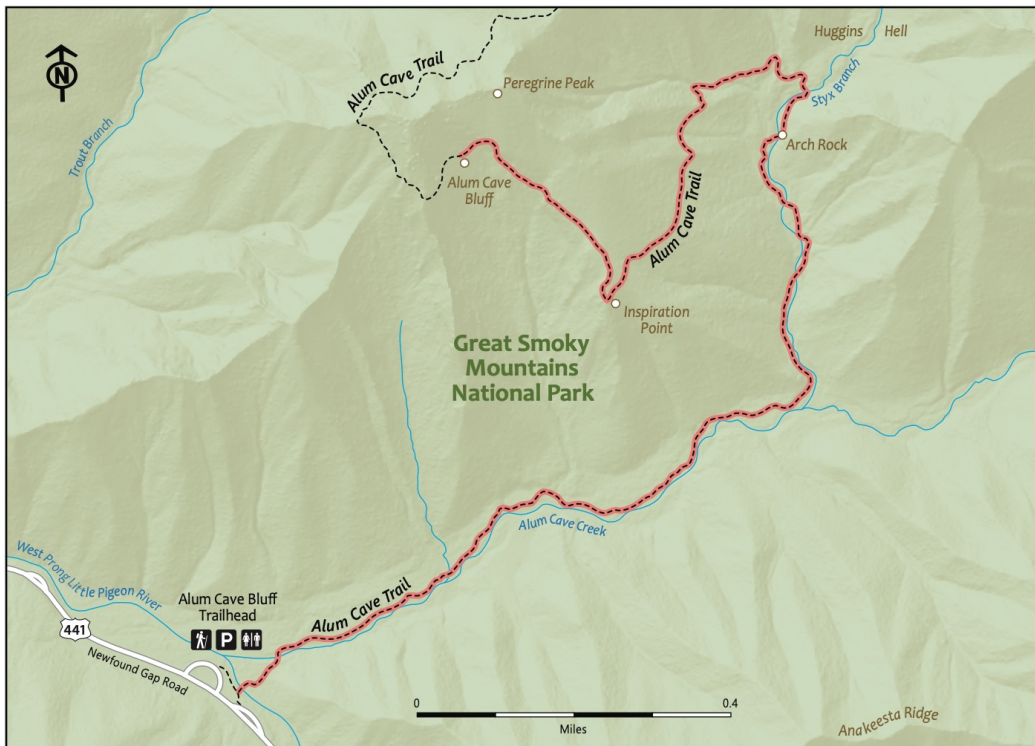


## Trail 30: Alum Cave Bluffs

### Key Characteristics

Trail Name	Alum Cave
Region	Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Trail #	28
Time Estimate - Hiking Fast	3 hours
Time Estimate - Hiking Slowly	5 hours
Trail Distance (Miles)	4.5
Elevation Change	Very Steep
Pets	Not Allowed
Parking Pass/Entrance Fee	Required
Restroom(s)	Yes (seasonal)
Terrain	Dirt path; rocky path; rock steps



## Overview

This is a hike up arguably *the* finest trail in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The trail starts at a pretty trailhead along Highway 441, the main road through the park. The trail continues along the super scenic Alum Cave Creek; the trail is very well-maintained and easily hiked by younger children. The trail climbs through a unique geological feature you hike *through*, Arch Rock, then heads up more steeply toward Mt. LeConte. The trail then crosses an overlook surrounded by Mountain Laurel before climbing farther toward Alum Cave, yet another unique geological feature, Alum Cave, you hike *beneath*. It's epic. This is a perfect spot for a rest and a picnic before returning to the trailhead. This is a challenging hike, and finding parking can also be a challenge, but it is worth the investment of time and effort, particularly for older kids or little kids looking for a big challenge.



## Directions to the Trailhead

Trailhead Address	Alum Cave Trailhead Parking Area, 3639 Newfound Gap Rd, Gatlinburg, TN 37738
Trailhead GPS Coordinates	35.62872, -83.45076

This is one of the busiest parking areas and trailheads in the park. Particularly with children, visiting during periods that are less busy can be essential for quickly finding a spot. Apart from visiting outside of busy periods, arriving in the early-mid afternoon can be a good time, as many who arrived in the morning are departing. Try to park at one of the two parking areas immediately beside the trailhead (one alongside the road, the other near the seasonal toilet). If you cannot, other parking is available, but from those you have to walk along the side of the road to reach the trailhead. If two or more adults are present, consider dropping children off with one adult, while the other finds a spot. After finding a spot, look for the signs for the Alum Cave Trail.

## Trail Description

Distance from Start	Description
0.0	Start on the Alum Cave Trail. Almost immediately cross a bridge over the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River.
0.1	Continue on the trail, now along Alum Cave Creek. The trail gradually climbs up a wide, scenic pathway, occasionally crossing
0.6	Fun spots to splash in the creek abound around this section. Pick one and cool off in warmer weather!
1.3	Cross a bridge and then climb up the stairs through Arch Rock. This is an optional point at which to turn-around and return to the start.
1.4	Cross a footlog and enter a different part of the hike, one where you will ascend more steeply (though the trail remains moderately steep here).
1.9	Reach inspiration point, a rocky prominence and scenic overlook — and a great point to pause or return back to the start, though the bluffs are only a bit further.
2.2	Steep climb up stairs. Almost there!
2.25	Alum Cave Bluffs. Rest, soak in the views, and get ready for the return hike (almost all downhill!). The trail to Mount LeConte continues past the bluffs.
4.5	Trailhead.





## Nearby

- Visit Sevierville, Pigeon Forge, and Gatlinburg. Sevierville, Pigeon Forge, and Gatlinburg loosely form a corridor from I-40 to the entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Sevierville and (especially) Pigeon Forge feature tourist attractions, restaurants, and a very wide variety of shops; Gatlinburg is touristy but has a more small-town character. As tourist destinations, all three can be busy, but they can be fun places to stop with happy but tired kiddos.
- Hiking on to LeConte for a grand adventure! You may continue farther along on the Alum Cave Trail to Mount LeConte, a peak with only around 40 feet less height than Kuwohi, but only accessible via (lengthy) hikes—the roundtrip hike from the Alum Cave Trail Trailhead to Mount LeConte is around 11 very challenging miles. There is a lodge at which you can reserve a rustic room—LeConte Lodge (LeConte Lodge · Gatlinburg, TN 37738)—but it can be difficult to secure a reservation. The LeConte Lodge includes a store at which day hikers can purchase snacks, coveted t-shirts, and even more coveted no-bake cookies.

