

## Spring is BUS-ting HIKES

### **General Hiking Guidelines**

- During the pandemic, wear a mask when you cannot maintain 6 feet of distance from people not in your household.
- Stay on paths.
- Disturb the wilderness as little as possible.
- Protect yourself from bites with clothing or repellent.
- Stay well hydrated.
- Hike with a buddy.

### **DIRECTIONS & INFORMATION**

These are only a few of the exceptional outdoor experiences available to you in these communities! Continue your adventures by checking out all the opportunities for outdoor movement in and around your cities.

#### **Anderson County**

- **Wildflower Greenway Trail** (approximately 1.5 miles) across from the Girls Inc Center building in Oak Ridge is known for an abundance of wildflowers. Part of an ever-growing system of greenway trails, the author remembers her father taking the family of eight kids into this area over 60 years ago.

Directions: South of The Oak Ridge Turnpike across from the Girls Inc Center building turn onto W. Vanderbilt Drive. There trail may be accessed at either end as marked on the map.

- **Norris - River Bluff Small Wild Area** Located on Norris Dam Reservation, this is 125 acres of rich, mixed mesophytic forest on steep north-facing slopes. Its 3.2-mile loop trail—designated by the U.S. National Park Service as a National Recreation Trail—provides access to a 40-year-old pine plantation, rich vegetation and steep bluffs overlooking the Clinch River. Known as one of the most spectacular arrays of wildflowers in the area with trillium, rue anemone, columbine, twinflower, trout lily, pennywort, waterleaf, little brown jug and many others.

Directions: Take Norris Freeway 441 across Norris Dam, up the winding road to Left on Dabney Lane. Take the next slight left turn to go down a winding narrow road to the parking lot.

#### **Blount County**

- **Maryville College Woods** - This 2.3 mile loop trail is in a protected and managed multi-use 140-acre forest purchased by Thomas Jefferson Lamar in 1881 for almost \$3000 and then sold to Maryville College for \$1. The 100-Year Plan includes control of invasive plants like English Ivy and promotion of the health of a climax mixed mesophytic forest (look this up!). It is shared with the community who are asked to use it respectfully and abide by Pandemic precautions of masking mouth and nose when unable to physically distance from other hikers.

Directions: Go to Maryville College on E. Lamar Alexander Parkway. Parking for the Woods is behind Cooper Athletic Center.

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- **GSMNP - Chestnut Top** - Choose your hike length, as this trail makes an 8.6-mile out-and-back hike from the trailhead to the Schoolyard Gap Trail junction. The first half-mile is the richest for wildflowers in a northeast-facing limestone slope supporting a hardwood- and hemlock-dominated forest. The trail then follows the ridge through dry pine-oak woods with sporadic views from the Chestnut Top Lead crest both north (toward Tuckaleechee Cove) and south (into the heart of the Great Smokies).

Directions: Park at the intersection of Route 73 from Townsend and Little River Road. The trail head is across the road from the parking lot.

### **Knox County**

- **Meads Quarry** - Take the Imerys Trail to check out the Keyhole, an area built in the 1920s to give workers access to the other side of the quarry. Today the area looks like the ruins from an ancient civilization. Take a walk through the Keyhole to experience an area that the locals refer to as God's Chair. In summer months you'll also find it refreshing to stand in front of a cave, located in the very back of the area.

Directions: From Sevier Ave go South on Island Home Ave, just past Ijams to parking on the right for Meads Quarry. Imerys Trail is south of the tracks, but you can't go wrong exploring the whole area.

- **Sharps Ridge** - 3.6 mile moderately trafficked loop trail located in Knoxville that features beautiful wild flowers and is rated as moderate. It is also one of the best places in the region to observe migrant songbirds during the spring and fall migration.

Directions: From N. Broadway south of I-640, go west on Ludlow Ave to Sharps Ridge Memorial Park Drive. The trail head is as you enter the park on the Left.