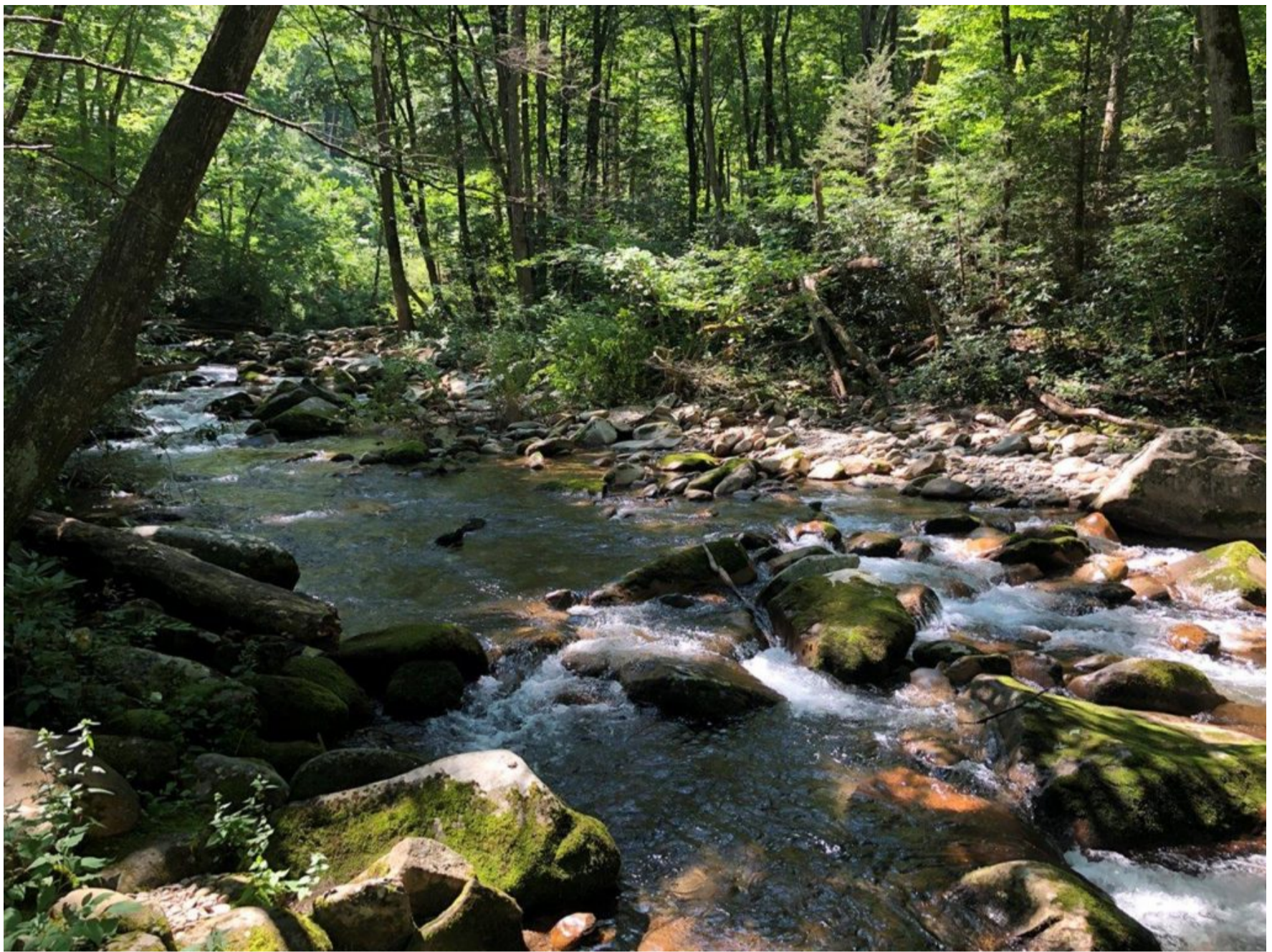
We proceeded on the Big Creek Trail and at 5.6 we arrived at the Walnut Bottom #37 site, just after crossing a very well made bridge and reading a bear activity warning sign. I clocked the elevation in at

3,318 feet, making it cooler and naturally breezy, with the raging river passing the sites.



If you pass the campsite, Big Creek Trail runs into Low Gap Trail which will take you to the Appalachian Trail.

I'm told fishing is very good up from the midnight whole to the Walnut Bottom campsite. I can tell you this for certain, it's a very well maintained and excellent location for your fishing base camp. Most all the sites have flat root free tent sites, great tree coverage for shade, and from here we could access several feeder streams that all flow into Big Creek.



The camp site marks the end of Big Creek Trail. The walnut bottom site is broken down into 5 individual sites with plenty of room for for up to 4 people in each. There also is a sixth site that could be used for overflow, however the 5 sites with fire-rings are for up to 20 people and need to be booked in advance.



The yellow Creek trail begins where Big Creek Trail ends and at 6.3 miles from the start or .7 tenths of a mile past the Walnut bottom sites, you'll arrive at the start of Gunter Fork Trail. The stream from this point up is referred to as Guyot Creek.



If you want proceed 3.3 miles upstream you'll arrive at Deer creek. We didn't go that far, as it would be 9.6 miles from the start. A tad too far for us without spending the night!

Directions:

Drive from Sylva Base it was 54.5 miles, about 1 hour to the Big Creek Pa Comfort Station, Newport, NC 37821











