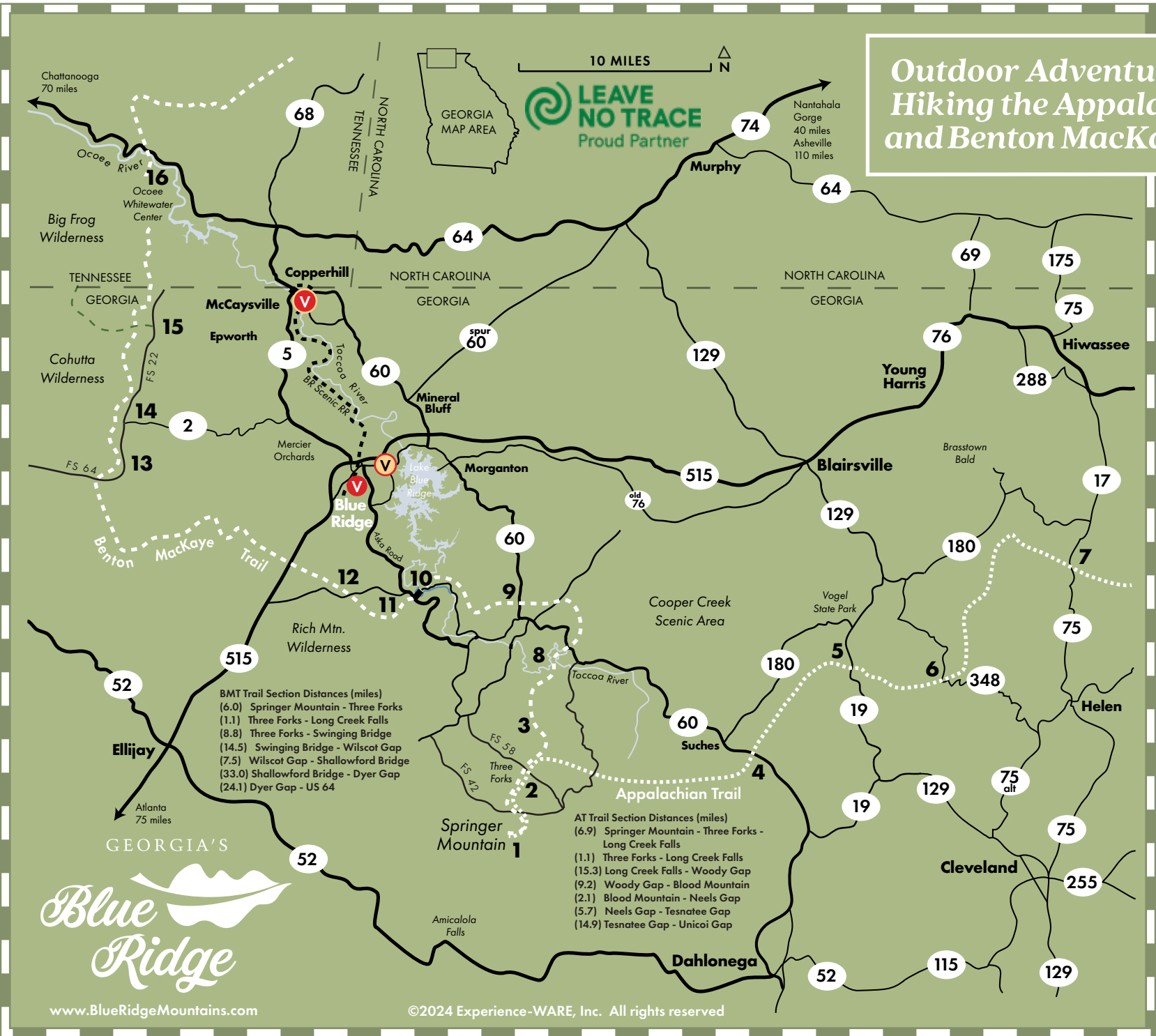


## Outdoor Adventure: Hiking the Appalachian and Benton MacKaye Trails



**Benton MacKaye Trail**  
**Appalachian Trail**

- 1 Springer Mountain (Trail Terminus for AT & BMT)
- 2 Three Forks
- 3 Long Creek Falls
- 4 Woody Gap
- 5 Neels Gap, Walasi-Yi Center
- 6 Tesnatee Gap, Richard Russell Scenic Hwy.
- 7 Unicoi Gap
- 8 Toccoa River & Swinging Bridge
- 9 Wilscot Gap, Hwy 60
- 10 Shallowford Bridge
- 11 Stanley Creek Rd.
- 12 Fall Branch Falls
- 13 Dyer Gap
- 14 Watson Gap
- 15 Jacks River Trail (Dally Gap) - - -
- 16 Thunder Rock Campground

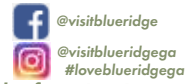
- V Main Visitor Center
- V Downtown Visitor Ctr.
- V McCoysville Visitor Center
- 64 Highway Number

**BMT Trail Section Distances (miles)**  
 (6.0) Springer Mountain - Three Forks  
 (1.1) Three Forks - Long Creek Falls  
 (8.8) Three Forks - Swinging Bridge  
 (14.5) Swinging Bridge - Wilscot Gap  
 (7.5) Wilscot Gap - Shallowford Bridge  
 (33.0) Shallowford Bridge - Dyer Gap  
 (24.1) Dyer Gap - US 64

**AT Trail Section Distances (miles)**  
 (6.9) Springer Mountain - Three Forks - Long Creek Falls  
 (1.1) Three Forks - Long Creek Falls  
 (15.3) Long Creek Falls - Woody Gap  
 (9.2) Woody Gap - Blood Mountain  
 (2.1) Blood Mountain - Neels Gap  
 (5.7) Neels Gap - Tesnatee Gap  
 (14.9) Tesnatee Gap - Unicoi Gap



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# #8 Outdoor Adventure: Hiking the Appalachian Trail and Benton MacKaye Trail

The hiking trails of Fannin County include some of the most legendary in the USA. The Appalachian Trail and Benton MacKaye Trail (pronounced mack-eye) begin here on Springer Mountain. Whether you are out for a day hike or a longer multi-day hike, Blue Ridge is the perfect starting point for your hike, picking up gear, supplies & advice.

The Appalachian Trail (AT) begins at the top of Springer Mountain and continues 2,200 miles all the way to Maine. The rugged terrain of the trail can be used for short hikes or longer multi-day hikes with shuttles you set up near access points. The Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) is a footpath of nearly 300 miles through the Appalachian mountains of the southeastern United States. Named after the originator of the AT, it is designed for foot travel in the tradition of the Appalachian Trail (AT). Blue Ridge has been designated as the first Benton MacKaye Trail Town.

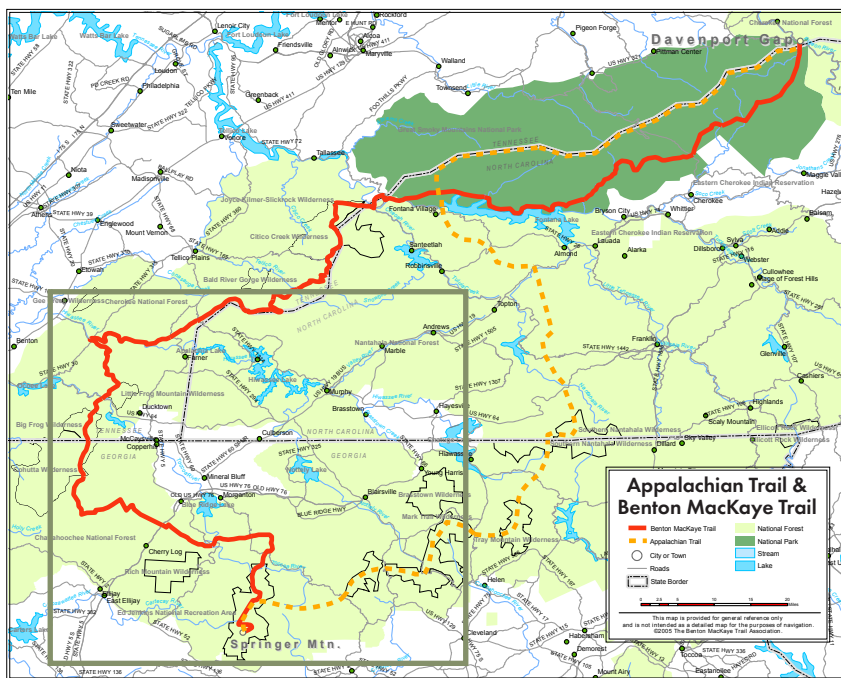
This guide is a general guide only. Please make sure you are adequately prepared for wilderness hiking.

## Appalachian Trail & Benton MacKaye Trail FROM THE START, SOUTH OF BLUE RIDGE:

**1 Springer Mountain.** This is the starting point of both the BMT and the Appalachian Trail. From Blue Ridge, take Aska Rd., 13.5 miles until it dead ends into Newport Road. Turn right on Newport Road, go 4.5 miles until it dead ends into Doublehead Gap. Turn right on Doublehead Gap and go 2 miles to FS road 42 (on the left). Turn left and go approximately 6.5 to 7 miles to parking area on your left at Big Stamp Gap. From the parking lot take the trail back across the road for a .9 mile hike to the summit. Parking lot - [N 34°38.262' W084°11.712'](#)

**2 Three Forks.** A junction of the Benton MacKaye Trail and Appalachian Trail. Go 13.5 miles south on Aska Road to its end. Turn right onto Newport Road, go 4.5 miles to end. Turn left onto Doublehead Gap Road, cross a concrete bridge and come to a dirt gravel road. Continue on this road .3 miles to the intersection with dirt-gravel FS Road 58, intersecting sharply from the right. Turn right (east) into the forest and drive 5.3 miles to Three Forks. Noontootla Creek is on the right as you drive. The 1.1 mile trail to Long Creek Falls begins on the north side of the road (on the left). [N 34°39.815' W084°11.053'](#)

**3 Long Creek Falls.** A pretty hike alongside Long Creek to the falls. There are three short ascents before reaching the blue blazed side trail to the falls at 1.1 miles. [N 34°39.815' W084°11.053'](#) is the trailhead fix.



green box references detail map area on front

**4 Woody Gap.** From Three Forks the combined AT/BMT continues northeast toward Long Creek Falls where the trails split. The BMT goes north, and the AT continues east past Hawk Mountain to Hightower Gap and on to Woody Gap.

**5 Neels Gap.** The AT climbs over challenging terrain up Blood Mountain and down to Neels Gap & Walasi-Yi Center.

**6 Tesnatee Gap, Richard Russell Scenic Highway.** The AT crosses one of the most beautiful scenic highways in Georgia

**7 Unicoi Gap, Hwy. 75** AT access from Hwy. 75

**8 Toccoa River & Swinging Bridge.** A 260-foot suspension bridge crosses the Toccoa River on the Benton MacKaye Trail. From the intersection of Hwy 515 and Hwy 5 (McDonalds) in Blue Ridge, follow Hwy 515 East approximately 4 miles to the traffic light at Hwy 60. Turn right and go to the stop sign; then turn left on Hwy 60. Go 1.5 miles into Morganton, then turn right on Hwy 60 South toward Dahlonega for 11.3 miles passing Skeenah Mill. Another .7 miles on the right is FS 816, turn right and follow ROUGH gravel road about 3 miles to the parking area. Short hike down to the Toccoa River, BMT & Swinging Bridge. Parking lot - [N 34°44.350' W084°10.213'](#)

**9 Wilscot Gap.** BMT access from Hwy. 60

**10 Shallowford Bridge.** The BMT crosses the Toccoa River here over an historic steel bridge.

**12 Fall Branch Falls.** A double waterfall with mountain laurel and rhododendron growing along the trail and creek bank. The hike to the falls is about 30 minutes round trip. In Blue Ridge, follow Aska Road south for eight miles. Turn right on Stanley Creek Rd. **11** (Toccoa Riverside Restaurant is on the left). The trailhead is about three miles on the right (.2 miles from where pavement ends). Parking lot - [N 34°47.017' W084°18.166'](#) Waterfall - [N 34°47.198' W084°18.370'](#)

## Benton MacKaye Trail FROM WEST OF BLUE RIDGE:

**13 & 14 Dyer Gap & Watson Gap.** The BMT traverses the Cohutta/Big Frog Wilderness northward from here to the Ocoee Whitewater Center. From Blue Ridge travel north on Hwy 5 for 3.9 miles to Hwy 2, take a left and go west on Hwy 2 until the road turns into a gravel Forest Service road to Watson Gap. From the four-way intersection at Watson Gap turn left and drive 2.5 miles to Dyer Gap.

**15 Dally Gap.** From the four-way intersection at Watson Gap turn right and uphill onto FS 22, then go 3.4 miles to the trailhead at Dally AT/BMTGap. Jacks River Trail access here.

**16 Thunder Rock Campground.** This is a nice place to stop, park, start a hike or set up shuttles for long hikes. From Blue Ridge take GA 5 north to McCaysville, then turn left on Tennessee Highway 68. In Ducktown, take U.S. 64 west to the Thunder Rock Campground on the left.

**A Word to the Wise ...** Be prepared for wilderness. Get info from [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org) and [www.bmta.org](http://www.bmta.org) plus the USFS web site at [www.fs.fed.us/conf/](http://www.fs.fed.us/conf/). Drive a 4WD vehicle to the trailhead, get USFS maps, Trails Illustrated map #777 (for detailed terrain and trail info) and carry the 10 essentials. The law of the forest is "leave no trace". See [www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org) for info. Please pack in all you will need and pack out all your trash. If you build a fire, never leave it unattended. Use good judgment when hiking, particularly around waterfalls where rocks are often wet, moss covered and slippery. If hiking during hunting season, wear a brightly colored vest.

**Main Visitor Center:** 152A Orvin Lance Drive, Blue Ridge, GA 30513 1-800-899-MTNS

**Downtown Visitor Center:** 282 West Main St., Blue Ridge

**Downtown McCaysville Visitor Center:** 53 East Market St.

[www.BlueRidgeMountains.com](http://www.BlueRidgeMountains.com)  
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