

Cherokee Hiking Club Trail Blurb

Chestnut Mountain Loop Trail #104 / 105 Ocoee/Hiwassee Ranger District - Cherokee National Forest

Distance: 9.9 miles

Elevation Change: 1040 feet

High Point: 2560 feet (top of Chestnut Mountain)

Low Point: 1520 feet (Intersection of Trail 104 and 105 on the south end)

Trail Rating: Moderate (please refer to our trail difficulty rating system on our website)

Parking: The best parking is on Starr Mountain Road at Iron Gap at the north end of the trail.

Driving Directions to the Iron Gap Parking Lot: From Tellico Plains at the intersection of TN 68 and the Cherohala Skyway (TN 165), go north on TN 68 towards Madisonville 0.5 miles to the intersection with TN 39. Turn left on TN 39 and travel 3.9 miles to the intersection with TN 315. Turn left onto TN 315 and travel 10 miles to Starr Mountain Road. Turn right onto Starr Mountain Road, cross Spring Creek in 1.4 miles and then travel another 3.0 miles (total 4.4 miles from TN 315) to Iron Gap. Turn left into a parking area. This is the Chestnut Mountain Iron Gap Trailhead on the north end of the trail. Park your car here. Be sure to hide any valuables in your trunk or out of site or take them with you on the trail. If coming from Reliance on TN 315, drive north on TN 315 to Starr Mountain Road 5.3 miles, turn left onto Starr Mountain Road then follow the above directions to the trailhead.

Trail Description: This entire trail is designated as a horse trail. But the trail is reasonably well designed and there should be no major problems with damaged trail. However, some areas do not drain well and thus may be somewhat muddy after a rain. It is a beautiful trail and we highly recommend it for a day long hike in this area. From the Chestnut Mountain Trailhead off of Starr Mountain Road (FS 44) at Iron Gap, we recommend you first head up Trail 104, also known as the Chestnut Mountain Trail, which is the right branch of the trail. Trail 105, also labeled as FS Road 2004 and known as Coffee Branch Trail, goes to the left out of the parking lot. Trail 104, the trail you will take to the right out of the parking lot, is an old logging road and initially is quite steep. The trail becomes gentler after about the first ½ mile, but steadily heads uphill along the crest or close to the crest of Chestnut Mountain. At mile 2.4 you will reach the highest point on Chestnut Mountain at 2560 feet. The trail then heads down the west flank of the mountain, first through a series of switchbacks but steadily downhill. Along this segment of the Chestnut Mountain Trail there are grand views into the Gee Creek Wilderness and the southeast flank of Starr Mountain on the other side of the Gee Creek watershed. You will reach the intersection with Trail 105 (Coffee Branch Trail) at mile 3.9. This trail intersection is the low point of your hike at 1520 feet. At the Trail 105 intersection, turn left to close the loop to your car. If you turn to the right, the trail will take you down to the parking lot in about 1.8 miles near the Hiwassee River at the Lost Corral Campground. We recommend you turn left onto Trail 105. This trail follows the eastern flank of the mountain. In many places there are great views into the Hiwassee River and Spring Creek watersheds and in the distance you will see the mountains in the Big Frog and the Little Frog Wilderness areas. The trail travels gently uphill for the first couple of miles, then becomes fairly level, staying at about the 2000 foot elevation. At mile 7.3 there is a rocky outcrop with great views. You can locate the site by the presence of the horse tie posts on the right side of the trail. After leaving the rocky outlook area, go another 1.6 miles back to your car. The total trail distance is just under

10 miles and can be easily hiked in about 5 hours. You should take a map and compass, since this is a remote wilderness area and the trails within the wilderness are not blazed.

Camping: There are no clearly designated campsites along this trail. Most of the Chestnut Mountain Trail is within the Gee Creek Wilderness and no camping is permitted within the boundary of this specific wilderness. Camping is permitted along the Coffee Branch Trail, since it is outside of the wilderness area. If you camp, be sure to use Leave No Trace ethics. Leave your campsite cleaner than you found it and obliterate any evidence you were ever there.

Water: Water is available several places along the trail where small streams cross the trail. Be sure to treat your water appropriately and take your water from the upstream side of the trail. Remember, this is a horse trail. During a long dry spell, these water sources may dry up. So take at least 2 quarts of water in your daypack.

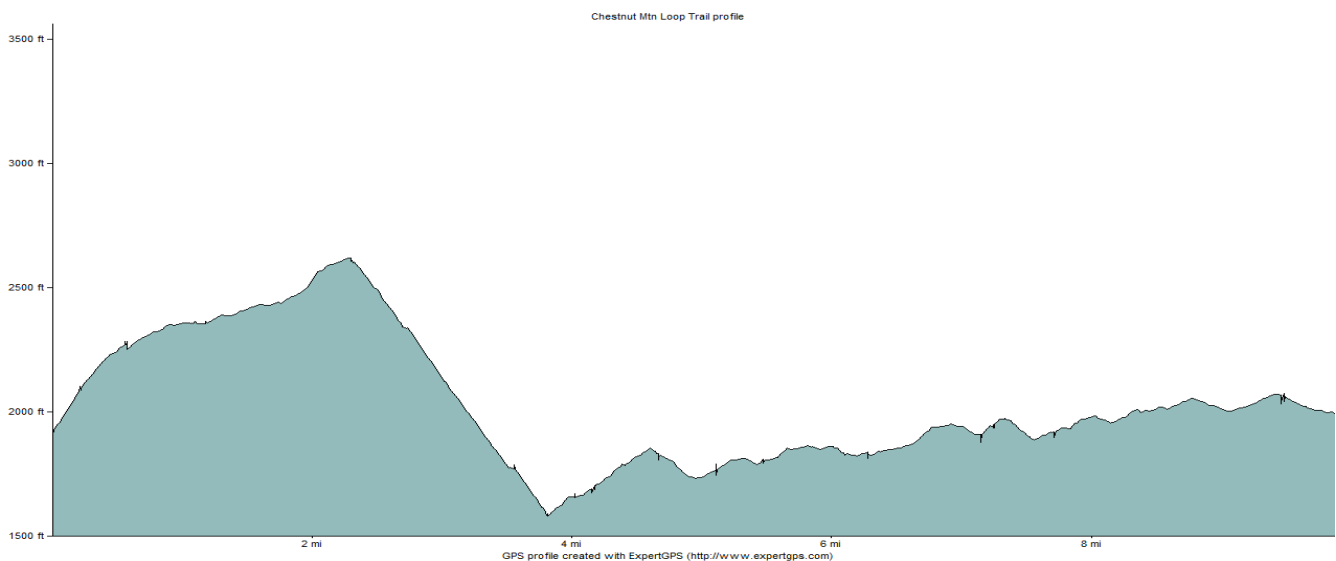
Cell phones: Cell phone service is spotty in the Cherokee National Forest. However, you will undoubtedly get good service intermittently along this trail. Good service is available in Tellico Plains and Etowah. Emergency is 9-1-1. In keeping with the wilderness ethic, cell phones are discouraged within any wilderness area.

History of the Trail: This horse trail follows old logging roads for much of its length, especially along Trail 105, which is also designated as FS Road 2004. This entire area was logged in the early part of the 20th century, but has been allowed to recover since then. Much of the area is mixed forest, but in other areas white pines predominate, especially along the north end of Trail 104. Several huge hemlocks can also be located which to date seem to be free of infestation by the adelgid.

Trail Maintenance: This and other trails in the Ocoee Ranger District of the Cherokee National Forest are maintained by volunteers. If you would like to volunteer, contact the Ocoee/Hiwassee Ranger Station at 423-338-3300 (3171 US Highway 64, Benton, TN 37307, sbiatowas@fs.fed.us). If you see something which needs the attention of the trail maintainers, please contact the ranger station.

Updated March 10, 2009

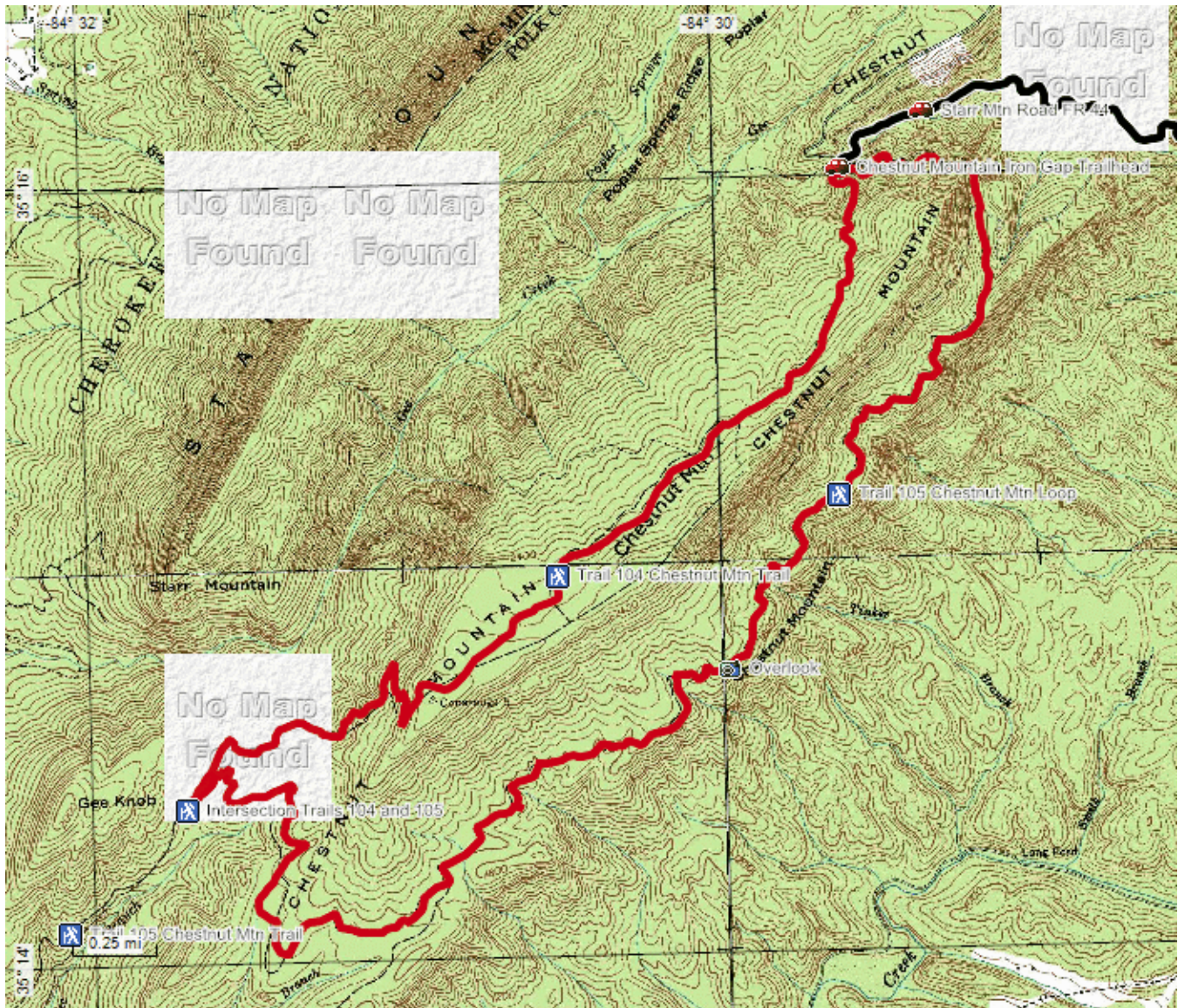
This trail blurb was developed by the Cherokee Hiking Club, 2359 Varnell Road, Cleveland, TN 37311. For more information, check out our website at www.CherokeeHikingClub.org



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Chestnut Mountain Loop Trail Access Roads Ocoee/Hiwassee Ranger District - Cherokee National Forest

