

Cherokee Hiking Club Trail Blurb

Kirkland Creek Trail #85

Tellico Ranger District - Cherokee National Forest

Distance: 4.3 miles

Elevation Change: 700 feet

High Point: 2580 feet (Sandy Gap)

Low Point: 1880 feet (Bald River Road)

Trail Rating: Moderate (please refer to our trail difficulty rating system on our website)

Parking: Parking is available at both ends of the trail. Sandy Gap is the western end of the trail where the Kirkland Creek Trail intersects with the Benton MacKaye Trail. There is plenty of space here for several cars. The eastern end of the trail is along Bald River Road just north of the Holly Flats Campground. This trailhead has only room for 2 or 3 cars.

Driving Directions to the Bald River Road Parking Lot: From the intersection of the Tellico River Road (FS Road 210) and the Cherohala Skyway (TN 165), drive up the Tellico River Road past Bald River Falls (mile 6.3) and through Green Cove (mile 13.4) where you will find a couple of stores and motels as well as many cabins. Turn right onto the Bald River Road (FS 126) (mile 13.7). Follow this gravel road several miles up over Sugar Mountain and down to about a half mile before the Holly Flats Campground entrance (mile 5.3 on the Bald River Road). The trailhead is marked with a carsonite sign with FS 85 marked on it.

Driving Directions to the Sandy Gap Trailhead: From TN 68 where this highway crosses over the Hiwassee River, bear east onto River Road, a gravel road which heads east upstream along the north bank of the Hiwassee River, then leaves the river to parallel Shuler Creek. When you reach a T-intersection at mile 2.0, bear left, onto Shuler Creek Road and travel to mile 6.9 to the intersection with Joe Brown Highway coming in from the left, another gravel forest road. These two roads merge, then in a short distance, Joe Brown highway crosses Shuler Creek and continues east. You should go straight, staying on Burrell Mountain Road, paralleling the left side of Shuler Creek. At mile 9.4, Burrell Mountain Road turns right. You go straight, now of Evans Road and still following Shuler Creek, reaching Sandy Gap at mile 13.4. Park in the parking lot at the gap. The Benton MacKaye Trail runs right through the parking lot. The Kirkland Creek Trail runs off the northwest end of the parking lot and is labeled as FS Trail 85.

Shuttle from Bald River Trailhead to Sandy Gap Trailhead: This is a long shuttle, and in general we would recommend going to one or the other trailhead and do an in and out trip. But if you really want to shuttle the whole distance (23.1 miles, mostly on gravel forest service roads), here is how to do it. From the Bald River Road Trailhead, head west up over Basin Gap and to the intersection with Wildcat Creek Road mile 5.1. Turn left and follow this road which becomes paved Smithfield Road. Smithfield Road intersects with TN 68 at mile 9.5. Turn left (south) on TN 68 to Joe Brown Highway at mile 13.6. Turn left onto Joe Brown Highway and follow this eventually gravel road over Unicoi Gap and down to its intersection with Shuler Creek Road at mile 19.1. This road becomes Evans Road and follow it to the top at Sandy Gap at mile 23.1.

Trail Description: From the Bald River Road Trailhead, immediately cross the Bald River (must use wading shoes, there is no possibility of crossing this river and keeping your boots dry unless you take them off). You will be following an old railroad grade along the left side of Kirkland Creek. After 0.9 miles, you will cross Kirkland Creek, which again may require wading shoes if the water is high. Then you will be following the right side of the creek. You will cross the creek, actually, several times until you reach the confluence of Kirkland Creek with Waucheesi Creek coming in from the right. At this point, you will cross Waucheesi Creek and with several more crossings will parallel Waucheesi Creek for almost a mile before finally cutting steeply left of the hillside and away from the creek bed. You will soon reach an old logging road at the crest of the ridge and will cut right on this trail and follow it on up to Sandy Gap. Be careful at the 4-way intersection at a gap. Go straight, not right or left. Please note this route is different from the route in the Skelton Book (Cherokee National Forest Hiking Guide). The old route which stays along Kirkland Creek up to the gap, has been abandoned and is no longer maintained.

Camping: Several excellent campsites are along the trail next to the creek.

Water: Water is available all along Kirkland and Waucheesi Creeks and is also available just a short distance down from the Sandy Gap trailhead at a spring.

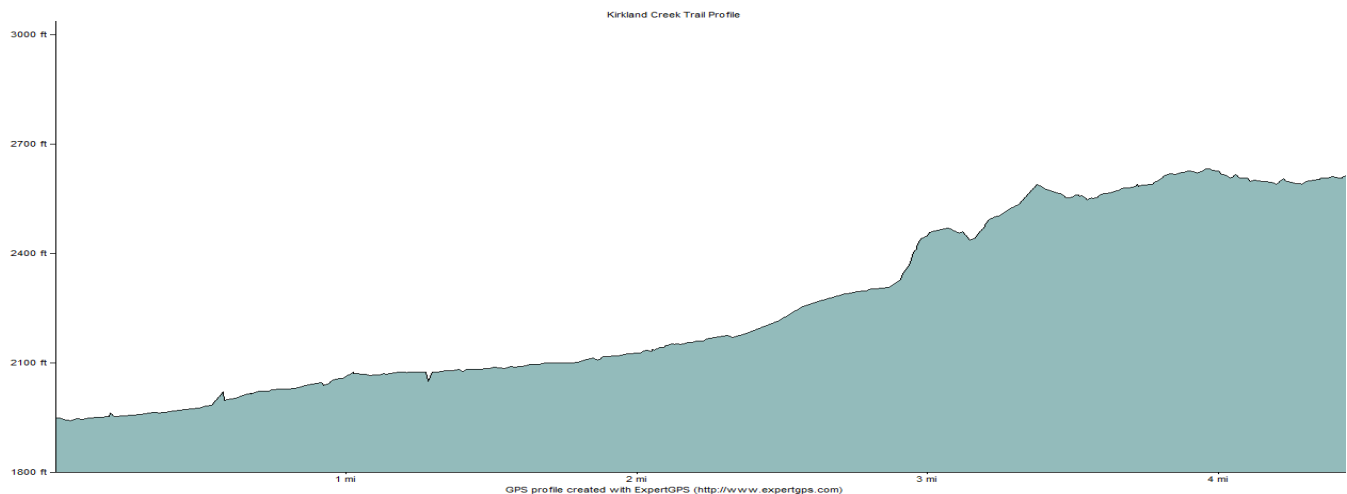
Cell phones: Cell phone service is spotty in the Tellico Ranger District of the Cherokee National Forest, but good service is available in Tellico Plains. Emergency is 9-1-1.

History of the Trail: This trail was heavily logged in the early part of the 20th century but is now totally contained within the Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area, protecting the area from logging. The trail must be maintained with primitive non-motorized tools as well. The trail for part of the way follows the old logging route up the gorge. You may see trout fly fishermen along the trail. The area is inhabited by bear and boar and you are likely to see signs of their existence. Also wild turkey are frequently seen along the trail.

Trail Maintenance: This and other trails in the Tellico Ranger District of the Cherokee National Forest are maintained by volunteers. If you would like to volunteer, contact the Tellico Ranger Station at 423-253-8400 (250 Ranger Station Road, Tellico Plains, TN 37385, lesliemsmith@fs.fed.us). If you see something which needs the attention of the trail maintainers, please contact the ranger station.

Updated April 26, 2009

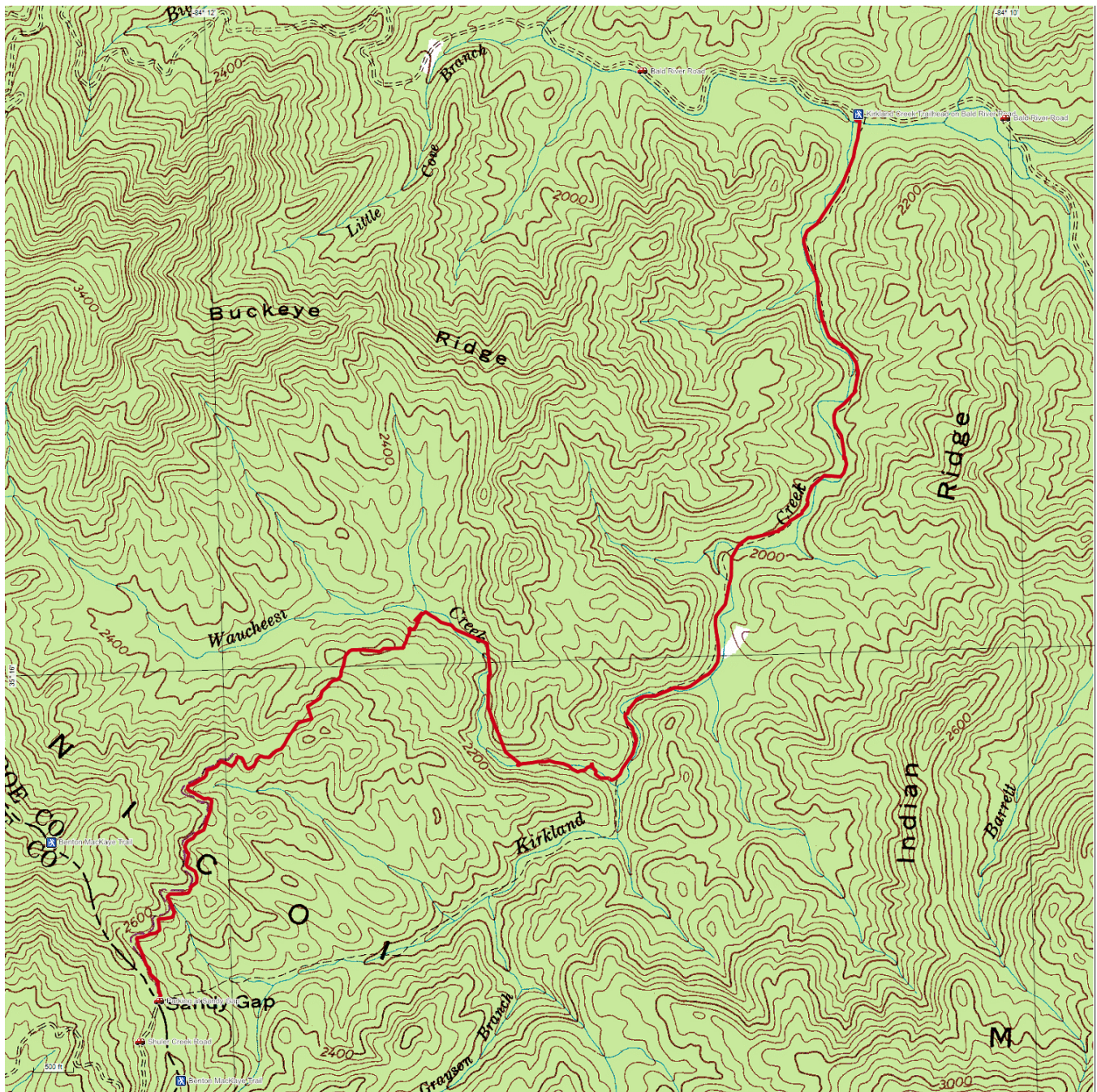
This trail blurb was developed by the Cherokee Hiking Club, 2359 Varnell Road, Cleveland, TN 37311. For more information, check out our website at www.CherokeeHikingClub.org



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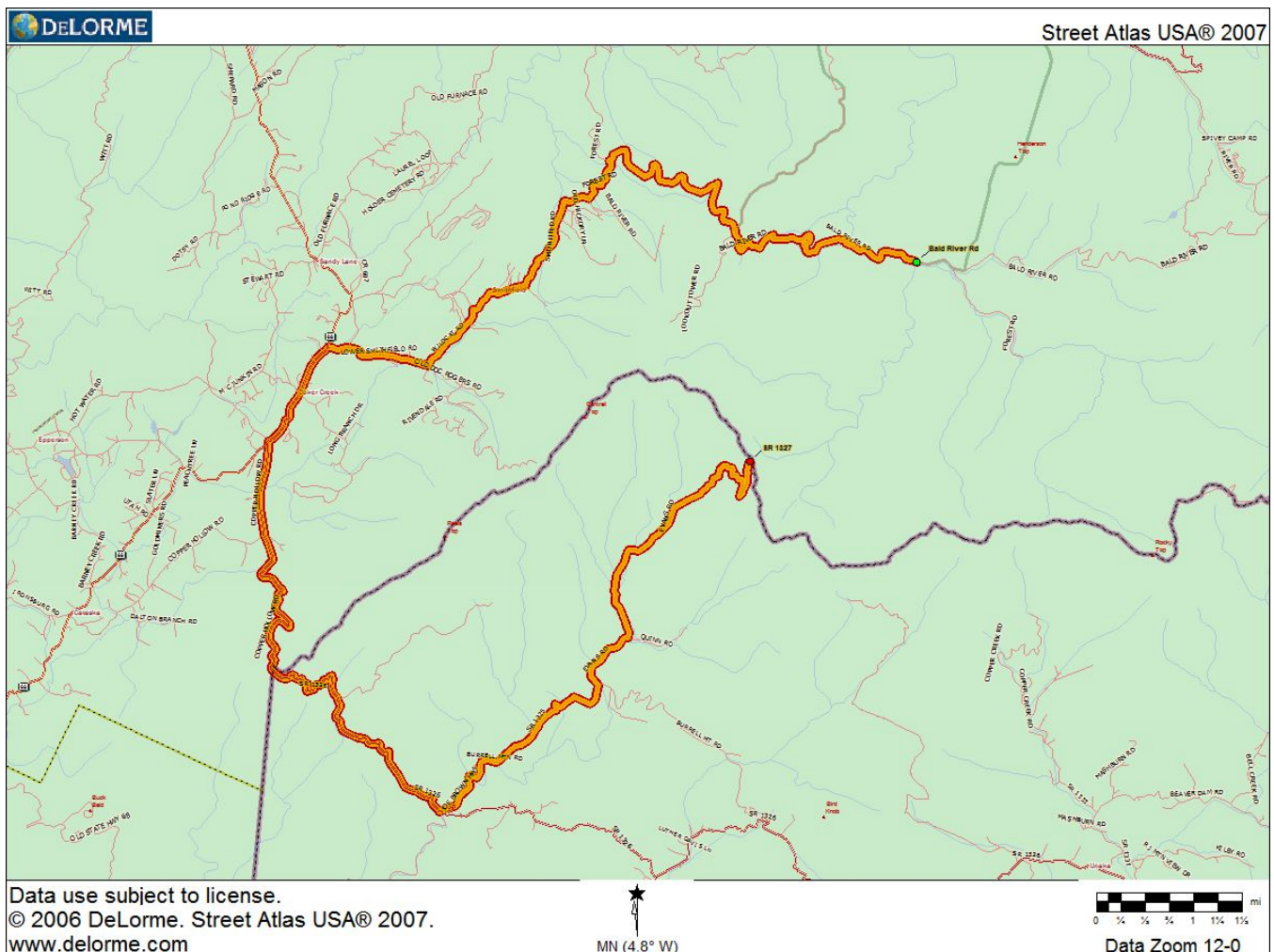
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Kirkland Creek Trail #85 Shuttle Map Tellico Ranger District – Cherokee National Forest

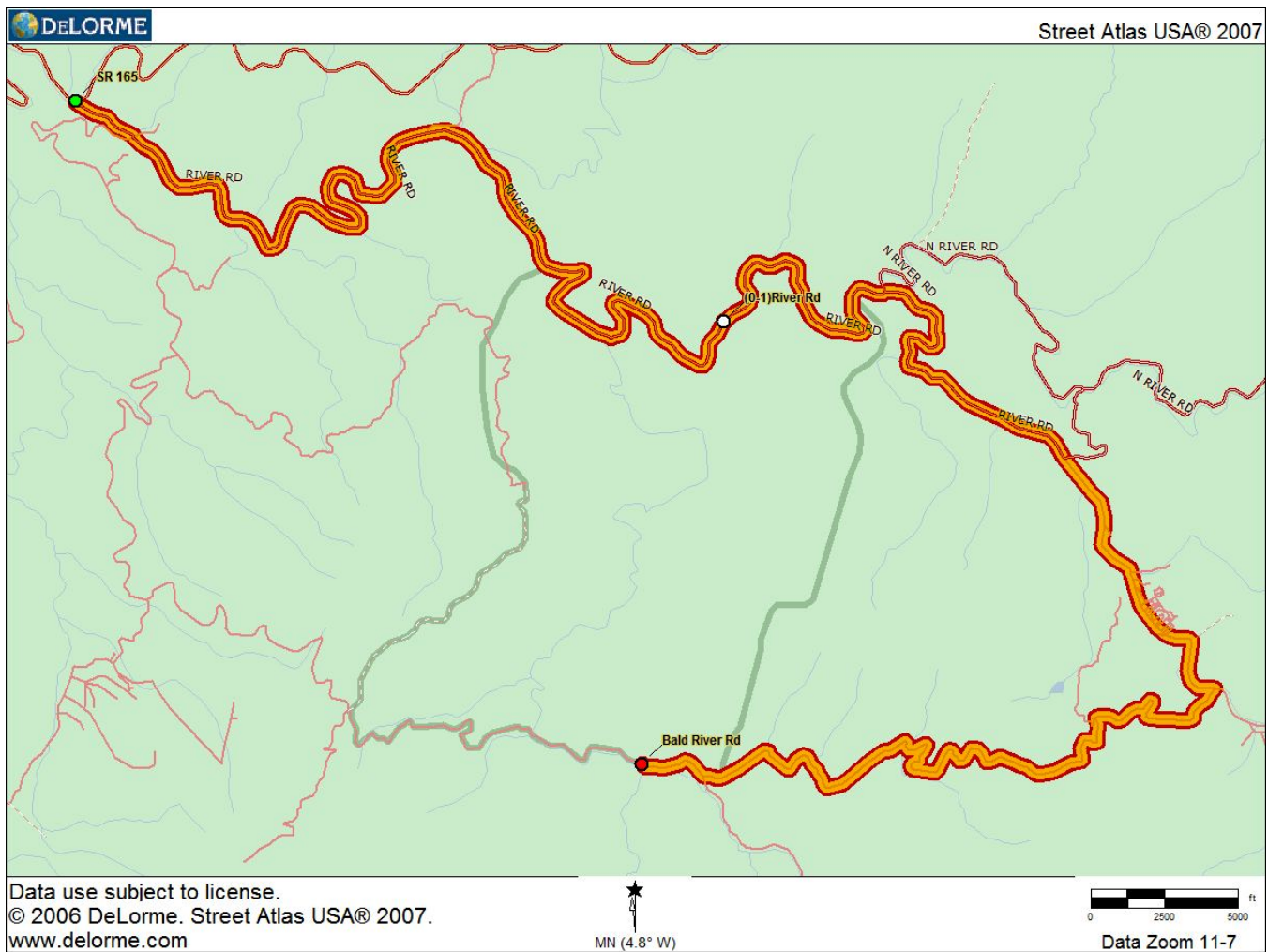


Cherokee Hiking Club Trail Blurb

Kirkland Creek Trail #85

Bald River Road Access

Tellico Ranger District – Cherokee National Forest



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Kirkland Creek Trail #85

Shuler Road / Sandy Gap Access

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