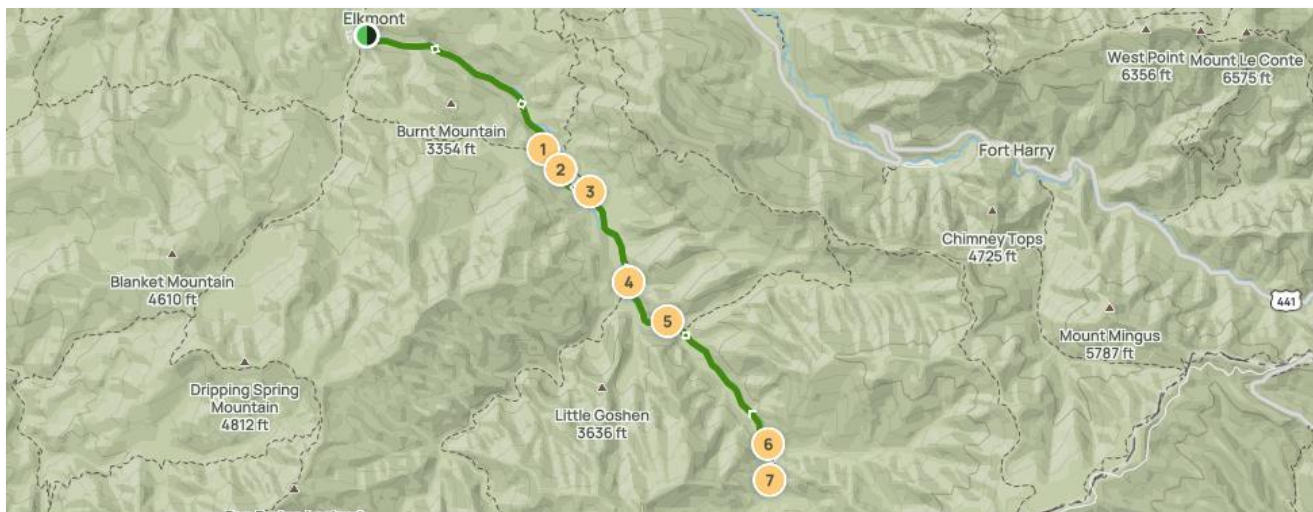


Little River Trail

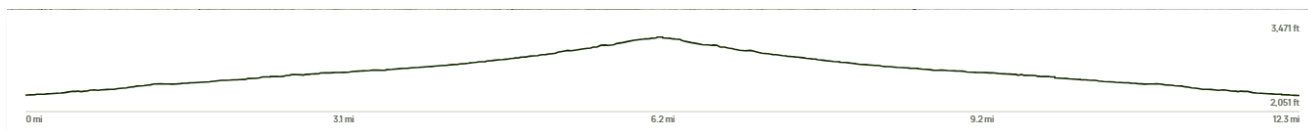
12.4 Miles Out & Back

Elkmont Campground to Three Forks Backcountry Campsite #30

Trail Map



Elevation Profile



Trailhead

Drive into the Elkmont Campground from the Little River Road. As you approach the Elkmont Campground check-in station you will see a road to the left. Follow that road and cross the bridge over the Little River. Park in the low parking lot and proceed to the gate. You are on the Little River Trail. (Note: If the lot is full continue to the upper parking lot, park there and then come back down to the trailhead.)

Waypoints

- 1) Huskey Branch Falls.
- 2) Junction, Cucumber Gap Trail.
- 3) Junction, Huskey Gap Trail.
- 4) Junction, Goshen Prong Trail.
- 5) Ford Rough Creek at Backcountry Campsite #24. The Junction with Rough Creek Trail is just beyond the campsite.
- 6) Ford, Meigs Post Prong.
- 7) Ford Three, Little River Headwaters and Backcountry Campsite #30.

Hike Description

The Little River Trail is one of the most popular trails in the national park. It begins at the gate in the parking lot at the end of the road behind the Elkmont campground. Hiked to the end, it extends 6.2 miles to Backcountry Campsite #30 at the base of Kuwohi (formerly Clingmans Dome). Along the way it passes four trail junctions and three stream crossings that you must ford. During high water you should seriously consider the wisdom of making these crossings.

Many of those hiking the Little River Trail have made their destination upon reaching Waypoint #1, 2-miles into the hike. Here Huskey Branch Falls tumbles into the Little River. At 2.3 miles we reach Waypoint #2, the junction with the Cucumber Gap Trail. The Cucumber Gap Trail is part of a popular loop trail out of Elkmont; the Jakes Creek/Cucumber Gap/Little River Trail Loop.

At Waypoint #3, 2.7 miles from Elkmont, the Little River Trail reaches the junction with the Huskey Gap Trail on the left, just after crossing the river on an old railroad bridge dating back to the days of the Little River Lumber Company. This trail climbs to an intersection with the Sugarland Mountain Trail. At that point the hike may become an Out & Back, a Point-To-Point by continuing on to US 441, or a Loop Hike by turning left on the Sugarland Mountain Trail and continuing downhill to Mids Gap, at which point you would follow a little used manway on the left to the Nature Trail adjacent to the Elkmont Campground.

Continuing on, at 3.7 miles you reach the junction with the Goshen Prong Trail coming in on your right. This trail gives access to Backcountry Campsite #23 Fish Camp Prong, then on to the Double Springs Gap shelter on the A.T., a distance of just under 8-miles.

At approximately 5 miles into your hike, you will come to both your first stream crossing, the ford of Rough Creek, and Backcountry Campsite #24. This is a fairly easy crossing with several alternative crossing points. It is also a very roomy and level campsite.

The final trail junction is at mile 5.3, just past the Rough Creek Backcountry Campsite #24. The Rough Creek Trail joins the Little River Trail on the left, from there climbing to the Sugarland Mountain Trail. At that point, turn right and follow the Sugarland Mountain Trail to the Mt. Collins Shelter, and the A.T.

The next stream crossing at Mile 5.8 is one of the more difficult fords I have encountered in the park. Here you must cross the Meigs Post Prong of the Little River. Look at the second page of photos below, focusing on the top photo on the right and the photo below it. You will see my walking stick on the right of the first photo. This is the view where the trail comes to the stream. It is a good 6' to 8' above the water. The depth of the water here is at least 4'; for my 5' 5" body a no-go. On your left, there is a manway, of sorts, that follows the stream. It is very narrow, on a steep grade, and washed out in several places. There were also fallen trees to cross. Follow the manway to a point approximately at the top of the photo and crossed the river at that point, just upstream of the island. Had the water been any higher, this would have been the end of our hike.

Finally, at 6.2 miles you will come to the last ford, this one through the headwaters of the Little River to access Backcountry Campsite #30, the end of the hike. We did not make this crossing. It was a steep drop to the river, a log and debris jam in the river, and a steep climb up the other side. To be fair, it did look like it was a flat, open area, probably a nice campsite.

My closing thoughts on this hike are: 1) it is not a difficult hike. The trail, for the most part, is in good condition and easy to hike, not considering the fords. Until the very end it is on old roads. 2) Unless you want to stay in Backcountry Campsite #30, or you have set about to hike all of the trails in the park, this trail's most useful purpose, in my opinion, is to access four other trails: Cucumber Gap, Huskey Gap, Goshen Prong, and Rough Creek. All four of these trails will take you to a collection of Point-To-Point and Loop Hikes. You will also be able to access the A.T. and other multi-day outings.

Enjoy...

Photos

The following photos show some of the highlights of the Little River Trail



Old Logging Railroad Bridge over the Little River

When I first hiked this trail in the late 60's this was the trailhead and parking turnaround.



Huskey Branch Falls



Cucumber Gap Trail Junction



Goshen Prong Trail Junction



Huskey Gap Trail Junction



This bridge was washed out several years ago.



This is the first ford, a relatively easy one across Rough Creek at Backcountry Campsite #24. A nice campsite.



This is the ford over Meigs Post Prong. This photo and the photo below. Not easy.



This is the actual point of crossing. Still got wet, but only up to our knees...



The last ford, this one over the Headwaters of the Little River at Backcountry Campsite #30 (the level open area in the top of the photo).