

Cherokee Hiking Club Trail Blurb

Bald River Trail #88

Tellico Ranger District - Cherokee National Forest

Distance: 4.8 miles

Elevation Change: 480 feet

High Point: 1860 feet (Bald River Road)

Low Point: 1380 feet (Tellico River Road)

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

Parking: The best parking is adjacent to the Bald River Falls Parking Lot along the Tellico River Road. Parking is also available at the south upstream end of the trail on Bald River Road adjacent to the Bald River bridge.

Driving Directions to the Bald River Falls Parking Lot: From TN 68 go up the Cherohala Skyway to mile 5, then bear right onto the Tellico River Road, past the ranger station entrance road and on up to the Bald River Falls parking area. It is 6.3 miles to the falls on the Tellico River Road from its intersection with the Cherohala Skyway.

Driving Directions to the Bald River Road Trailhead: From the intersection of the Tellico River Road (FS Road 210) and the Cherohala Skyway (TN 165), drive up the Tellico River Road past Bald River Falls (mile 6.3) and through Green Cove (mile 13.4) where you will find a couple of stores and motels as well as many cabins. Turn right onto the Bald River Road (FS 126) (mile 14.0). Follow this gravel road several miles up over Sugar Mountain and down to the Holly Flats Campground entrance (mile 6.1 on the Bald River Road). Continue past the campground entrance road to the bridge over the Bald River (mile 6.6). Park on the northwest side of the bridge in a small parking area (Upper Bald River Trailhead). One can also reach the Upper Bald River Trailhead by turning right off the Tellico River Road at the entrance to the Ranger Station across the bridge onto Wildcat Creek Road (FS Road 384). Follow Wildcat Creek Road 6.3 miles, then turn left onto Bald River Road (FS Road 126) and follow this road 4.7 miles over Basin Gap and down to the Upper Bald River Trailhead.

Trail Description: From the Bald River Falls Trailhead, head up the trail at the east end of the parking lot to climb to the top of the falls. Take plenty of pictures, but be careful. Others have met their death falling down the falls. If you are lucky, you might see some kayakers doing the lower drop of the falls. Above the falls there is an abandoned picnic area which is often busy in the summer with swimmers, but again beware of the danger downstream if you decide to get in the water. We highly recommend you not swim here because of this danger. The old logging railroad crossed the falls at the site of this abandoned picnic area. Once you leave this area, you will pass several more less impressive falls, but many are quite incredible. At mile 0.5, take the signed left hand switchback up the face of the cliffs to reach the top above the river. At the top there is a narrow rocky and very precarious ridgeline which extends out into a bend of the river. Be very careful if you go out on this ridgeline. The shear drop on either side is about 100 feet to the river below. We recommend you not go out on this narrow ridgeline. Continue up the main trail over the nose of the ridgeline and down again to river level on the other side of the ridge. Soon you reach another spectacular waterfall at mile 0.7. At mile 1.4 the Cow Camp Trail intersects with the Bald River Trail. This trail leads to the ridgetop above and then meanders back to the Tellico River Road about a mile upstream from Bald River Falls. The Cow Camp Trail is well maintained and can make a nice loop hike. After passing by the Cow Camp Trail intersection, the Bald River Trail

continues up the river gorge fairly close to the river. There are several excellent campsites along the river's edge. You are likely to see evidence of beaver on this quieter section of the trail. The trail eventually ends on the Bald River Road just a short distance west of the Holly Flats Campground. From here you can reverse your route back to the Bald River Falls parking area for a hike totalling 9.6 miles or go to a car you have spotted on the Bald River Road trailhead.

Camping: Several excellent campsites are along the trail next to the river. They are spaced about ½ to 1 mile apart and are visible by noting a cleared area with a fire ring.

Water: Water is available from the Bald River and any of its tributaries. Be sure to sterilize the water, even though it looks absolutely crystal clear. The river does flow through the Holly Flats Campground upstream of Bald River Road.

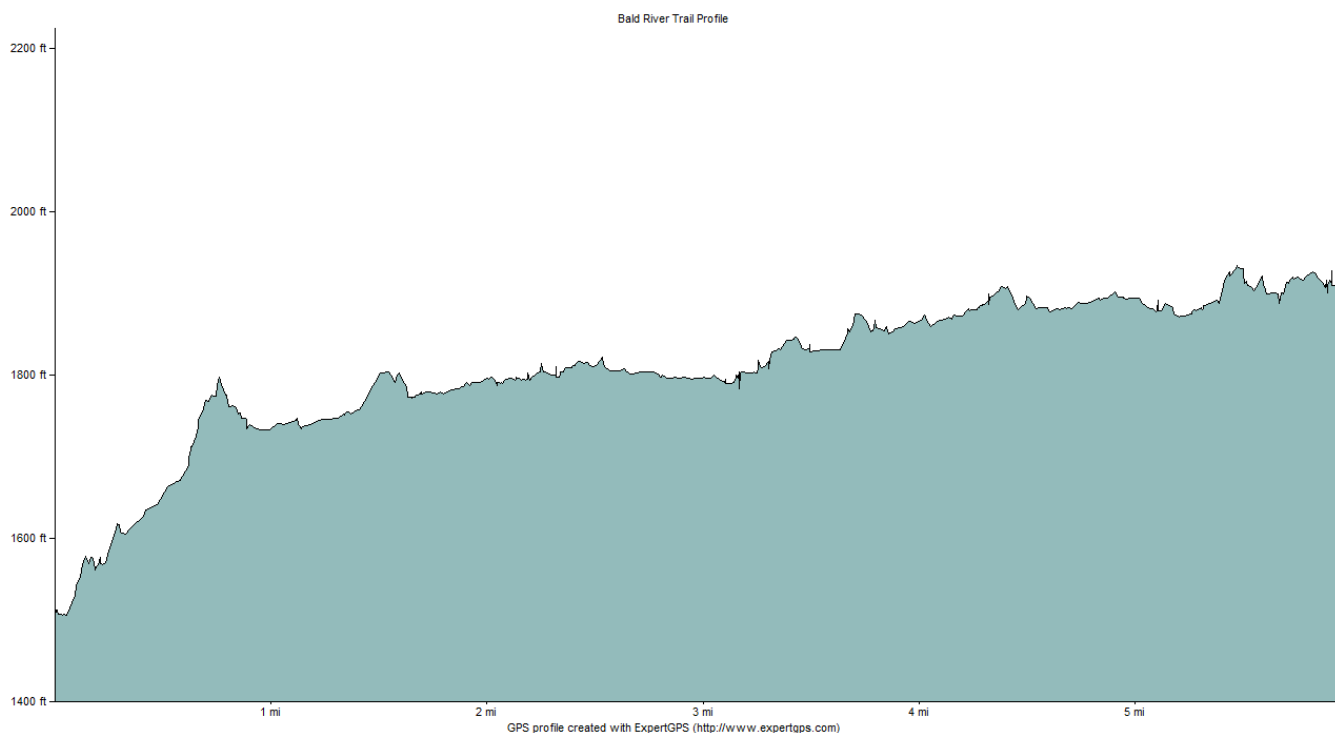
Cell phones: Cell phone service is spotty in the Tellico Ranger District of the Cherokee National Forest, but good service is available in Tellico Plains. Emergency is 9-1-1.

History of the Trail: This trail was heavily logged in the early part of the 20th century but is now totally contained within the Bald River Gorge Wilderness, forever protecting the gorge from future logging. The trail must be maintained with primitive non-motorized tools as well. The trail for part of the way follows the old logging railroad route up the gorge. You are likely to see trout fly fishermen along the trail. The area is inhabited by bear and boar and you are likely to see signs of their existence. Also beaver inhabit the area as well as wild turkey.

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 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 5, 2009

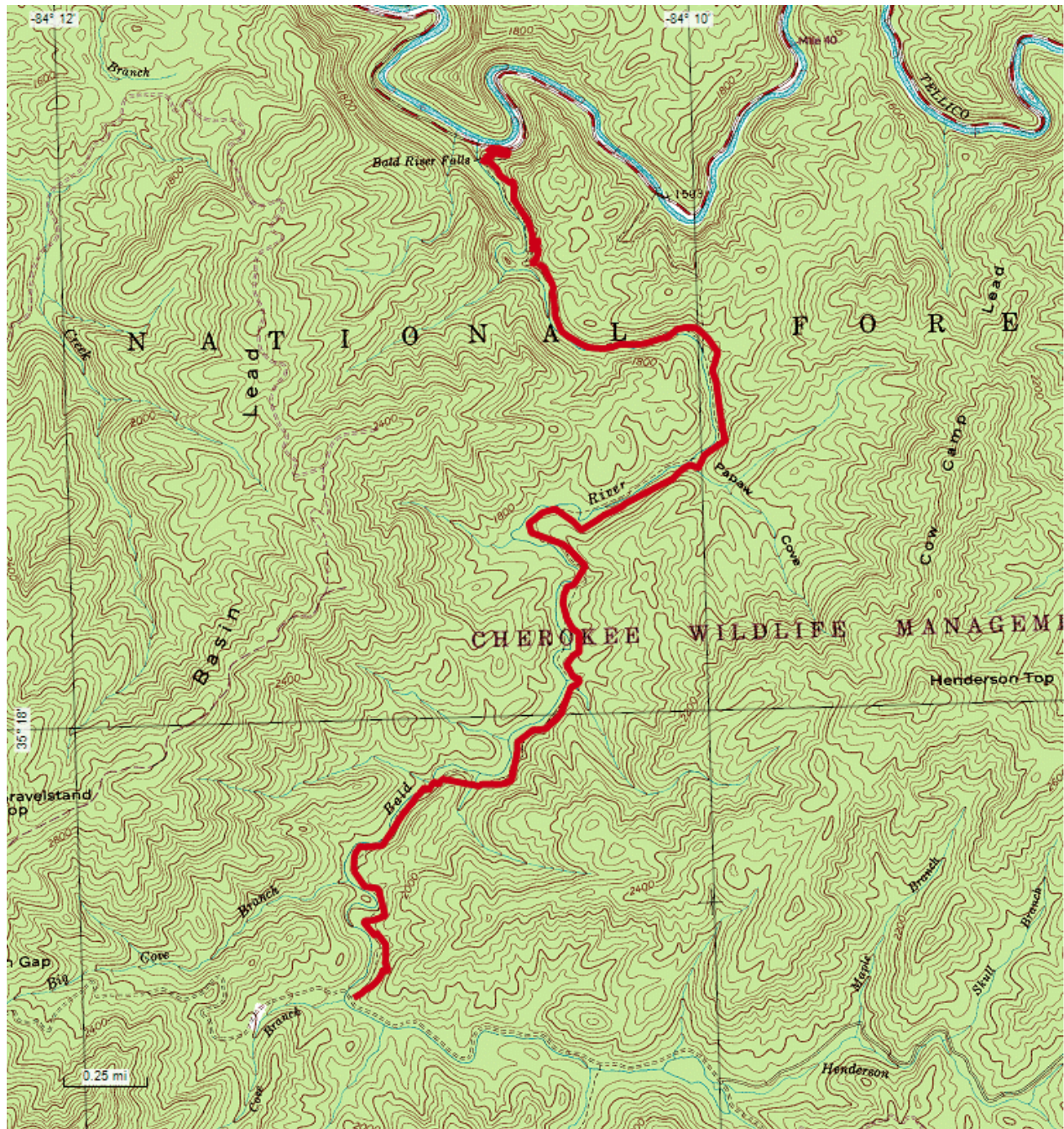
This trail blurb was developed by the Cherokee Hiking Club, 2359 Varnell Road, Cleveland, TN 37311. For more information, check out our website at www.CherokeeHikingClub.org



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Bald River Trail #88 Road Access Map Tellico Ranger District – Cherokee National Forest

