

**EAST TENNESSEE WANDERERS
ELKMONT HISTORIC TRAIL WALK
7K/12K**

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ELKMONT

Elkmont evolved from a series of small farms into a booming lumber camp in the early part of the 20th century. Old-growth timber was cut and hauled out, leaving vast clear-cuts. In the mid-1920s, after the good lumber had been harvested, the lumber company moved its operations. During and after the lumber company worked the area, property was sold to private citizens. The lots were developed as weekend and summer cabins. After the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was established in 1934, the resort developments were used under lease agreements. The leases eventually expired, and the properties were closed to public access pending future planning for the area. Elkmont is now the largest campground in the park, and also home to an unusual firefly display in late May to mid-June. Thousands of fireflies light up the night. What is unusual is that these fireflies (*Photinus carolinus*), one of at least 19 species of fireflies that live in the Park, are synchronous. Peak flashing for synchronous fireflies is normally within a 2-week period in late May to mid-June. Due to the large crowds, special tickets must be secured in advance for access to the Elkmont area after 5 p.m. during the "firefly season."

STARTING POINT

The starting point for both distances is the trailhead for the Little River Trail just outside the Elkmont Campground in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Directions:

From Townsend to the Start Point at the Elkmont Campground: From Townsend drive on Lamar Alexander Parkway (US 321) for three miles, then turn left at the intersection toward Gatlinburg on Little River Road. In approximately 12 miles, turn right on Elkmont Road toward Elkmont Campground.

From Gatlinburg to the Start Point at the Little River Trailhead: Depart Gatlinburg on Gatlinburg Parkway (US 441). In approximately 2 miles, turn right toward the Sugarlands Visitor Center onto Fighting Creek Gap Road. Drive approximately 5 miles and turn left onto Elkmont Road toward Elkmont Campground.

Arriving at Elkmont: After about 1.5 miles, as you approach the campground, turn left onto Little River Road toward the Nature Trail and Little River Trail. In about a half mile you will come to the parking lot and Start Point.

Parking: The parking area for the Little River Trailhead is a good size, but can fill early during prime hiking times. **NOTE: A parking tag (permit) is required to park anywhere in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Tags can be purchased online and at park visitor centers. Tags are available for a day (\$5), a week (\$15), or a year (\$40)**

Latitude 35.653843, Longitude -83.580177

GENERAL WALK INFORMATION

The initial part of this walk (7K) is an out-and-back along the Little River Trail, one of the easiest trails in the entire Smoky Mountains National Park. Going out-and-back just means that you get a bit more time to walk and enjoy the views and sounds of the Little River. It can be a bit rocky; so, watch your step, but it is very flat for East Tennessee. The last 5K of the 12K route is mostly on paved roadbed, but it does involve one significant hill at the beginning of this section.

While the Elkmont Campground is open from around mid-March to late November, the area can be walked year round, but when the campground is closed there are no restrooms at the Start Point or along the route. Please carry water as potable water is not available on the trail. There are no restrooms directly on the 7 km route; however, during the season when the campground is open, there are numerous restrooms in the campground. There is also one set of restrooms near the Appalachian Clubhouse on the 12 km route which are not open in late fall through winter.

POINT OF CONTACT

Guy Calkins (president @easttennesseewanderers.org) 585-727-6493

If you have questions, comments, or recommendations with respect to this event, please do not hesitate to make contact.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

The two Special Programs associate with this walk are A-Z and 50 States.

OSB REMINDERS

Be sure to log back into the OSB system to finish/complete your online registration. You can then print out your insert cards for this walk.

OTHER EAST TENNESSEE WANDERERS EVENTS

While in the area, you might enjoy some of our other events.

Linda Nelson Memorial, Alcoa Bike, Bridges of Pistol Creek (Alcoa/Maryville Extended Greenway), A.T. Through Tennessee, Clinton 12, Gatlinburg Trail, Gatlinburg Tourist, Knoxville (Music, Moonshine, and Art), Knoxville (UT), Knoxville (North Knoxville – 4th & Gill), Seven Islands State Birding Park, Maryville, Oak Ridge, Townsend, and Fort Loudoun State Historic Park.

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The East Tennessee Wanderers

Elkmont Historic District Walk © 2025

Great Smoky Mountains National Park,
TN

7/12 KM Walk Rated 2C Y1307

1. From the parking lot, **go through** the gate and **walk out along** Little River Trail with the river on your left. While I normally do not like "out-and-back" routes, this one is a little different. Going out-and-back just means that you get a bit more time to walk and enjoy the views and sounds of the Little River. This is one of the easiest trails in the entire Smoky Mountains National Park.
2. First things that you might notice as you walk along this trail are the limited remains of what were cabins on either side of the trail. These cabins (and others that you may see later on your walk) were built by members of the Appalachian Club, mostly from Knoxville. These cabins, built in the 1930s, served as weekend or summer retreats in the years before the National Park was created. The Little River Railroad scheduled daily excursions from Knoxville to Elkmont. Please note that these areas are posted as no trespassing allowed.
3. **Continue** on the Little River trail for about 100 feet from the trailhead. You will see a small path to your right.
4. **Follow** this path, which bears to the left, to take you to a cute little bridge known as the "Troll Bridge ". You'll find the small stone bridge slightly off-trail. It spans a small creek. The idyllic setting is perfect for photos, and gives a very whimsical feel.
5. **Retrace** your steps back to Little River Trail and **turn right**.
6. **Turn around** when you reach a small waterfall (Husky Branch Falls) on your right and a wooden bridge across the stream (at about 3.5km/45 minutes).
7. **Walk back** to the gate where you started with the river on your right.
8. **(7k) Walkers:** This completes the walk.
9. For those doing the longer walk, follow these directions to walk into a bit of the history of the area before it was the Smoky Mountains National Park.
10. **[12k] Walkers:** **Exit** the trailhead gate, **turn right** to walk through the opening in the stone wall.
11. Walk up a short distance up to the Spence Cabin which has been renovated and can be rented for special occasions. If the sign indicates that the cabin is in use, please do not proceed farther than the sign. Spence Cabin is in the area called Millionaire's Row. It is the only cottage that has been retained in this area.
12. **Turn around** and **walk back down** through the stone fence.
13. **Cross** the road, and **walk through** the parking area.

In case of emergency, call 9-1-1
After emergency, call (585) 727-6493

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14. **Follow the Little River Road to the left** up the hill. Be careful as the road is narrow, and you are sharing it with cars full of tourists.
15. When you reach the top of the hill, pause a moment to look around. Across the road and parking lot and up the hill is Levi Trentham Cemetery. To your left is Jakes Creek Trail/Road and Society Hill.
16. **Turn left, go through** the gate, and walk up Jakes Creek Trail/Road. This is Society Hill.
17. Of these cottages, only one has been saved--the green Chapman cottage.
18. **When you reach the Chapman cottage on your right, turn around.**
19. **Walk back** along the road.
20. **Go through the gate** (8 km) and turn left to cross the bridge.
21. **Walk up** the gravel road to the Levi Trentham Cemetery.
22. **Go through the gate** into the cemetery and check out the historical markers. The first person buried in the cemetery was Levi Trentham's wife. The Parton's buried in the cemetery are relatives of the famous singer and actress, Dolly Parton, of Sevierville. TN
23. After viewing some of the interesting grave markers, leave the cemetery and after **securing the cemetery gate, walk back** down the gravel road,
24. **Turn left** at the road intersection.
25. **Follow the one-way signs.**
26. **Walk along the road** with cabins on both sides. *This is the main street of Daisy Town. This area was one of the resort areas for the well-to-do who lived in Knoxville. Note how the roadbed is lower than the cabins. This is because the roadbed was a railroad roadbed, and this height difference allowed folks to step right out of the train cars to their cabins. The last cabin on your right once belonged to the Vice Mayor of Knoxville. Select cottages in Daisy Town were chosen for preservation and have been restored to their original 1930s condition by the National Park Service.*
27. As you reach the Appalachian Clubhouse on your left, there are restrooms on your left that are open seasonally. *Walk up and rest a spell on the porch of the Appalachian Clubhouse where you just might catch a glimpse of the lady in white, the resident ghost. This building was constructed in 1934 as a gathering spot by lessees and guests of the Appalachian Club whose members, mostly from Knoxville, built these rustic cabins.*
28. **Turn left** to walk down the road, following your rest in a rocking chair.
29. *As you reach the bottom of the hill, you will cross over Bear Wallow Branch. This is a man-made creek for the folks who lived in the cottages in the area. Where you are now, as the road crosses the stream, is the location of a notable train accident.*

"Daddy" Bryson and his brakeman lost control of their train on the downhill grade and the train derailed, killing them both. Daddy's lunch bucket was hung on a tree near the Appalachian Clubhouse. This was one of many accidents that claimed the lives of railroad and timber workers.

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30. Turn left when you reach Little River Road (9 km). When you reach the bridge, take a minute to enjoy the beauty of the river. This bridge was constructed by the CCC

31. Cross the bridge and immediately take the path to your **left** down the hill and **into** Elkmont Campground. When the campground is open, restrooms will be available throughout the campground.

32. Go right on the campground road, **bearing right** at each intersection.

33. After the road curves left, watch to your right for Campsite B21. *Stop here to note: You are actually walking along what was the roadbed of the Little River Railroad operated by the Little River Lumber Company. Here at Campsite B21 are the last remnants of an old machine shop. This is the only remaining artifact of the town of Elkmont. When the lumber company ran out of trees to cut down in 1925, they packed the town onto their train cars and moved the town to another location.*

34. Walk back along the campground road to the orange and white post.

35. As the road curves to the right, **walk left** up to Little River Road **through** the clearing using the path that starts at the orange and white pole.

36. Carefully cross Little River Road, **turn right**, and walk facing traffic the direction the Nature Trail sign is pointing.

37. Notice the small parking lot for the nature trail on your left. This area is the location where there was one leg of a railroad wye—a turn-around location for trains. A little further down the road there once was a relatively clear area to the left (now pretty well overgrown) which was the other leg of the wye. A train would be driven up one leg and then out onto the tail of the wye. The switch would be thrown, and the train would be backed along the other leg of the wye until it was back on the main line facing the opposite direction from when it entered the wye.

38. Continue along the road to the parking lot and the end of your 12 km walk.

Hopefully you enjoyed this walk in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Be sure to log back into the OSB system to finish/complete your online registration.

While in the area, we would like to invite you to participate in our other Year-Round Events.

POC: Guy Calkins (585) 727-6493

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