

## 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 I wound up and to the north to Brasstown Bald. From the parking lot six tenths of a mile, mostly north and continuing uphill, lies the highest point in Georgia at 4,784 feet above sea level. The parking fee included a shuttle bus to the summit, but I elected to walk. The paved walking path is heavily forested and wanders through ash, birch, maple, and oak trees -- with a few good sized waxy leafed rhododendrons and mountain laurel sprinkled in. The thick 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. In the Appalachian Mountains a bald refers to the summit of a hill or mountain even though typically they are covered in thick vegetation. 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 the 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 of the platform 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.

Notwithstanding having a visitor center on the summit, I found the atmosphere at Brasstown Bald to be adventuresome. It is a remarkable mountain which actually surprised me – a welcomed and pleasant surprise at that. Perhaps I had expected a more developed setting. Some have even claimed this to be the among 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>