



A Section Hike of the Appalachian Trail

by Jack N. Callahan

The Appalachian Trail (AT) draws thousands of backpackers each year and many attempt to hike the entire length. I have led numerous backpacking trips on the AT but I prefer to hike some of the more scenic sections. One of the most scenic, according to many “through hikers” (hikers attempting to hike the entire AT in one year) is the section from Carvers Gap to Highway 19 East from Roan Mountain north. This is a great section, not only for the ease of access, but also because it does have excellent scenery.



There is a hostel on Highway 19 East which runs a shuttle to Carvers Gap and provides a safe location to leave your vehicle during the hike. The shuttle takes about 30 minutes to reach Carvers Gap. From there back to the hostel along the AT is 17 miles. Some rush through it in one day, but I prefer to make a three-day two-night trip. Carvers Gap is 5,512 feet in elevation, so you are starting high, which is always my preference. From there the trail climbs uphill to Round Bald. This provides a great 360-degree view of the country. Continuing on, you hike down and then up to Jane Bald. This is a somewhat difficult climb up to the intersection with a side trail to Grassy Ridge. I prefer to go up to Grassy Ridge and camp the first night. The elevation is 6,184 feet and has spectacular views. There are many good locations for a campsite which allow sunset and sunrise views without moving. Flowering plants in the Spring include rhododendron, wild azalea, and the rare Roan Lily. This is the only lily native to North Carolina that is pollinated by hummingbirds.

Day two starts out with a downward hike to the Stan Murry Shelter. There you can stop to take a short break and use the picnic table. Then you take another climb and then back down to the intersection with the Over Mountain Victory Trail. A side trail goes down to the Barn Shelter (currently closed due to storm damage). It is a steep drop to the Barn, a great place for lunch, to water up, and possibly use the latrine. The climb back up to the AT begins a very steep climb to finally reach Little Hump which is

a great bald to rest and again take in the scenery. Often you may observe a pair of ravens soaring overhead at this location. From here the trail goes downhill again to finally reach a good campsite at Bradley Gap with a reliable spring close by. At this location a decision is usually made to either camp here or to climb Big Hump and go on to Doll Flats to camp. I have done it both ways, but Doll Flats is a great place to camp if you have the energy to climb Big Hump late in the afternoon.

From the saddle at Bradley Gap, the climb is a difficult grind to the top of Big Hump "The Hump." The views are great and are needed to take your mind off the steep grade and the constant "false tops" you encounter. Average grade of this section of trail is 14 percent. On top of the Hump is another place to camp for the views. It is level, but after camping there one night and waking up in a severe thunderstorm with lightning and 30 mph winds, I chose not to do it again.

From the Hump down to Doll Flats is an easy hike until you reach the tree line. Then the tread sometimes becomes difficult with a lot of short, steep, rocky sections. This is a great section to observe the many lichens growing on the rocks and tree trunks, like tripe and beard lichens. Doll Flats is another camping option with a field, wooded area and large rock outcrops to use as tables. There is a reliable water source nearby. From here it is a steady downhill hike to Highway 19 and the hostel. The tread is good and you are in a forested area with large timber.



The total elevation gain for this hike is 2,100 feet. The total drop is 4,670 feet. As mentioned, there are several difficult steep sections (40 percent grade), and it does get a fair amount of use. I would avoid it when the spring surge of through hikers come marching through. The views and the ease of access make it one of my favorite backpacking trips. I have made this hike six times in the past 6 years. I plan to do it again this fall.

Stan Murry of the Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoe Club is recognized for his efforts to save the "Balds" for the AT with several brass plaques on the trail. The many Forest Service personnel who worked tirelessly in the acquisition of these many acres include but are not limited to: Lewis Kearney, Tom Speaks, Tracy Stiles, Dave Ferguson, Wayne Shepherd, Bill Kane, J.J. Foreman, Mitch Gurganus, Dan Ballenger, Jim Frola and Horace Landrith. The hikers of the AT owe them immensely for this outstanding section of trail, one of the most scenic in the entire 2,190 miles.

- PAST EVENTS

BACKPACK TRIP IN MOUNT PISGAH AREA MAY 3 – 7, 2022

This was a backpacking hike of the iconic Art Loeb Trail in the Shining Rock Wilderness in North Carolina near Asheville. The total hike was about 31 miles and is considered very strenuous. There are scenic views across several miles of peaks with elevations above 6000'. Hikers were Buddy Arnold, Charlie Snow, Bruce Lee, James Anderson, Stuart Johnson, and Kelly Mott. The following was the itinerary.



May 3, Day 1-Drove to Davidson River Campground (about 3.5 hours) and camped the first night there. This is a very nice campground with a stream running through it.

May 4, Day 2-Shuttled to Camp Daniel Boone. Starting elevation about 3500'. Hiked 6.8 miles to campsite elevation about 5800', gain of about 2300'. Parts of the trail were very rough, but there were a number of scenic views. Buddy Arnold (foot issues) and Stuart Johnson (hip problems), decided to leave the trail at Ivester Gap (about mile 9) about halfway the second day and walked about three miles to a Forest Service road for pickup.

May 5, Day 3-Hiked 8.4 miles to Deep Gap Shelter at mile 15.2, 4500', loss of about 1300'. Again, some rough trails, but very nice views at Tenant Mountain and Black Balsam Knob. Shelter at Deep Gap in poor condition.

May 6, Day 4-Hiked about eight miles to campsite near stream at Mile 22.5, elev. 3100', loss of about 1400'.

May 7, Day 5-Hiked about eight miles to Davidson River Campground, 2100', loss of about 1000'. Drove back to Cleveland.



Overall, this was a successful hike with many great views and some nice camping sites. However, on the negative side, the trail was extremely rough in places, badly needing some maintenance. There was one area where we took an alternate route that turned out had been closed due to erosion, but was not marked where we entered it. It was extreme to the point of being dangerous. The trail is poorly marked in many places, requiring a good GPS trail guide. Water sources are shown on the map, but require some searching to find at times. I would recommend portions of the trail for day hikes, or shorter backpacks, but not the entire trail for most hikers. - Buddy Arnold

WEDNESDAY WALKS ON THE CLEVELAND GREENWAY

THIRD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH BREAKFAST



- UPCOMING EVENTS

NOTE: Event schedule subject to change according to guidance from governmental agencies and offices regarding COVID-19, weather, or other conditions. An email will be sent to members if an event is canceled.

CHILDERS CREEK SECTION OF BMT/JOHN MUIR NRT

JUNE 6, 2022 MONDAY RELIANCE TN

Meet at 9 am at Childers Creek trailhead parking area. Hike is six miles total and is considered moderate due to section in the middle where there are big rock steps and narrow trail. Bring water and lunch or snacks. If interested in carpooling from Cleveland, contact Hike Leader James Anderson at 423-715-8824.

MONTHLY CLUB MEETING

JUNE 9, 2022 THURSDAY 6 PM GEE CREEK CAMPGROUND AMPHITHEATER

Bring your favorite dish for the potluck dinner. The Club will be furnishing drinks, cups, and plastic eating utensils. The program is Gee Creek Raptors (including owls and hawks) by Ranger Gillian Roberts.

ROCK CREEK TRAIL/BMT LOOP

JUNE 10, 2022 FRIDAY

With Benton MacKaye Trail Association. Seven and a half miles with short shuttle, moderate with about 1500' elevation climb. We will meet at Thunder Rock Campground, shuttle to Rock Creek Trailhead and hike up the Rock Creek Trail, partly paralleling the creek, 5.5 miles to the intersection with the BMT/Dry Pond Lead Trail and return downhill in two miles to the Thunder Rock CG. There is one significant creek crossing at mile four, so I suggest bringing wading shoes, dry socks, and hiking poles. Dogs on leash attended by well-behaved humans are welcome. Bring lunch, plenty of water, bug repellent, and a snack for your dog as well. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris at harrisri@aol.com or call 423-253-6358 for meetup time.

BMT/WHIGG RIDGE TRAIL LOOP

JUNE 20, 2022 MONDAY

With Benton MacKaye Trail Association. Moderately strenuous, 10.5 miles, elevation climb 2100 feet. We will meet at the Pheasant Fields parking area where the BMT crosses the Tellico River and River Road. We will hike six miles up the BMT/Sycamore Creek Trail to Whigg Meadow Road. This is a fairly gradual climb. Then we will hike .5 miles down the road to the trailhead for the Whigg Ridge Trail, then down this trail about four miles to the intersection with the BMT and the parking lot. No significant creek crossings. Dogs on leash attended by well-behaved humans are welcome. Bring lunch, bug repellent, hiking poles, water and a snack for your dog as well. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris at harrisri@aol.com or call 423-253-6358 for meetup time.

FALLS BRANCH FALLS

JUNE 21, 2022 TUESDAY CHEROHALA SKYWAY

Meet at the Cherokee Skyway Welcome Center in Tellico Plains, TN, at 9 am or the West Rattlesnake pull-off/trailhead on the Cherokee Skyway at 10 am. This is three miles of moderate to difficult terrain. It will include a small water crossing with slick rocks. Wildflowers should be in bloom. A hiking pole (or poles) is highly recommended. Contact Hike Leader Sue Robinson at 423-519-9751.

WEDNESDAY WALKS ON THE CLEVELAND GREENWAY

Every Wednesday Jack Callahan leads a 3.75-mile walk on the Cleveland Greenway, meeting at the lower end of the parking lot across from Perkits and the Gondolier restaurant adjacent to Keith Street. Meet time is currently 4:30 pm. A note on the walk is sent out the beginning of each week on Messenger. Contact Jack Callahan at 423-284-7885 if you want to be included in the messages.

THIRD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH BREAKFAST

Join us for conversation over breakfast at 8:30 am at Old Fort Restaurant on 25th Street in Cleveland. For more information, contact Jack Callahan at 423-284-7885.

· **NON-CLUB OPPORTUNITIES**

TELLICO/OCOEE VOLUNTEER TRAIL CREW

Check the Facebook page for future work days.

BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

See the calendar for upcoming events.

As always, go to the specific sponsor web page for more information on these events if you plan on attending.