

Hiking Tips

- Hike with at least one other person and make sure someone knows where you are going
- Research the trail and the terrain
- Bring the right type of food and plenty of water
- Remember sunscreen
- Check the weather and prepare accordingly
- Good hiking shoes are a must
- Consider the risks involved (weather, injuries, wildlife)
- Keep track of the time and your location

Parks & Recreation Management

Students in the Parks & Recreation Management program have produced this guide. For more information about the PRM program contact us at 828.227.7310 or visit our website at prm.wcu.edu

Base Camp Cullowhee

Not ready to explore on your own? Or would like to try a new outdoor adventure? Need to rent outdoor gear for your next adventure? WCU's Base Camp Cullowhee (BCC) provides an array of outdoor program services, which include recreation trips, outdoor gear rental, and experiential education services. Contact BCC at 828.227.3633 or visit their website at basecamp.wcu.edu

Additional Resources

American Hiking Society | americanhiking.org

Blue Ridge Parkway Hiking Trails | brptrails.com

Friends of Panthertown | panthertown.org

Great Smoky Mountains National Park | nps.gov/grsm/index.htm

Hiking in the Smokys | hikinginthesmokys.com

Hiking in Western North Carolina | hikewnc.info

Nantahala National Forest Hiking Trails | ncnatural.com/NCUSFS/Nantahala/trails.html

Cullowhee Adventure Guide Originally Produced by:

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(Brian Howley, Robert Owens, Brett Atwell, Milas Dyer)

Updated in 2015 by Thomas Graham, Peter Langenwalter and Daniel Csizmadia

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Hiking

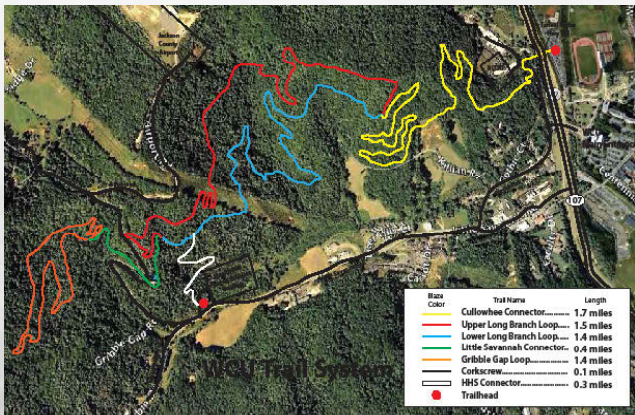
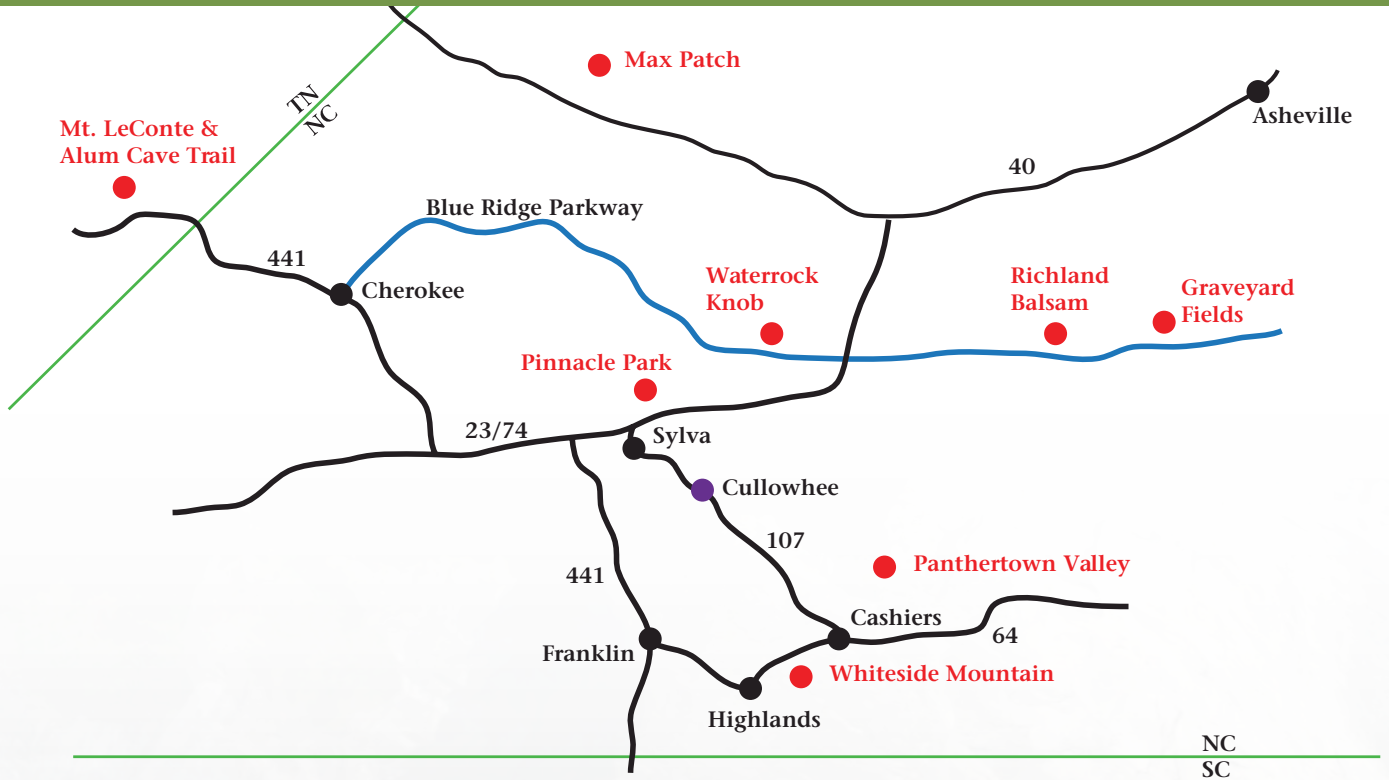
Where Whee Play



9 Local Trails with Detailed Descriptions and Directions
Tips for a Success Trip
Leave No Trace Ethics

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Where Whee Hike



To download a map of the WCU Trail System, go to basecamp.wcu.edu and click on "WCU Trail System Info" on the left

WCU Trail System

Difficulty: Moderate | Trail Time: 1-5 hrs (0.4-6.8 miles)

Western Carolina University has its very own trail system, accessible to all bikers, hikers, and runners. The seven trails are narrow, winding, and single track. The trail system is 6.8 miles total and has two trailhead locations: one located at the parking lot of the Health and Human Sciences Building and the other at the parking lot of the softball field. From the softball parking lot, trail users will proceed through the tunnel onto NCCAT property, where the trailhead is located. WCU trail system is mostly intermediate terrain and great for after-class recreation.

Leave No Trace (L.N.T.)

Help preserve the environment by practicing these conservation tips:

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Leave what you find
- Be considerate of other visitors
- Dispose of waste properly
- Respect wildlife
- Pack it in, pack it out

To learn more visit www.lnt.org

Graveyard Fields Loop

Difficulty: Moderate | Trail Time: 2 hrs (3.2 miles)

Travel Time from WCU: Approximately 20-30 minutes

Directions to Trailhead: Leaving campus through the main entrance turn right onto NC 107 go 5.1 mi, turn right at US-23 go 1.4 mi, take ramp onto US-23 go 9.0 mi, turn left toward Blue Ridge Parkway go 0.5 mi, turn left on to Blue Ridge Parkway go 25.2 mi to Graveyard Fields Overlook.

Trail Directions & Highlights: Take the trail at the lower end of the parking area. This descends down a paved path for most of its length but has some very rough spots near the river. Cross bridge, turn right along the trail until you come to the first trail intersection to the right; descend a long flight of steps to viewing platform for first waterfall. Return by same route, do not re-cross river but continue straight ahead, the upper falls is about 1 mile ahead. On the return from the upper falls about 3/4 mile turn right off the trail to cross the river on a wooden bridge. Continue on this trail to the exit at the upper end of the parking area.

Max Patch

Difficulty: Moderate | Trail Time: 1-1.5 hrs (1.4-2.4 miles)

Travel Time from WCU: Approximately 40 minutes

Directions to Trailhead: Leaving campus through the main entrance turn right onto NC 107 go 5.1 mi, turn right at US-23 go 1.4 mi, take ramp onto US-23, turn right at US 23/74 to I-40, towards Knoxville, TN. Get off at Exit 7 Harmon Den. Turn right at bottom of the exit ramp follow a well maintained dirt road uphill for six miles to parking area on right.

Trail Directions & Highlights: There is a choice of two easy loop trails, one crosses the summit the other circles the area. The trail leads straight from car park at the end of the dirt road, trails are marked with white blazes of Appalachian Trail. The treeless summit gives a 360° panoramic view of the surrounding mountains. Great place to picnic or fly a kite.



Mt. Leconte & Alum Cave Trail

Difficulty: Hard | Trail Time: 6-9 hrs (11 miles), 3-4 hrs (2.3 miles)

Travel Time from WCU: Approximately 1 hour, 20 minutes

Directions to Trailhead: Take Hwy 107 towards Sylva. Drive through Sylva, take a right onto Grindstaff Cove Road. Go past Jackson Plaza (on your right). Go under the 4 lane, bearing right to get on the 4 lane (Great Smoky Mtn Expressway, Hwy 74). Take Hwy 74 to 441 N towards Cherokee. Follow signs on 441 N to Great Smoky Mountain National Park. Once you leave Cherokee, you are still on 441N. You will see the Oconaluftee Visitor Center for the GSMNP on your right. From the visitor center it is 20 miles to the trailhead parking lot. *If you need a bathroom, stop here. Follow 441 N through the park to Newfound Gap (*more bathrooms here, but may be closed). Keep following 441 N, about 5 miles from Newfound Gap, there will be a turn out and a parking lot on your right, turn in here for trailhead parking. (*You know you have gone too far if you seen the sign for "Chimney Tops Trailhead on your left)

Trail Directions & Highlights: Elevation at Mt. Leconte summit: 6,593 feet. Total elevation gained for hike to Mt. Leconte: 2,560 feet (512 feet per mile) Elevation at the Trailhead is 3830'. Hike 1.3 miles to Arch Rock. Continue .7 mile to Inspiration Point with views of Little Duck Hawk Ridge and Dolly Parton Peaks. Alum Cave Bluff will be another .2 miles. Nice place to stop for a snack. If you don't want to continue to Mt. Leconte, turn around at Alum Cave Bluff. At 2.5 miles from the trailhead is Gracie's Pulpit. Grassy Slide is 4 miles from the trailhead. It is a large expanse of grass with good views of Newfound Gap and Clingman's Dome. There are several rocky ledges to cross with the aid of steel cables. The trail meets Rainbow Falls/Bull Head Trails and Boulevard Trail. Mt. Leconte Lodge has a small gift shop and the kitchen will sell you cookies and drinks. To take in the views, hike out to Cliff Tops or Myrtle Point.

Panthertown Valley

Difficulty: Varied | Trail Time: 3 hrs - 3 days

Travel Time from WCU: Approximately 35-45 minutes

Directions to Trailhead: Leaving campus through the main entrance make a left onto 107 towards Cashiers. In Glensville, make a left onto Bee Tree Rd. This will be the first road on your left once you begin to see the lake to your right. Once you are on Bee Tree Rd. take the first road to your right to get on Cedar Creek Rd. The road will become gravel and go through a heavily wooded section before emerging near a tree farm. Once at the tree farm, make a left on to Breedlove Rd. Continue to the end of Breedlove until you arrive at a cul-de-sac. A small dirt road at the end of the cul-de-sac will bring you to a Forest Service gate and the trailhead.

Trail Directions & Highlights: There are many trails that run throughout Panthertown that allow for hikes that range from a few hours to a few days. The main trail into Panthertown is the Forest Service road behind the main gate which is easy to spot. About 30 yards in there is a registration box on a tree to the right of the trail which hikers are encouraged to use. Panthertown has a lot to offer from spectacular views to waterfalls and a wide range of trail lengths and difficulties. It is important to know that trails in Panthertown are not always well marked. Maps of the area can be purchased at Blackrock Outdoors in Sylva and Highland Hiker in Cashiers. Camping is allowed anywhere in Panthertown. Burt Kornegay's "A Guide to Panthertown" is a great resource for trails and information about the area.



Waterrock Knob

Pinnacle Park

Difficulty: Hard | Trail Time: 3-5 hrs (6-7 miles)

Travel Time from WCU: Approximately 15 minutes

Directions to Trailhead: Leaving campus through the main entrance turn right onto NC-107 N., turn right onto US-23 (at Bogart's), at 2nd stop light turn left onto Hospital Rd., turn right onto Skyland Dr., turn left onto Fisher Creek Rd., continue until dead end at trail entrance.

Trail Directions & Highlights: Hike straight up trail behind Iron Gate. When trail forks, take left fork, continuing on main trail. Trail branches again about two-thirds of the way up. Take left fork again, bearing 90 degrees, and continue to a small plateau surrounded by trees. Trail turns left again, heading out to Pinnacle Ridge. The trail is marked. The trail to the "Pinnacle" is an old roadbed that is wide, rocky and steep. The elevation gain is over 2,900 feet in approximately 3 miles. The trail follows a small stream with several small cascades. The forest is mostly mixed hardwoods at the beginning of the trail and some spruce near the summit. The bald has a mixture of rhododendron, mountain laurel and is known as a semi-heath area. There are some sheer cliffs and drop-offs on the Pinnacle itself, so be careful. The 270 degree view from the "Pinnacle" gives hikers a unique perspective of the Sylva-Cullowhee area. *This trail is not for small children or the non-physically fit.

Richland Balsam

Difficulty: Moderate | Trail Time: 1 hr (1.4 miles)

Travel Time from WCU: Approximately 30-40 minutes

Directions to Trailhead: Leaving campus through the main entrance turn right onto NC 107 go 5.1 mi, turn right at US-23 go 1.4 mi, take ramp onto US-23 go 9.0 mi, turn left toward Blue Ridge Parkway go 0.5 mi, turn left on to Blue Ridge Parkway continue north for about 12 miles until trailhead at Haywood-Jackson Overlook.

Trail Directions & Highlights: The Richland Balsam Trail begins and ends at the Haywood-Jackson Overlook about half a mile south of Parkway Milepost 431, and is a self-guided loop through spruce-fir forests that leads to the summit of Richland Balsam. Richland Balsam at 6410 feet is the highest peak of the Great Balsam Range and the 10th highest in the eastern US. The trail is 1 ½ miles long.

Waterrock Knob

Difficulty: Moderate-Hard | Trail Time: 1 hr (2.4 miles)

Travel Time from WCU: Approximately 40 minutes

Directions to Trailhead: Turn right on NC 107 go 5.1 miles, turn right at US-23 go 1.4 miles, take ramp onto US-23 go 9.0 miles, turn left toward Blue Ridge Parkway go 0.5 mi, turn right onto Blue Ridge Parkway, go 7.2 miles to Waterrock Knob.

Trail Directions & Highlights: Hikers can park in the visitor center's lot and begin on paved pathway. About 0.2 miles of it is paved. However, the trail climbs a little over 500 feet in that length and the trail is very steep. The hike to the top of Waterrock Knob climbs 574 feet in approximately .6 mile to an elevation of 6,292 feet. There are views to the west of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to the north of Maggie Valley, and once you reach the top, hike out to the small rock ledge to view the Balsam Mountains, Blackrock and Sylva.

Whiteside Mountain

Difficulty: Easy-Moderate | Trail Time: 1 hr (2 miles)

Travel Time from WCU: Approximately 45-55 minutes

Directions to Trailhead: From campus make a left on to 107 towards Cashiers. At the main light in Cashiers make a right on to US 64. Drive 4.7 miles and make a left onto Whiteside Mountain Road (SR 1690). You will see a brown sign marked: "Whiteside Mountain Trail." Continue for 1.1 miles. You will pass Wild Cat Cliffs Country Club on your right. The Parking area is well marked and will be on your left. This is a National Forest fee area, you will need to pay to park.

Trail Directions & Highlights: Shortly after leaving the trailhead the trail makes a split. Hikers wanting a steeper, more difficult climb should take the right fork while the path to the left offers a more gradual incline. The Trail is a 2 mile loop so either fork will bring you to the same great views and back to the parking area. The trail is very well marked and maintained. Hikers will pass spectacular scenic overlooks and informational signs. Whiteside rises to a height of 4,930 feet along the eastern continental divide and is the location of the highest vertical drop in the eastern U.S. (750 ft.).



Pinnacle Park