

Vital Trail Information

Trail Length

Current official length is 287.6

Trail Type

The BMT is a backcountry hiking trail. Nearly half the route is on land managed as [Wilderness](#) by both the NPS and the USFS.

Trail Elevation

Ascent: 54,682'

Descent: -56,808'

High: 5,779'

Low: 755'

Grade: Average Grade: 6% (4°)

Max Grade: 22% (13°)

Lowest: 765 feet at crossing of the Hiwassee River in Reliance, TN.

Highest: 5,843 feet at summit of Mt. Sterling in the Smokies.

Dogs

Leashed dogs allowed except no dogs allowed in GSMNP.

The Blaze



The official blaze is a white diamond, 5" across by 7" tall. (None permitted in Wilderness.)

Resupply Points

For long-distance hikers, see [Thru Hikers Guide and Resupply Strategy](#) page.

[Access Points and Trailheads](#)

16 in Georgia, 24 in Tennessee / North Carolina, and five in the Smokies. See [Access Points and Trailheads](#) for a detailed listing.

Shelters

Two on the trail: one at mile 50.3 and the other at mile 273.8, northbound.

Permits Required

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park requires a permit and advance reservations for all backcountry camping in the park. Before planning your backcountry trip, please read through this important information about

reservations and permits, regulations, bear safety, trail closures and more.

[Learn more.](#)

Degree of Difficulty

The BMT is chartered to travel the high ridge so difficulty is similar to that of the AT -- 'strenuous'.

Water

Generally, not a problem in the Appalachians, though there are a few stretches where water is limited. One stream (at the southern crossing of Georgia Hwy 60, mile 17.9) is not potable.

Permitted Uses

While the BMT is a hiking trail, some segments are routed on local trails with pre-existing horse or bicycle use permitted.

Weather

The BMT is generally open year-round, but hikers should be prepared for extreme weather, especially in the higher elevations.

Road Walks

Over the entire trail, approximately 15 miles of road walking combined.

Major Intersecting Trails

The Benton MacKaye Trail intersects the:

Appalachian Trail at miles 0.0, 3.8, 5.9, 200.1, and 287.6

Pinhoti (Georgia) at 69.4

Mountains-to-Sea Trail at 241.5 and 249.5.

Fords

Several creek crossings but no deep-water fords.

Crowds

Known as a trail where hikers can enjoy mile after mile of peaceful solitude, crowds are not a problem. The BMTA has identified an 'abundance of shelters' as the primary cause for trail overcrowding and has resolved to honor its charter to keep the BMT as a 'primitive' trail by not adding to the number of existing shelters.

Check for the latest trail conditions [HERE](#).