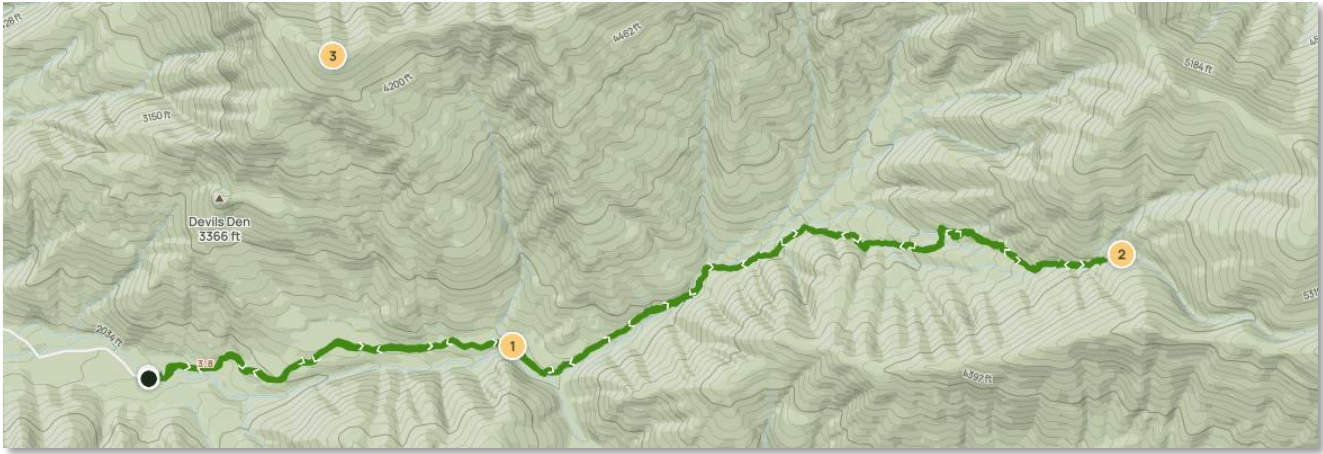


Ramsey Cascades

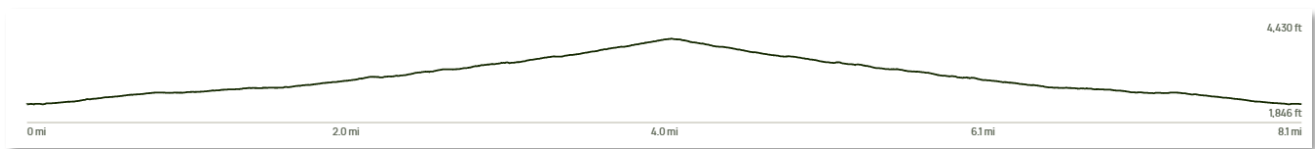
Out & Back Hike

Ramsey Cascades Trail

Trail Map



Elevation Profile



Trailhead

This hike is in the Greenbrier area of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Drive US 321 East from Gatlinburg past Pitman Center to the Greenbrier Park entrance. Turn right into the park and follow the Greenbrier Road past the picnic area. At the bridge over the Little Pigeon River, turn left and follow the road along the Middle Prong to the trailhead parking area.

Waypoints

- 1) Road Ends. The Jeep trail to the fire tower on Greenbrier Pinnacle started here.
- 2) Ramsey Cascades. (This is a very interesting trail with impressive stands of old-growth trees and interesting rock formations. However, there are no trail junctions, Backcountry Campsites, fords, or overlooks to be identified as Waypoints.)
- 3) Greenbrier Pinnacle. Not on the hike, shown here for reference.

Hike Description

Your hike will begin at the bridge that spans the middle prong of the Little Pigeon River at the parking area for Ramsey Cascades. On the other side of the bridge, you will begin to follow an old road, the last official purpose of which was to provide access to the fire tower atop Greenbrier Pinnacle. Throughout your hike to Ramsey Cascades, you will parallel the Greenbrier Pinnacle Ridge on your left. As a result, you will be treated to some incredible rock formations. The total elevation gain from the trailhead to Ramsey Cascades is 2,188 feet in a distance of 4-miles.

At 1.5 miles into your hike, the road ends in a turnaround. At this point in your hike, the Ramsey Prong and the Back Fork of the Little Pigeon River join to form the Middle Prong, which you have followed to this point. From here on it is the Ramsey Prong that that you will follow the rest of the way to the Ramsey cascades.

It is also here that the road, now a jeep track, turned sharply to the left and begins the climb to the fire tower atop Greenbrier Pinnacle. This trail is no longer maintained by the park so locating it may require some effort, but when I last hiked it, it was open and easy to follow. It was also used as a bridle trail.

The trail now becomes narrow and, in some places, quite steep. I think that the most unique element of the hike is now found in the incredible old-growth cove hardwood forest through which you are now hiking.

As an aside, some of the written materials on Ramsey Cascades will tell you that it is the “tallest falls in the park”, If it was a “waterfall” that might be true. But it isn’t a waterfall. The name of this hike clearly makes that distinction. It’s Ramsey Cascades¹.

Enjoy the cascades, take lots of pictures, get your feet wet, but don’t try to climb them...

Comments

As you drive up the road along the Middle Prong of the Little Pigeon River from the bridge crossings to the trailhead parking area you will notice that while you are clearly in the mountains there are some significant areas of level, farmable land on both sides of the road, and along the river. However, when you begin your hike, almost immediately the open land begins to disappear. The early settlers noticed that as well. They had selectively logged in this area for Tullip Poplar, Basswood, and Buckeye, both for their own use and for smaller lumber companies purchasing lumber from the locals. (See my comments on the *Porter Creek Trail* and the Whaley Family.) The only commercial logging interest to come here was the Champion Fiber Company and they had just purchased land and begun to make plans for railroads to haul out the timber when the National Park came into existence. Therefore, record size trees remain to this day.

...

Cascade or Waterfall?

¹In a **waterfall** the water moves only downward, like falling off the edge of a table. In a **cascade**, the water moves both downward and forward, like going down a set of stairs or on a ramp. See the photos below.



Abrams Falls

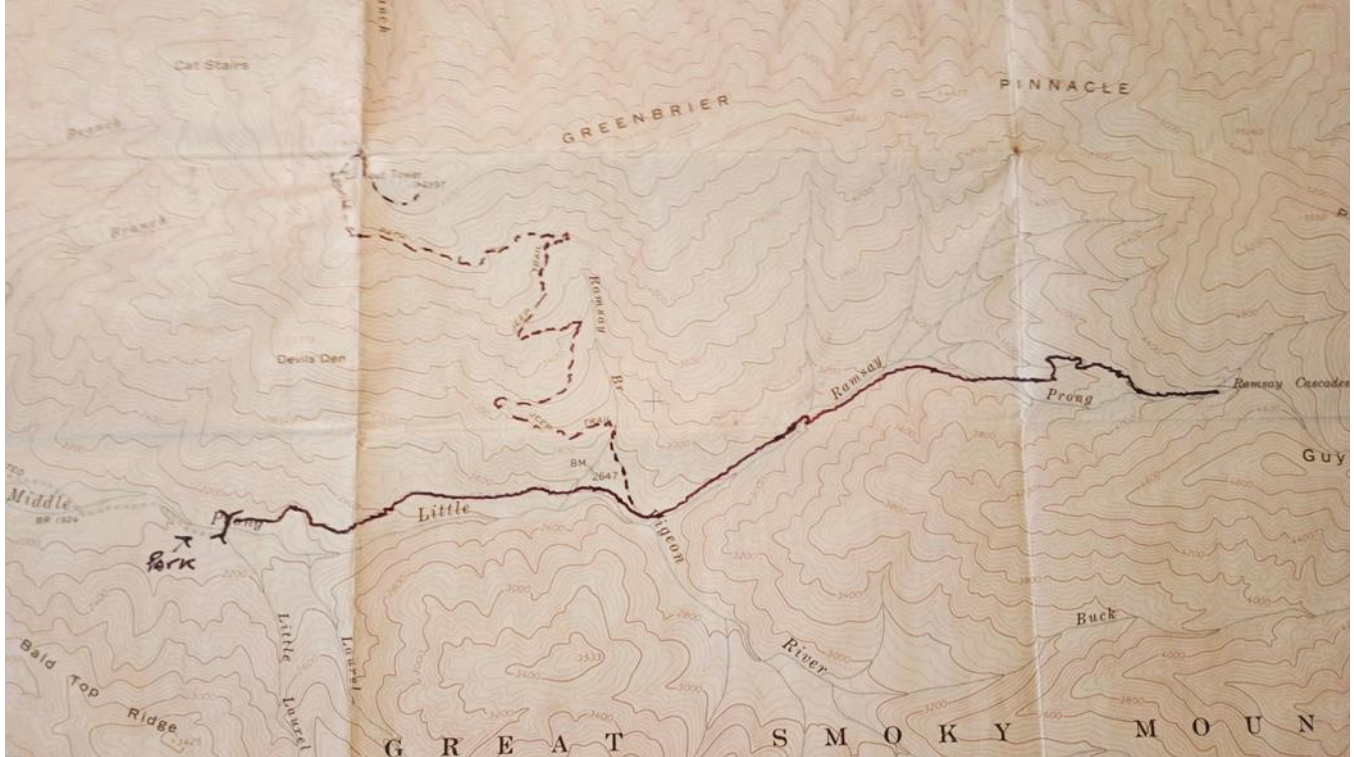
Yes, I know, it *Cascades* over a big rock in the middle of the falls. Don’t be picky.



Ramsey Cascades

Photos

The image below shows my Ramsey Cascade hike as well as my hike to the location of the Lookout Tower (Fire Tower) on top of the Greenbrier Pinnacle (elevation 4,597'). I failed to put the date of either hike on the map, or in my notes, but a good estimate would be in the spring of 1964 or 1965.



The photos below as well as the Trail Map and Elevation Profile are from my son Eric. He made this hike on April 29th, 2024. When I did the trail, I had neither GPS nor camera, so I appreciate the photos.



Rock Outcrops



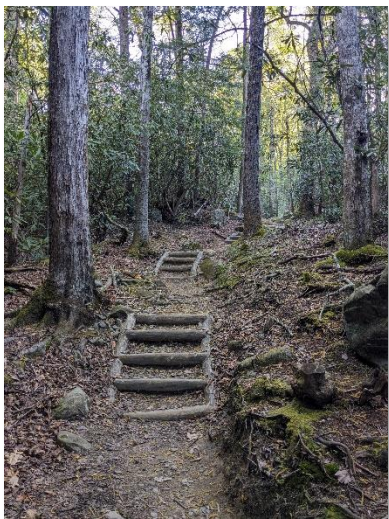
Wide Easy Trail



End of Road



Rocks & Roots...



Steps...



Rocks, Steps & Bridge...



And Big Trees...



Then the Reason You Made the Hike.