

## **Brasstown Bald, GA, 4,784 ft. – October 3, 2019, HP #26: A Pleasant Surprise**

After spending about thirty minutes on the highest point of South Carolina I headed south and west via Highways 11 and 76 into Georgia. At Macedonia I turned left onto Highway 75 and found Owl Creek Road. At Jacks Gap the road wound up and to the north to the parking area for Brasstown Bald. From the parking lot, heading mostly north and uphill for about six tenths of a mile, the highest point in Georgia awaited.

Although the parking fee included a shuttle bus to the summit, I elected to walk. By 4:00 p.m. I located the paved walking path which zigzagged its way up through the thick forest wandering through ash, birch, maple, and oak trees -- with a few good sized waxy leafed rhododendrons and mountain laurel sprinkled in. The heavy forest and humid climate give the area an almost tropical feel.

Brasstown Bald gets its name from a misheard Cherokee word. The natives called the area Itse' yi meaning place of fresh green. This was misheard as Untsaiyi which means brass in the Cherokee tongue, and the area became known as Brasstown. Although typically covered with thick vegetation, a "bald" in the Appalachian Mountains refers to the summit of a hill or mountain. The metal alloy of copper and zinc known as brass has no ties to the area. Like its distant neighbor Sassafras Mountain 98 driving-miles to the northeast, Brasstown Bald is part of the Blue Ridge Mountains.



With the natural beauty of the area today one would not think it, but in the late 1800s destructive lumber companies stripped this land. As a result, native animals all but became extinct. Even deer had to be reintroduced to the area after the land was obtained by the Federal Government in the early 1900s. Fortunately, today the northern Georgia Mountains are again forest covered and wild animals including grouse, turkeys, white-tail deer, and even black bears roam the area.

The summit contains a large wooden structure consisting of an observation platform, fire lookout tower, and a small visitor center. The current structure was erected in 1965, however the Civilian Conservation Corps built the original observation deck in 1935. Without the platform only the forest itself would be viewed, but thanks to the extra elevation the platform provides the views in all 360 degrees are amazing. Some claim the skyline of Atlanta, 100 miles to the south, can be viewed under the right conditions. What caught my eye the most was the patchy Chatuge Lake (a man-made reservoir) to the north.

I only had a few minutes to poke my head into the visitor center before it closed. When I started my hike down, just after 5:00 p.m., I was the last person on the summit.

Many of the elements of Brasstown Bald are geared toward tourism, but notwithstanding, I was pleasantly surprised its atmosphere still alluded a sense of adventure. Its rural setting was serene,

causing me to understand why others have claimed Brasstown Bald to be one of the most enjoyable eastern US state highpoints. My description for the selfie taken in front of the dark brown metal sign at the top of the hiking trail states, "The surprisingly wonderful Brasstown Bald Mountain of GA."

Photo Album: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/wzH43Vcj5gKSooLD8>