

Reach higher ground.



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## Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Great Smoky Mountains National Park encompasses 800 square miles in the states of Tennessee and North Carolina and is the showcase for some of the most inspiring natural and cultural treasures that the Southern Appalachians have to offer. The Park's abundant plant and animal life and historical significance, coupled with its accessibility, makes this park the most visited in the nation with over nine million visitors annually. GSMNP lies within 550 miles of one-third of the American population.

The idea for a national park in the Southern Appalachians began in the late 1890s, and by the mid-1920s support groups from Asheville, North Carolina and Knoxville, Tennessee pulled together for an area between the two cities. The strongest supporters of the Park, interestingly, were not hardcore conservationists but motorists who wanted to preserve the beautiful scenery through which they could drive their new cars. Eighty-five percent of the land was once held by large commercial interests - primarily lumber companies - and the remainder of the acreage was small farms and miscellaneous parcels. More than 2,000 deeds, representing lands that were purchased by the states of North Carolina and Tennessee, were transferred to federal ownership. On June 15, 1934, Congress established the national park and allowed the building of the Park's infrastructure.

Over the next 16 years, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) worked to build many of the trails, campgrounds and beautiful stone bridges and buildings that are still enjoyed by visitors in the Park. When President Franklin Roosevelt formally dedicated the Park in 1940, it had become a sanctuary for all the people of the country and the rest of the world to enjoy.

GSMNP celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009, with special programs planned throughout the year including the rededication of the Park which President Franklin Delano Roosevelt formally dedicated in 1940. For more information on the festivities, visit <http://greatsmokies75th.org/welcome-to-the-great-smokies-75th/>.

As stewards of significant historic resources, the Park preserves and maintains a collection of some 77 historic structures, along with preserved scenes and landscapes in five historic districts. This collection, representing a century of human history in the Appalachia region, helps to tell the story of the people who lived and worked in the Park prior to its creation.

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Conservationists, backpackers, trout fishermen and motorists were among the recreational groups driving the creation of the Park. Today, those and other visitors take pleasure in the Park's many recreational opportunities and sanctuary as a wild place.

The Park's fundamental significance lies in its extraordinary quality as a sanctuary – massive mountain ridges, deep-cleft valleys and unspoiled streams create entirely different ecosystems which are refuges for the hundreds of plants and animals species.

The Park boasts more than 1,100 front country campsites, 100 backcountry campsites, 800 miles of trails, 700 miles of streams, 11 picnic grounds, three visitor centers and numerous scenic overlooks. American black bears, deer, turkeys, flowers and other wildlife are popular with nature photographers in the Smokies. The Park's intricate trail system provides access to view the diversity of life in the Smokies. Many salamander and plant species are found nowhere else in the world, and the forests contain more tree species than any national park.

Looking ahead, GSMNP celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a special series of events and commemorations.

Park maps, guidebooks, handbooks and videos are available at the Park bookstores within each visitor center. More information can be found online at [www.nps.gov/grsm](http://www.nps.gov/grsm) and by calling 865/436-1200.