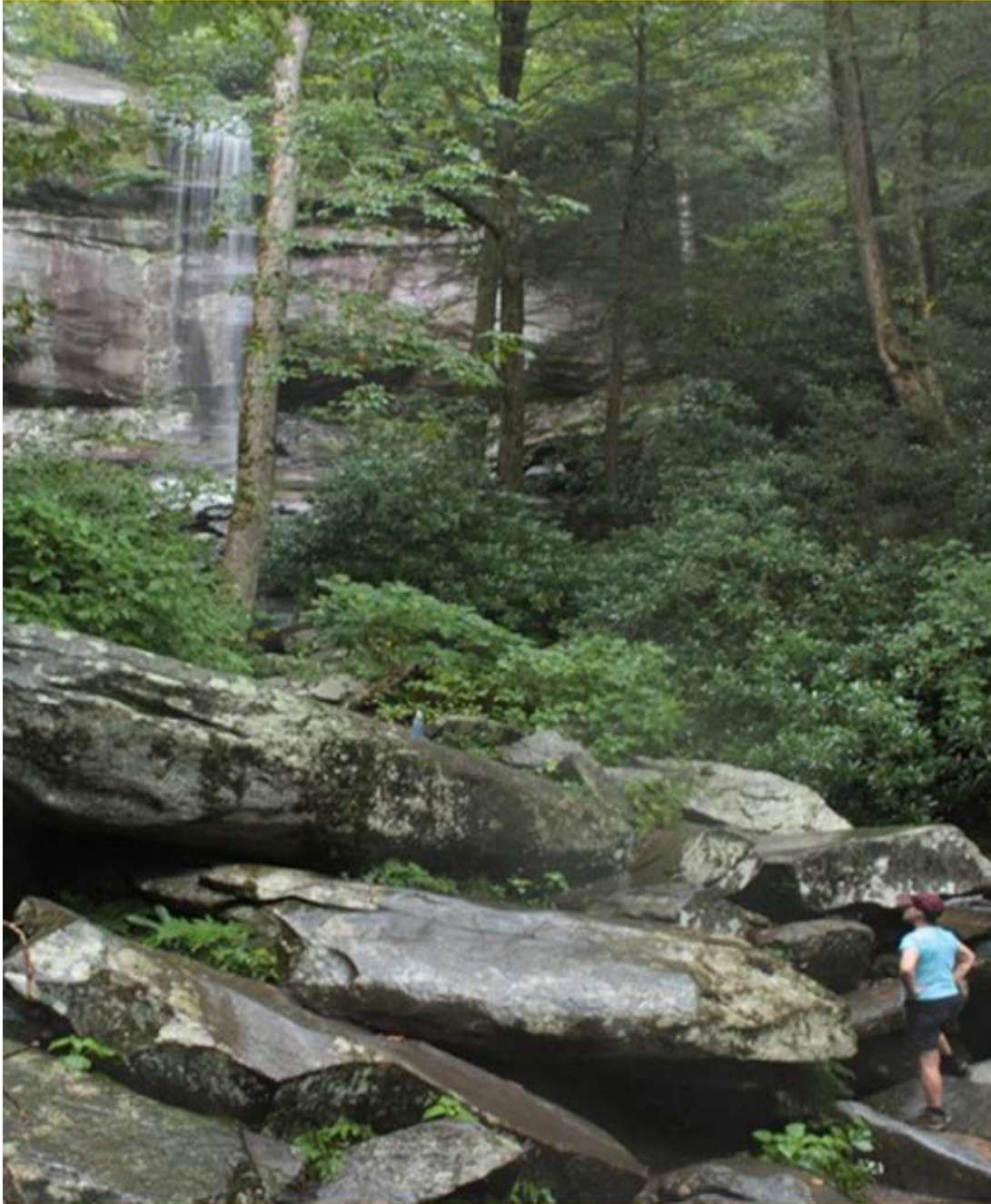


# Hiking the Smokies



**VISUAL TRAVEL TOURS**

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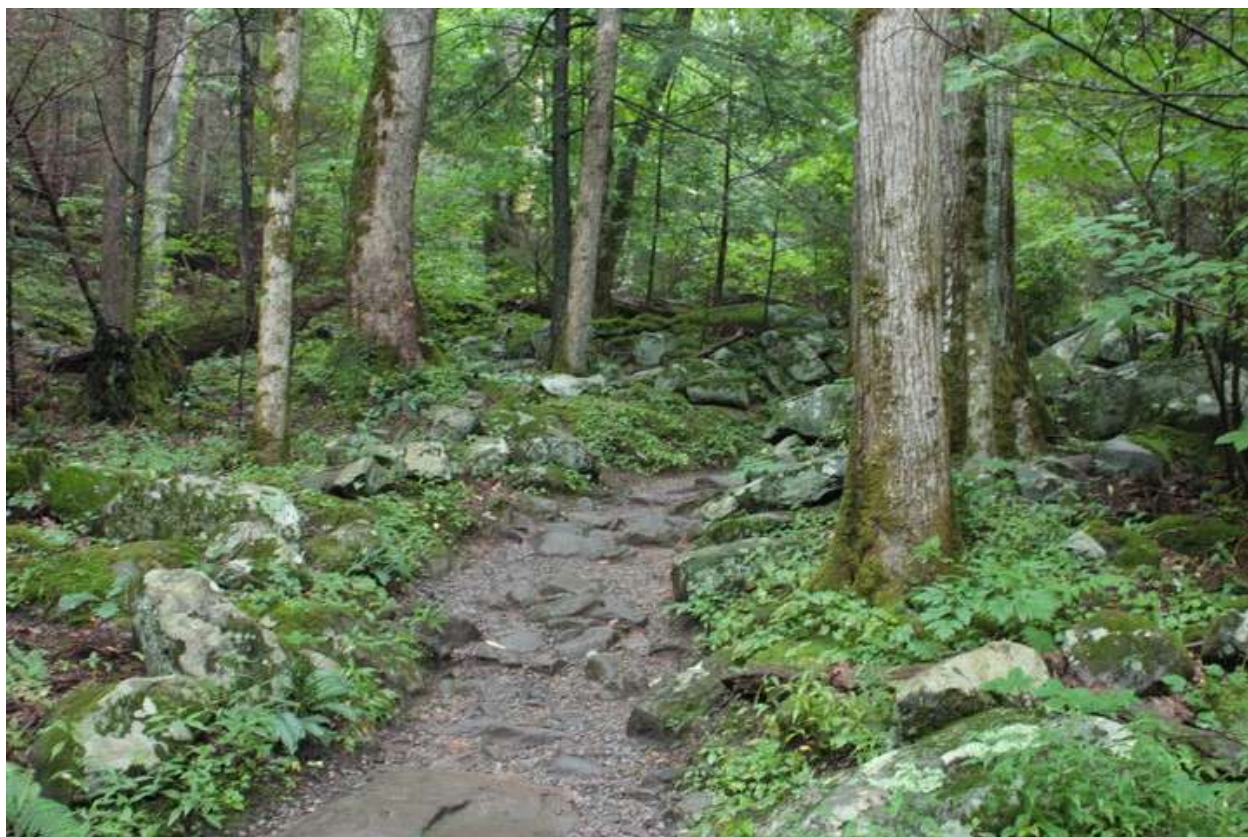
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# Tour Summary

As the nation's most visited national park, the Great Smoky Mountains can get busy in the high season. But with half a million acres of wilderness available, the best way to see the park (and escape the crowds) is to head into the woods on foot, enjoying everything from steep treks up mountain balds to easy walks to waterfalls.

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# Fun Hikes in the Smokies





Hello, I'm Deborah Huso, and I'll be giving you a sampling of some of the hikes available in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Most visitors to the park drive through, only stepping out of their

vehicles to take pictures at the overlooks.  
So even though it's the most visited national park in the U.S., you can often escape the crowds just by getting out and hiking.



There are more than 800 miles of hiking trails in the park, and to enjoy some of the Smokies' most scenic vistas and prettiest waterfalls, you must be willing to walk.



Most of the park's hikes are long ones, due in large part to the fact that the park has vast tracts of roadless areas, representing the largest unbroken wilderness area in the East.





But you can find some easy-to-moderate trails, some of which will take you to lovely waterfalls and long-abandoned Appalachian homesteads. Others just offer you the

opportunity to take in the sights and sounds of the woods.



Of course, if you're an avid hiker, there is no shortage of long-distance, challenging hikes in the park. Very few of the park's trails are circuit hikes, however, so consider using a local shuttle service if you'd like to turn your trails into loops with different starting and ending points.



Before you get started on your hiking odyssey, be sure to stop by one of the park visitor centers and pick up a Great Smoky Mountains trail map, which shows all of the

trails in the park as well as their distances and where you can access them.



Another indispensable resource you can purchase in every park visitor center and bookstore is "Hiking Trails of the Smokies." This book covers all of the park's trails with descriptions, elevation maps, and useful

information on the cultural and natural heritage of the areas you'll be exploring.



I'll be introducing you to four hikes in this tour, ranging in difficulty from easy to strenuous. I'll let you know as we proceed through the tour how steep the trails are,



what you'll see along the way, and how many miles (or steps!) you will be climbing.



The first hike I'll take you on is a short and easy one to Mingo Falls, a beautiful waterfall just outside the park on the Cherokee Indian Reservation.



The second hike will be along the Rough Fork Trail in the Cataloochee Valley and will take you to an infrequently visited Appalachian farmhouse, and perhaps even give you a glimpse of some of the park's elk.



The third hike is the most challenging, a five-mile trek on the Alum Cave Bluffs Trail to the summit of Mount LeConte, the third-highest peak in the park.



I'll end with a waterfall hike to Rainbow Falls, which you can access off the Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail just outside Gatlinburg on the Tennessee side of the park.

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