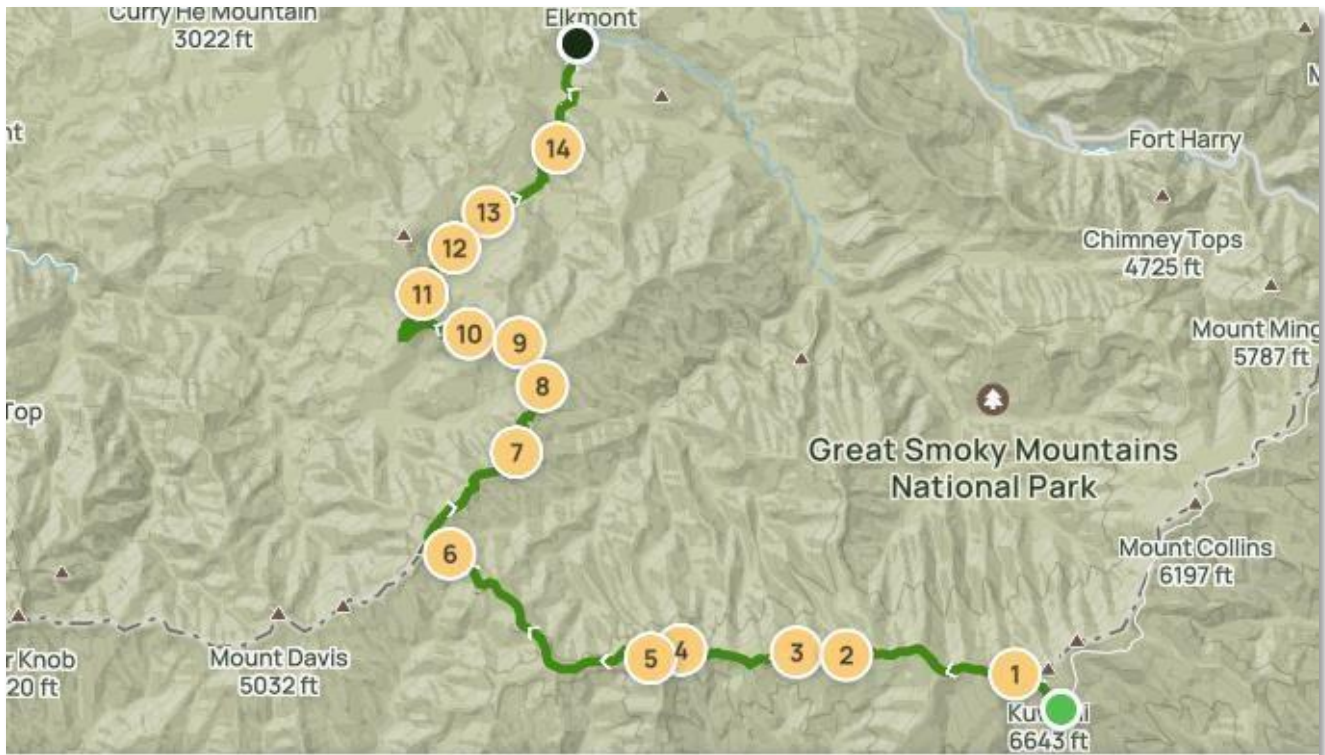


Kuwohi to Elkmont via Miry Ridge Trail & Jakes Creek Trail
Approach Trail, Appalachian Trail
Point-To-Point
Kuwohi Bypass, Appalachian, Miry Ridge, Jakes Creek, & Stable¹ Trails
Trail Map



Elevation Profile



Trailhead

The trailhead is at the west end of the Kuwahi parking lot, at the bottom of the paved trail leading to the Kuwahi Observation Tower. To reach this trailhead drive US-441 from Gatlinburg to Newfound Gap. Just beyond the Newfound gap parking lot the road to Kuwahi turns to the right and proceeds 7.7 miles to the Kuwahi parking lot.

Waypoints

- 1) Junction, Appalachian Trail.
- 2) Junction, Goshen Prong Trail.
- 3) Double Spring Gap Shelter.
- 4) Junction, Welch Ridge Trail.
- 5) Silers Bald Shelter.
- 6) Junction, Miry Ridge Trail. Turn Right.
- 7) Ben Parton Lookout.
- 8) Junction, Lynn Camp Prong Trail.
- 9) Backcountry Campsite #26, Dripping Springs Mountain.
- 10) Dripping Springs Mountain. Excellent views.
- 11) Panther Creek Trail.

- 12) Backcountry Campsite #27, Lower Jakes Gap
- 13) Ford Jakes Creek, probably a wet crossing.
- 14) Side Trail to the Aventura Cabin (artist's cabin)

Hike Description

The Miry Ridge Trail is one of those trails that you must get to by hiking another trail (or trails). Therefore, the use of an approach trail is a given. The question then is what approach trail gets us to our objective and at the same time gives us the most interesting and fulfilling hike. I have never been a fan of Out & Back Hikes if a Point-to-Point or Loop Hike that can get me to the same destination is available. Certainly, there are hikes where Out & Back is the only option. But, if I am able to complete a hike from start to finish without going over the same ground twice, that's my preference. With that in mind, for this hike the approach trail that I have chosen is the Appalachian Trail.

As with several other hikes that use the A.T. as an approach trail, this hike begins on the Kuwohi Bypass Trail and in about ½ mile it joins the Appalachian Trail southbound. There is then a very short rise to Mt. Buckley followed by a steady decent to the Goshen Prong Trail junction and then on to the Double Spring Gap Shelter. Beyond the shelter for a little over a mile the grade is small ups and downs to a short, steep climb to Silers Bald with good views, then down to the Silers Bald Shelter, about 4.5 miles into your hike.

From Silers Bald to the junction with the Miry Ridge Trail is 2.8 miles, bringing your total distance on the A.T. to about 7.3 miles. Again, the total elevation is down but there are a couple of short climbs of a little over 1/10 of a mile, including the final climb to the Miry Ridge Trail. Depending upon the time of day and the season when you were able to begin your hike, this may be a good place to spend the night.

The Miry Ridge Trail remains fairly level for about ¾ of a mile and then begins to move gently downhill. After about 1½ miles you will reach the Ben Parton Lookout, a knob at 4,754' on the Miry Ridge Trail on which Ben Parton, an employee of the Little River Lumber company (1901 - 1939), constructed a platform from which he was able to look for trespassers and forest fires on Little River Lumber Company land. Its position on the Miry Ridge Trail is at the junction between Miry Ridge and an unnamed ridge that extends down to Backcountry Campsite #23 on Fish Camp Prog. Views extend from Kuwohi to the east and Cades Cove to the west as well as all of the major points on the A.T. including Thunderhead and Rocky Top. As you continue downhill, in 0.8 miles you will reach the junction with the Lynn Camp Prong Trail.

From here you have about a 1 mile climb, less than 300' elevation gain, to Dripping Springs Mountain, a heather bald. On the way up you will pass the Dripping Spring Mountain Backcountry Campsite #26². The view from the Dripping Springs Mountain is worth a scramble, I don't think there are any actual trails that go to the top. Continuing down to Jakes Gap from Dripping Spring Mountain the trail was badly eroded in several places and rocky in others. Use caution.

Finally, when you reach Jakes Gap the trail improves significantly. Backcountry Campsite #27 is less than a mile down the trail, a small but very nice site. A bit further down you will need to ford Jakes creek. Finally, after another stream crossing, this time on a bridge, you will in a short distance come to an unmarked side trail to the Aventura Cabin (Artist's Cabin). The trail is not obvious; look for log stairs dropping sharply down toward Jakes Creek. If you visit the cabin, replace the rocks that keep the door closed and sign the register in the kitchen just off the front porch.

Continuing further down the Jakes Creek Trail you will come to the Meigs Mountain Trail Junction. You can remain on the Jakes Creek Trail all the way to the upper parking lot at Elkmont. But it's a boring trail with nothing of any interest to see. Therefore, turn left on the Meigs Mountain Trail and follow it downhill to a log bridge over Jakes Creek. On the other side of the bridge the trail will climb slightly to a short rock wall on your left. At this point the Meigs Mountain Trail will turn slightly to the left. Straight ahead you will see your trail, a well-used manway. As you follow the manway you

will quickly come to an old stable where the park kept horses back in the day when rangers patrolled on horseback. Turn right on the road (I call it the Stable Trail)¹ and follow it to the Elkmont Parking Lot and the restored vacation cabins.

Comments

This is perhaps my favorite of the hikes that use the A.T. as the approach trail from Kuwohi. As with the others, the views from the A.T. are, in themselves, worth every step. But beyond that, the Miry Ridge Trail from the A.T. to its junction with the Jakes Creek Trail remains among my favorite hikes since I first hiked this section in May of 1990 with our son and daughter-in-law. In particular, the views from both the Ben Parton Lookout as well as from Dripping Springs Mountain heather bald are incredible. I also recall the gentle decent on well-maintained trail from Jakes Gap as well as a relaxing overnight at the Lower Jakes Gap Backcountry Campsite #27. There we were entertained by deer that browsed all around us as though we were not even there.

One word of caution is in order. From the junction of the Lynn Camp Prong Trail with the Miry Ridge Trail horse traffic is allowed. There are areas of significant erosion destruction, dangerous even to horses, resulting from horse use. It would be good, in my view, to restrict horse traffic to low, flat terrain, but no one asked me. Just be careful...

Just a thought, returning to a previous comment. You might ask if it would not be easier and shorter to just hike the Jakes Creek Trail to the Miry Ridge Trail, then out to the Appalachian Trail and return. I'm glad you asked. The total distance to the A.T. on the Jakes Creek Trail and the Miry Ridge Trail is 8 miles; Out & Back that's 16 miles. The total distance for the hike I have laid out is 16 miles. And the grade is level to mostly down. Your choice...

¹ "Stable Trail" is the name I have given to this route. It will not appear on any map (other than mine). The short section of the Jakes Creek Trail shown in GSMNP maps from its junction with the Miry Ridge Trail on to the Elkmont upper parking area is a steep downhill gravel road giving easy access for park maintenance. That's fine, but its also boring and anything but a rewarding and gentle hike. Just try the "Stable Trail" once and then you tell me.

² Dripping Spring Mountain Backcountry Campsite #26 may be an option, depending on when you began your hike. My opinion? Adjust your starting time or push harder if you must. This is not, in my view, a desirable campsite. On my last hike through here it was essentially unmaintained to the point of undesirable. Perhaps your experience was (will be) different.