

Cherokee Hiking Club Trail Blurb

Flats Mountain Trail #102

Tellico Ranger District - Cherokee National Forest

Distance: 6.1 miles

Elevation Change: 1900 feet

High Point: 3860 feet (Flats Mountain)

Low Point: 1960 feet (Beehouse Gap on Citico Creek Road)

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

Parking: Parking is available at both ends of the trail. Each parking lot will hold 4 cars or so.

Driving Directions to the Eagle Gap Parking Lot: Drive up the Cherohala Skyway to just past mile post 19 on the Tennessee side. Turn left up a steep parking lot access road off the Skyway. Park by the forest service road gate.

Driving Directions to the Beehouse Gap Trailhead: Drive up the Cherohala Skyway on the Tennessee side to just past mile post 14, then turn left onto FS Road 345 and drive 1.2 miles toward the Indian Boundary Recreation Area. Just before entering the recreation area, turn right onto Citico Creek Road (FS 35-1) and drive 1.5 miles to Beehouse Gap, identified by a sign on the right side of the road. The parking area is directly across the road from the sign.

Shuttle: It is recommended that hikers leave one car at Beehouse Gap, then drive to Eagle Gap, then hike the trail from the top to the bottom, since the elevation drop is almost 2000 feet. The shuttle is 7.4 miles long.

Trail Description: This is a great trail for a day hike for those camping at Indian Boundary Recreation Area. A shuttle is required. This trail is well maintained, though it follows a ridge top much of the way with many dead pines which often fall with the high winds. So even if the trail has been recently maintained, expect a few deadfalls on the route. It is recommended that the trail be hiked from Eagle Gap to Beehouse Gap. From Eagle Gap, head off the end of the parking area past the forest service gate on the old roadbed uphill to a bald about a half mile up the trail. Turn right when reaching the bald, continuing on an old road till reaching the second bald at about mile 0.7. Hike through the bald to the far end. The trail enters the woods at this point. A wilderness boundary sign is seen a short distance down this trail. The slope to the right side of the trail is in the Citico Creek Wilderness which is a bear reserve. Most of the misbehaving bears from the Smokies are brought to this wilderness area. But don't worry, the likelihood of seeing a bear is small and if you do come upon a bear, just slowly back away. The bear will almost certainly move away as well. You can get a pamphlet at the Tellico District Ranger Station on how to be safe around bears. You will likely see evidence of wild boar along the trail as well. The boar tend to root along the side of the trail, tearing up the surface in spots. You may also spot bear scat with berries from the greenbriars as well as boar scat along the trail. The trail follows the crest of Flats Mountain in a general downslope. At points the trail leaves the crest to switchback down one side or the other to lose elevation at a more gradual rate. Be alert for these switchbacks. Often there is evidence of an animal track going straight at the switchbacks, but the trail maintainers try to make the route clear by piling up sticks or logs at these potentially confusing sites. At mile 2.8 there is a small campsite in a gap. No water is available so it will

be necessary to carry in your water. Along the ridgeline trail there are many great views in the Citico Wilderness and to the crests along the state line which reach of 5000 feet in elevation. To the left side one can see the lake at the Indian Boundary Recreation Area and beyond that at places one can see the Tennessee River and Tellico Lake as well as the Cumberland Plateau on a clear day. At mile 3.9, the trail comes to the end of a ridge with a steep downslope. The trail at this point switchbacks to the right and zigzags down the wilderness side of the ridge to reach the lower elevations below the steep downslope. You may hear Citico Creek below you to your right. Citico Creek is a large mountain brook with many waterfalls and major rapids. Continue on the trail to the Beehouse Gap parking area at mile 6.1. When you reach your car, you may want to drive another mile on down the road to Citico Creek. The road parallels the creek for many miles with many beautiful cascades. The creek is famous for its trout fishing. There are many marked primitive campsites along the creek. At the point where the road reaches the creek, 1.0 miles past Beehouse Gap, is a large primitive campground called Warden Fields. This area used to be a large logging camp to log out the huge trees in the Citico Creek watershed. At Warden Fields, there are 4 trailheads leading up into the Citico Creek Wilderness (Pine Ridge, Brush Mountain, South Fork Citico Creek, and North Fork Citico Creek trails) which all intersect with the Benton MacKaye Trail at the state line and into the trails of the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness. Several great backpack loops are possible out of the Warden Fields Campsite. Look for a trail blurb on this extensive trail system on the Cherokee Hiking Club website in the near future.

Camping: The only campsite is at mile 2.8 along the trail. This is a small campsite which will fit 3 or so tents. No water is available at the campsite. A fire circle is available, but be careful and be sure your fire is completely out when you leave the site. Campers who frequent this area commonly camp at Indian Boundary or one of the primitive sites along Citico Creek.

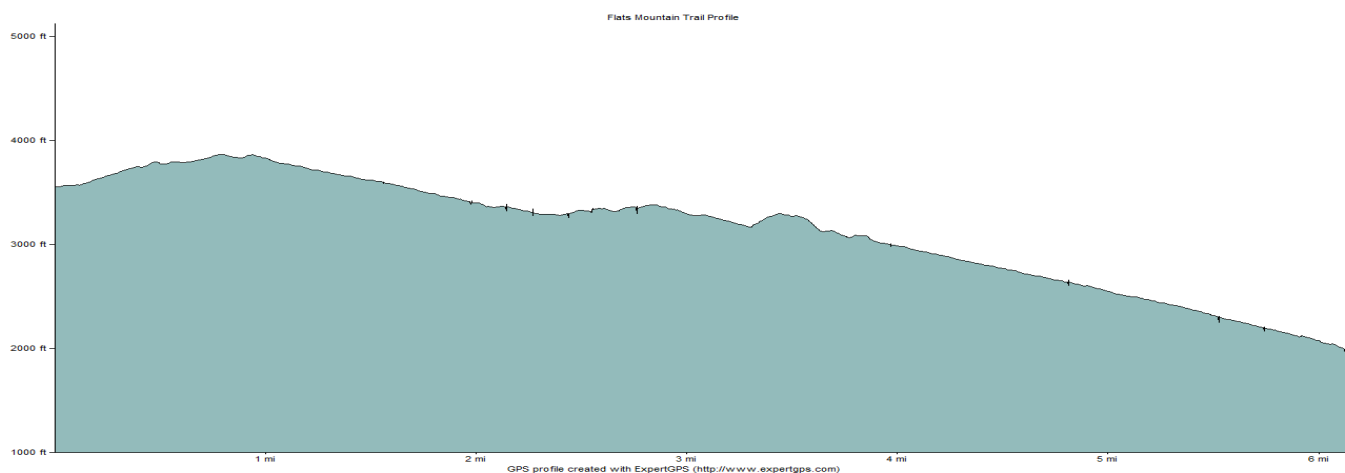
Water: No creek crossings or reliable springs are found along the entire distance of this ridgetop trail. Occasionally seeps can be found along the trail during times of wet weather. Bring at least 2 quarts of water per person for this hike, especially in the hot part of the summer.

Cell phones: Cell phone service is spotty in the Tellico Ranger District of the Cherokee National Forest, but good service is available in Tellico Plains. Emergency is 9-1-1.

Trail Maintenance: This and other trails in the Tellico Ranger District of the Cherokee National Forest are maintained by volunteers. If you would like to volunteer, contact the Tellico District Ranger Station at 423-253-8400 (250 Ranger Station Road, Tellico Plains, TN 37385, lesliemsmith@fs.fed.us). If you see something which needs the attention of the trail maintainers, please contact the ranger station.

Updated March 7, 2009

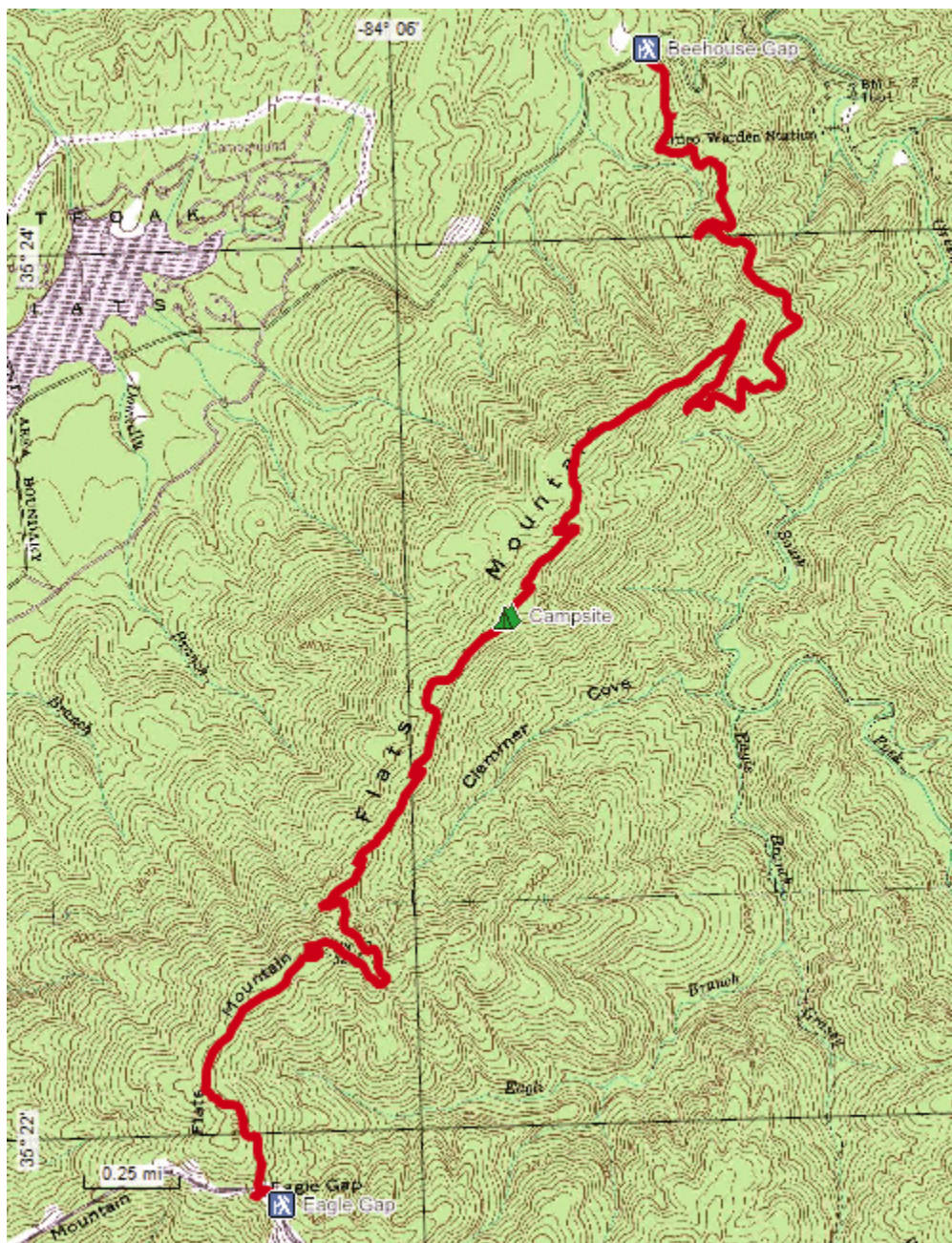
This trail blurb was developed by the Cherokee Hiking Club, 2359 Varnell Road, Cleveland, TN 37311. For more information, check out our website at www.CherokeeHikingClub.org



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Flats Mountain Trail #102 Road Access Map Tellico Ranger District – Cherokee National Forest

