

Time for Gittin Outdoors... Benton MacKaye Trail

Some of the best hiking weather is just around the corner and one of the premier hiking trails in the vicinity of Monroe and Polk counties is the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT).

Approximately 86 miles of the 288-mile-long BMT are in Tennessee. This includes 20.7 miles that follow the Tennessee/North Carolina State Line. Here a hiker literally has one foot in Tennessee and one foot in North Carolina as he hikes the trail.

“Whether you’re out for a short hike with the kids; are interested in a leisurely stroll through the woods; or if you want a more challenging six-10-mile hike, the BMT has a great day hike for you,” said Benton MacKaye Trail Association’s (BMTA) Hike



“Because it follows an old roadbed most of the way, the 2.7-mile Lost Creek trek is easy hiking ...



Whigg Meadow at 5000 feet with 360 degree views of the surrounding TN and NC mountains.

Director Kelly Motter.

“For those who prefer hiking with a group, BMTA offers several guided hikes every month,” Motter continued. “To find the hike that’s right for you and to RSVP for the activity, go to the events calendar on BMTA’s website, bmta.org.”

Some of the most popular hikes within easy driving distance of Monroe and Polk counties are:

Whigg Meadow – the family and your dog to enjoy a picnic on a wide-open bald on the top of the world. Just 1.6 miles from the Mud Gap Trailhead, you’ll enjoy snacking on blueberries and blackberries (in season) as well.

Lost Creek – This is a great kid and dog-friendly

hike near Reliance, TN. The trail is right next to the creek and kids and dogs can play below gentle waterfalls in a limestone gorge. Because it follows an old roadbed most of the way, the 2.7-mile trek is easy hiking ... and ... some say this hike is one of the most beautiful hikes on the BMT.

Hiwassee River -- The Hiwassee River has been described as one of the most gorgeous rivers in the Appalachians. Begin your hike at the Childers Creek Trailhead, heading upstream to the Towee Creek parking area. The length of your hike is up to you. The first three miles take you along the edge of the river and around a rocky point at the half-way point – a perfect picnic spot.



The Hiwassee River has been described as one of the most gorgeous rivers in the Appalachians and there’s no better way to see it than this hike

Further upstream, there is a campsite with an inviting swimming beach when the water is low. The last 1.3 miles take you up on the side of the ridge with great views of the river valley below. The 8.6-mile hike is best done with a shuttle, but you can make it a six-mile hike if you turn around at the Big Bend parking area.

For hikers who prefer the challenge of a long-distance trek, BMTA offers patches/rockers for a section or thru

hike of the BMT, completion of the BMT/AT 500-Mile Loop (a figure eight using the Appalachian Trail (AT) and the BMT) and the 1,000-Mile Challenge which includes the AT, BMT and Pinhoti National Recreation Trail.

For additional information on hiking on the BMT, go to bmta.org or email BMTA’s Hike Director Kelly Motter, hikeleader@bmtamail.org.

Thanks to BMTA member Clare Sullivan for the info!