The Skymont Scout Reservation Perimeter Trail Guide

2nd edition

S. Kittrell Rushing

The Cherokee Area Council
of the
Boy Scouts of America

1991 • 1998

For Charlie

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Boy Scouts of America,
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Preface to the Second Edition

Having recently moved to the Chattanooga area from the flatlands of Iowa and Nebraska, I continue to be in awe of the beautiful mountain scenery that God has placed here for our enjoyment As a resident of the area, I hope that you never become so accustomed to this scenery that you take it for granted!

Skvmont Scout Reservation covers 2,400 acres of the Cumberland Plateau and provides the perfect site for a young Scout to explore observe wildlife in its natural habitat, and enjoy mother nature's beauty Our camp also 1 provides the perfect place for a troop weekend outing offering a trail system that is well marked and well maintained.

Our council, the camping committee, and present and past camp rangers have all invested countless time, talent and treasure into making Skymont a safe, attractive property I strongly encourage your troop to full adv antage of the many program opportunities it provides.

Michael N. Watkins
Scout Executive
Chattanooga, Tennessee
July, 1998

Acknowledgements

This trail guide would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of a number of people. Especially important to the project was Dr. Barry Ligon, the organizer and force behind reopening the perimeter trail. Dr. Ligon's efforts were supported and encouraged by professional scouter Bill Lesshafft.

The dedication to and knowledge of Skymont reflected in the lives of Mr. Harvey Raper and his wife Marie must be acknowledged with fondness and respect. "Harvey" has been the ranger for the reservation since it opened to scouts in the late 1960s. He has cared for the camp d on much of the camp's development. Ranger Raper reflects the values of scouting to the hundreds of young men who visit the camp every year.

Special mention must be made of the work of the dozens of scouts and scout leaders who devoted a November weekend to trail clearing and marking. The young men worked many hours cutting, raking, and painting white blazes. As you hike the trail, you'll benefit from their labor.

The work of the author's son in helping develop this guide is also worth acknowledgement. Sam, a 13-year-old Star Scout, hiked the complete 12-mile trail with me one frigid, snowy day in January 1991. From about 8:30 that morning until 6:30 in the evening Sam pushed a small wheeled foot-counter barrowed from the Tennessee Valley Authority . We wouldn't have the accurate trail measurements recorded in this guide without Sam's work.

Whatever the value, benefit, and success of this booklet, the credit must be shared by those mentioned above. The responsibilities for its shortcomings remain mine alone.

Kit Rushing
Chattanooga, Tennessee
January, 1991

Permits for hiking the Skymont Reservation Perimeter Trail are available from the
Cherokee Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America.
6031 Lee Highway
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37421
(423) 892-8323

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Introduction

Skymont is located on the western edge of Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau. According to state geological reports, the rocks of Skymont and the surrounding area were laid down 250 to 325 million years ago. Tropical oceans which covered what is now Tennessee resulted in large seams of coal embedded in sandstone and limestone layers. The major rock formations in and around the Skymont reservation were created by the ancient seas, and were pushed up by the forces of shifting land plates beneath the eastern seaboard of North America into what is now the Appalachian mountain range.

As in the Savage Gulf area of the Cumberland Plateau just to the north of Skymont, during periods of heavy rainfall the usually dry river and creek beds become swift and treacherous. Flash flooding is a real danger during the heavy rains of spring and summer.

Years ago the Skymont area was logged for its hard wood trees, but the forests are recovering. An extensive long-range forest management project is underway to protect and nurture the forest of the plateau on which the reservation rests.

Skymont was purchased by the Cherokee Area Council in 1968 and was opened to scouts in 1969. The property was used as a private hunting and sportsman preserve before becoming a Boy Scout reservation. Local lumberman, Woodrow Levann, purchased the property in 1958, built the lodge and opened the preserve to the public in 1959. Hunters from Chattanooga and Nashville used to pay Levann $40 to hunt half a day. Levann provided hunting dogs. Sleeping facilities were available in the lodge. According to Skymont Ranger Harvey Raper, Levann even had a little trading post and kitchen set up in the lodge's back room to sell hunting supplies and meals.

Lake Talidandaganu was then a 9 acre lake, half its current size. After the Cherokee Area Council purchased the property, the lake was drained, improved, and increased to its present size of 18 acres.

Raper is Skymont's first ranger, and he's seen the camp grow from an experiment to a successful scouting adventure. The camp operated only four weeks a summer during those first years. Raper said if 400 boys showed up during summer camp, "we were flying." It wasn't until the early 1970s that attempts were made to use the property on a year around basis.

Now, the summer camp and summer activities begin the first week of June and last until the first weeks of August. The summer camp by itself now serves as many scouts in one week as the whole Skymont operation used to

serve in a full year.

The Skymont property is wealthy in the natural beauty of the Tennessee Cumberland Plateau. Mountain springs, creeks, brooks, rock formations, and overlooks surround the reservation. Faint evidence of ancient native American visits exists on the southeastern perimeter, and nearby are the archaeological remains of a 19th century stage coach station.

On the northern edge of the camp Vandyke's Cave is an entrance into the depths of the plateau. Mountain streams cascade over the side of the bluff only feet from the door to the cave, and the nearby bluff is a natural place to set up a camp from which to explore the forest.

The trail around the reservation's perimeter is a 12 mile hike along the edge of the South Cumberland Plateau. The trail was opened during the early 1970s, but after a few years was virtually abandoned. The trail was used only a few times by hikers during the 1980s. Several scouts including long time Skymont counselors Michael and Gregory Harris tried to hike the perimeter at least once a year in the late 70s and early 80s, but no organized, regular hikes took place in the years immediately prior to 1990. Early that year, scouter Barry Ligon agreed to organize the trail's reopening. Dr. Ligon, a Chattanooga veterinarian, organized and implemented plans to clear the heavy undergrowth which covered much of the southern and eastern segments.

At the time this trail guide was written, most of the trail was improved and blazed with white. The white blazes painted in November, 1990 are supposed to replace the preliminary blue blazes painted by Dr. Ligon during the initial stages of the trail's reopening. The original trail and property line blazes (blue, yellow, and red), for the most part, should be ignored where they remain visible. The trail is measured (to the foot), and the distances indicated in this guide are accurate.

When Dr. Ligon began remarking the "PT" in the spring, foliage was apparent but was not yet thick. Following the trail and the trail signs was sometimes difficult but certainly not impossible.

During the last week of the 1990 summer camp, several scouts began the perimeter hike. Their goal was to complete the trail in two days and two nights. The hikers were forced to leave the trail shortly after passing Eagle's Bluff because of the extremely heavy foliage and dense under-growth. They reported the high grass, tangled vines, and unimproved terrain made passage too difficult. The same day that the scouts began their unsuccessful hike, Dr. Ligon and the author drove to the intersection of the gas pipeline and the pipeline access road in the north end of the reservation. They left the car at the pipeline and hiked to Vandyke's cave. From the

cave the two men explored and marked the last five or six miles of the trail around the northeastern corner of the camp property. The summer growth was thick and heavy, but Ligon and Rushing completed the hike without major problems. The two experiences on the trail, the scouts hiking on the southern perimeter and the Ligon trek to the north demonstrated the lack of uniform conditions which existed. By the end of the year, however, with the successful execution of the Ligon's trail improvement plan, individuals and groups were able to circle completely the reservation within two days and one night. The trail can now be hiked in one day, but such a hike leaves little time to enjoy the many sights along the route.

The trail is 12 miles from beginning to end. Original estimates that the trail was 25 miles in length probably were based on the reservation's property line. At some locations the line is not on the bluff, but is located several yards down the mountain side in areas which are not appropriate for efficient hiking.

Preparing for Your Hike

You'll need some basic equipment to make your trek on the Perimeter Trail enjoyable. First, of course, is the paperwork. To hike the Skymont Reservation perimeter trail you must have a permit issued by the Cherokee Area Council. The office is located at 6031 Lee Highway in Chattanooga (37421). If you live outside of the council, you may call the office to arrange for a permit to be mailed to you. The council office's telephone number is (615) 892-8323.

Trying to carry too much gear can make your trek as miserable as not having what you need. You'll need a pack, something with which you can cook and eat, water, a change of clothes (a shirt, a pair of trousers, a pair of socks, and some underwear), and some rain gear. You'll also need a sleeping bag or a blanket roll, a pair of sturdy shoes, a flashlight with fresh batteries, a box of matches, and some trail food.

The next section of this trail guide is a summary of the basic information you need to hike the Skymont perimeter. Your attention is invited to the Boy Scout *Fieldbook* and the *Hiking* and *Backpacking* merit badge pamphlets for more detailed information about preparing for backpacking treks.

You may also want to review the Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class advancement requirements related to hiking and camping. Planning your trek on the Skymont Perimeter Trail to include advancement activities will help you and your hiking companions advance in scouting will add a positive challenge to your PT experience. A list of the requirements which

might be met on the trail are found on pages 35 and 36.

Packs

Frame type packs work very well for hiking the Cumberland Plateau. A daypack or knapsack is not recommended. Daypacks are not designed for long hiking, and a daypack will make your shoulders, underarms, and back sore after several hours on the trail. Either an internal or external pack is adequate. Most hikers in our region of the country use external frame packs. Internal frame packs seem to be more popular with mountain climbers and cave explorers.

Whichever type pack you use should be adjusted so the straps coming off the pack across the shoulders are parallel to the ground. A common faulty adjustment is to have the straps attached either too high or too low on the pack frame.

Most of the pack's weight should ride on the hip belt. The belt should fit snugly around the top of your hips. Belts which ride too low cause most of the weight to hang on the shoulders.

The balance of the pack is critical if you expect good footing. Gear should be loaded so that heavier items--tenting, stove, water, and food-- are high in the pack and close to your back. Clothing is usually lighter and can be stowed lower in the pack. Side balance is also important. If you pack a quart of water on one side of the pack, something of equal weight should be positioned on the other side.

Rain gear and a cover for your pack should be stowed in the very top or in the side pockets. You do not want to unload a pack in pouring rain to get to rain gear you've stuffed in the bottom.

The Scout *Fieldbook* recommends the total weight of the pack should be about a fifth of your total body weight. In other words, if you weigh 100 pounds, your pack should weigh no more than 20 pounds. If you weigh 200 pounds, the pack should weigh no more than 40 pounds. Strong hikers may be able to haul heavier loads, but most experienced hikers try to keep their loads as light as possible.

Once again, knapsacks and day packs are not recommended for overnight hikes on the Perimeter Trail.

Boots

A good pair of athletic shoes will do for most younger hikers. However, during winter or heavy rains, canvas shoes or sneakers will not keep your feet dry. Wet feet cause blisters and can lead to hypothermia. High topped shoes provide more support and more comfort. Avoid wearing shoes which are too worn. Shoes with holes in the bottoms or the tops will be uncomfortable and will cause blisters.

The author has hiked with scouts who've worn old sneakers held together with duct tape. They said the worn-out and taped footwear kept them from having to hike in school shoes. The price of such frugality was a serious set of blisters. You should avoid hiking in dress type leather shoes, loafers, moccasins, or rubber boots. Light weight moccasins do make for wonderful in-camp wear. After a seven or eight mile day on the trail, being able to slip off heavy hiking shoes and into a pair of light mocs is an experience akin to a drink of cold lemonade after a day of yard work!

For the Skymont trail "light hikers" are adequate. The more expensive hiking shoes, especially those labeled Gore-Tex™, come from the store prepared to repel water. Less expensive shoes need to be treated with a water-proofing compound like Snow-Seal™ before hiking.

Whatever type shoe you select, high topped athletic shoes or regular hiking boots, they should be broken-in before you begin a hike. Do not wear new shoes on the perimeter trail. New shoes cause blisters, and blisters make unpleasant hikes.

Socks

Experienced hikers usually wear two pairs of socks while on the trail. The first pair, the undersock, is a light weight "liner stocking" made of nylon, silk, or polypropylene. If you don't already have hiking "undersocks," you can use a light weight pair of dress socks. Your second pair, the outer pair, should be a heavy athletic or regular hiking sock. Wool or a combination wool and polypropylene are recommended.

Of course, you'll wear one set of socks, and you'll want at least one extra set in your pack.

You'll also want to have a roll of "mole-skin" in your pack. Mole-skin is usually found in the foot care sections of grocery and drug stores. Mole-skin is used to protect your feet from blisters, and should be used before a sore or "hot" spot actually becomes a blister. If you feel a sore developing,

stop, take off your shoe and sock, cut a piece of mole-skin large enough to cover the hot spot, and stick it to your foot. The mole-skin will protect the sore spot and prevent a blister from forming. Some experienced hikers put mole-skin on their feet before they begin an expedition. They know where blisters usually develop, and they get a jump on the blister by putting on the mole-skin first.

Sleeping Bags

Good sleeping bags are expensive, and like most other things, you get what you pay for. The best sleeping bags for winter backpacking probably cost more than many scouts are able or willing to pay, but if your budget can handle a hundred-plus-dollar sleeping bag, the difference in comfort and weight is worth the extra cost. Whatever you're able to pay for a bag, you should try to get one that's light and will dry quickly. Some experienced backpackers prefer goose down bags. Goose bags are expensive and tend to absorb water. Other experienced hikers say Quallofil™ or Hollofil™ bags are best. Whichever type you select or use, weight and temperature ratings are important considerations. If you have a bag that weighs between two and four pounds and is rated at 20 degrees or less, you'll be in good shape for most winter hikes on the perimeter, especially if you keep the bag dry! You'll want to pack your sleeping bag in a waterproofed "stuff-sack." Some hikers advise stuffing a sleeping bag in a plastic garbage sack and then into a regular stuff-sack.

During the late spring, summer, and early fall (April through September), a light-weight "sleep-over" or "camp" bag will work for most hikes as long as the bag is kept dry and can be stuffed into a compact carrying bundle.

Tents

The main points for selecting a tent are weight and water repellency. Backpacking is not the time to use large multi-roomed tents. The seams of new tents should be sealed and dried before use. Tent seam sealer is available from virtually all camping supply stores, outdoor departments of the major discount stores (for example K-Mart and Wall-Mart), and from military surplus stores.

Eureka's Timberline 2-person model is serviceable, easy to setup, and drys quickly. The small, inexpensive tents sold in most discount stores do not hold-up well over time, but they can provide adequate shelter if the seams are sealed and the tent erected according to the manufacturer's instructions. In harsh weather, the less-expensive tents tend to collapse more frequently

than not.

Many experienced hikers decide on tent partners before beginning a trek. The tent is divided between the partners to make the load easier on both.

Clothing

The keys to adequate clothing for the perimeter trail are to pack at least one complete change in the summer and to dress and pack for layering in the winter.

Clothing for warm weather hiking

During warmer weather hikers should consider having at least one pair of shorts, one pair of long trousers, two t-shirts, two pair of hiking socks, two pair of undersocks, two pair of undershorts, a light-weight jacket or sweatshirt, a light-weight hat or bandana, a belt, a pair of hiking shoes, and a pair of moccasins or house slippers. One set of clothing is worn. The second set is packed. The moccasins or slippers are for use in the campsite.

Clothing for winter hiking

Your gear during cold weather is heavier than in the summer, but you'll be wearing much of that weight. Even so, hiking is hot work; and you need to be able to peal off layers as body heat increases. Heavy, bulky coats are not recommended. Instead of one large coat, most experienced hikers wear several layers of light garments. For example, you may begin the winter hike dressed in a t-shirt, a flannel or cotton "river-driver's shirt," a long-sleeved flannel shirt, a sweat shirt, and a lighter weight all-weather jacket. The lower part of your body may be dressed in a pair of undershorts, a pair of long-johns, and a pair of flannel or wool trousers. Your feet will be protected in a pair of undersocks (usually polypropylene or silk), a pair of heavy wool or cotton hiking socks, and the hiking boots or shoes.

As you hike and your body temperature increases, you'll be able to peel off the jacket, then the sweat shirt, then the flannel shirt. As you take off the clothes, they'll be stuffed into or strapped to the outside of your pack.

You'll need some extra clothes, too. Many hikers will pack an extra set of underwear, the long underwear shirt, two or three sets of socks (undersocks and hiking socks). Winter hiking on the Cumberland Plateau is usually wetter than summer excursions, so carrying extra sets of socks is very

important.

A pair of running shorts will give you some dressing flexibility. If you need to do some extreme peeling, you might wear only the shorts. On the other hand, the shorts could be worn over long-johns.

No matter what the season, you'll want to carry a poncho or rainsuit. As advised earlier, your rain gear should be packed in the top of your pack.

Stoves

Stoves which are designed for backpacking are recommended for your trip. Camp stoves, like the classic Coleman 2-burner, are not practical and are not recommended.

The little GAZ cylinder stove is light and relatively safe to use. SEVA's carburetor backpacking stove is highly efficient but it is expensive. Coleman's PEAK series backpacking stoves often catch fire and are heavier than either the GAZ or SEVA stoves.

Fuel should be enclosed in a tank designed especially for backpacking, and packed in a compartment of your pack away from food or clothing. Packing the fuel tank in a plastic zip-lock type bag is recommended. You don't want fuel to spill into your food or extra clothes.

Food

High energy, light weight food should be taken on your trek. You need not spend a great deal of money for specialty trail foods. A number of modern grocery items work well in creating a backpacker's menu. For example, breakfast might be a packet or two of instant oatmeal or a couple of packets of instant grits, some instant tea, coffee, or hot chocolate. Lunch might be summer sausage, Squeeze-Cheeze™, crackers, and Kool-Aid™ with a candy bar dessert. Supper could be something like a packet of Lipton's instant soup or Ramen's Chinese Noodles cooked with a beef or chicken bullion cube, lemon aid, coffee, or hot tea.

Instant meals designed for microwave preparation make practical backpacking fare. Most microwave dinners can be boiled for about ten minutes rather than prepared in a microwave oven.

Whatever you select for your personal menu, keep weight and preparation to a minimum. A backpacking trip is not usually the time to practice

gourmet camp cooking. You do not want to pack an iron skillet or dutch oven. You do want to carry a pot in which to boil water, a cup or bowl, a knife, fork, and spoon, and a drinking cup.

Fieldbook Equipment Check list

The Boy Scouts of America *Fieldbook* recommends the following items as a basic list of equipment for a backpacking trip.

- food
- first aid kit
- pocketknife
- matches
- water
- fire starters
- flashlight (with extra batteries and bulb)
- watch
- whistle
- toothbrush
- toothpaste
- biodegradable soap
- small towel
- head band or bandana
- pencil and paper
- insect protection
- compass
- moccasins or house slippers
- toilet tissue
- hiking stick
- camera and film

You may also want to take a copy of this trail guide as well as a copy of the backpacking or hiking merit badge pamphlets. The *Boy Scout Handbook* or the *Fieldbook* are heavy. Each person on the hike need not take a copy. You may designate one hiker to carry the *Handbook*, and another scout might pack the *Fieldbook.*

The patrol gear, too, should be divided. If your group plans to cook as a patrol, no one person should try to carry all of the patrol's equipment.

An old farm house on the Cumberland Plateau

The Trail Guide

The trail guide notes correspond to mileage markers on the accompanying map (see pages 18 and 19). The mileage was computed originally by Tennessee Valley Authority cartographers using a tool which looks much like a pizza cutter. They traced the trail on the map to determine the length. The final measurement of the trail was made by actually pushing a foot counter around the full 12-mile circumference of the reservation.

Getting to Skymont

From Chattanooga take Interstate 24 to the Jasper exit (Exit 155). Turn right and follow the four lane (27) to the highway 41 intersection—about a mile and a half. Exit the four lane to the right and turn left onto US 41. In Jasper, turn right at the courthouse (onto highways 27-41), drive about 2-miles and turn left onto highways 150-41 and follow the signs up the mountain to Tracy City. In Tracy City you'll pass the Fiery Gizzard park on the left and the Dutch Maid Bakery on the right (with wonderful, fresh, homemade baked goods). Turn left at the stop light then right at the next light onto highway 56 and follow the signs to Altamont. Watch for the signs to Skymont. In Altamont, you'll turn left on highway 108 (108 is the turn after the highway 50 intersection). About 5-and-a-quarter miles later turn left again at the Skymont sign, and immediately bear to the right at the fork. The entrance to Skymont is about 3-and-a-half to four miles down the road on the right.

From Nashville take I-24 south toward Monteagle. Exit right I-24 at the Tennessee-50 McMinnville exit. After exiting the interstate, turn left on 50 and follow the signs to Altamont. In Altamont, turn left onto 56 and left at the next intersection (highway 108), following the signs to Skymont.

From the top of Monteagle and I-24 take Tennessee 56 to Altamont, and follow the signs to the Skymont Reservation (refer to the instructions in the above paragraph).

The ranger's house is on the right side of the road at the reservation's main gate. Unless you're visiting during the summer camp season, you must check-in with the ranger before entering the property. During the summer season (June through the first week of August), check-in at the camp's administration building. Refer to the map on page 19.

An important reminder, unless you are hiking during the summer camp season, you must have a permit from the Cherokee Area Council office to hike the perimeter trail. The office is located at 6031 Lee Highway,

Chattanooga, Tennessee 37421. The telephone number is (615) 892-8323. The permit must be include the names of each scout and scout leader who will be hiking the trail.

Main Gate to Southeast Corner

0.0 The zero mile marker. The Perimeter Trail begins just inside the Skymont Reservation main gate at a little bird house. Parking is available in the lot beside Lake One at Lakeside Lodge. The parking lot is a good place for a staging area. From the lot walk to the little red bird house at the intersection of the main camp road with the road to the camp master's cabin and the short-term camping area. The trail measurements are from this point—the bird house. The trail cuts across the yard toward the county road and is well marked in this section with white blazes.

176 feet (0.03 mile) The trail proceeds across the yard and intersects with the road marked with a white arrow painted on the road bed.

The original trail is marked with blue blazes on the trees just to the right edge of the road. White blazes appear on the road. The blue blazes were painted by Dr. Ligon during the initial work in reblazing the trail during the spring and summer of 1990. The white blazes were painted during the trail weekend in November of 1990.

In summer foliage the old blue markings are difficult to see. During the winter, fall, and early spring, the you may easily hike along the edge of the pine trees to right of the road until you get to a small stream - return to the road, cross at the culvert, and remain on road until you're beyond the open field.

Remember, when hiking along a road, walk facing on-coming traffic. In this case you'll be walking on the east side of the road (across from the camp property).

952 feet (0.18 mile) Mr. Smith's mailbox is on the right side of the road. The Smith driveway is on the left side..

1690 feet (0.32 mile) An old logging road (fire trail) turns right off the paved road and enters the woods. A barbed wire fence crosses the trail about 50 feet from the asphalt road An old white milk jug is attached to the fence post. The jug may not be there during your hike, but it made an effective marker when we left the paved road and entered the forest.

The trail curves around to the left and then to right.

2656 feet (0.5 mile) The turns to the left (south) at a fork in the logging road. This is map mileage mark point-5. In other words, you've covered a half-mile The fork is sometimes difficult to see during heavy summer growth, but during the fall and winter the turn is very apparent. Whichever season you're on the trail, follow the white blazes.

2958 feet (0.56 mile) An undeveloped two-rut fire road or trail cuts off to the right. Don't follow this one!

3203 feet (0.61 mile) A large tree limb lays across the trail, and the trail divides to go around a small stand of trees. The fire road continues straight, but the perimeter trail cuts sharply to the right (west). You walk now with a young forest of planted white pines on the right.

3890 feet (0.74 mile) Trail begins to turn to the left (south).

4025 feet (0.76 miles) A low swampy area. During wet weather you'll need to take care not to get your feet wet. During the summer and dry conditions you'll encounter no water hazard. As you leave the low area you'll begin to go uphill.

4529 feet (0.86 miles) The trail crosses an old logging road and continues southwest - loblolly pine planting are on your right. At this point the older blue trail blazes begin to appear on the trees. The old blazes are from the original trail work done in the 1970s. The hiking on this part of the trail is not too difficult. You've probably been on the trail about 25 to 35 minutes.

4830 feet (0.91 miles) Two big trees lay across the trail.

1.02 miles Trail begins to go downhill into a small gully.

1.17 miles The trail turns right (west). Pines are on your right and the trail crosses a small stream. The bed is dry during much of the summer, but it may flow heavily during the winter. Crossing is easy except in the most heavy rain. You are now about a mile from the Lake Talidandaganu dam. You should be there in about 45 to 90 minutes depending on how long you explore the area around the "Indian Writings." If you are hiking in the late afternoon, try to judge your time so that you have enough daylight to set-up camp.

1.43 miles Cross a rutted secondary trail. The cross trail may be used by local four-wheeler enthusiasts. You enter a heavily wooded area. Continue west. During the summer (heavy foliage season) going may be a bit strenuous on this part of the trail.

1.54 miles Another small stream crosses your path. You see a big

blue blaze on the tree in the middle of the creek bed. During fall and winter rains, be careful to keep shoes and stockings as dry as possible.

The gorge and a stream are on your left. Eagle's Bluff is about 4.25 miles ahead. The side trail here leads to a waterfall overlook - this might be a good spot to stop and check gear, rearrange loads. After the short rest, continue on. For many hikers this point represents about an hour to an hour and a half of hiking from the zero mile marker.

Southeast Corner to Overlook

1.67 miles The trail now begins to bear to the right (north) and follows the edge of the plateau. Clear, well-defined white blazes mark the trail at this point. The trail bed is smooth and soft. In winter you'll see vistas of the valley in the distance. During summer, the view is partially obscured by heavy foliage.

This portion of the trail should not be hiked after dark. The bluff on the west side of the trail can be treacherous.

1.75 miles You cross a little gully and climb a steep terraced slope. The old barbed wire fence which years ago surrounded the property is on the ground beside the trail. This barbed wire will appear off and on throughout the perimeter hike. It presents a hazard in some places, and hikers should be aware that the old wire trips, catches, snags, and rips.

During wet weather, you'll hear the sound of a nearby mountain stream as you work your way around the top of the plateau

1.95 miles The trail winds down into a ravine to the stream.

1.98 miles The trail is marked with a white arrow at the best crossing—two logs across the stream. Crossing is not a problem except in icy weather.

For people who started on the trail late in the day, the stream bank here provides a possible camp site. Room exists for three or four tents on the top of the slope. The ground is not level, but tents can be pitched with the feet pointing down hill.

2.0 miles Climb up the hill out of the stream bed. The two-mile point is the white blazed tree at the top of this ravine.

2.15 miles A small gully (usually dry except in the most wet weather) crosses your path.

2.34 miles Another small gully and stream bed present no difficulty.

2.41 miles You hear rushing water and you're able to look across the ravine on your left and see an ancient rock face and overhang.

The creek bank is slippery, and a bridge is needed at this point. Until a troop or the Order of the Arrow is able to complete construction of an all-weather crossing, getting to the other side and keeping dry during wet weather is a challenge. To cross the stream during wet seasons, you'll probably have to work your way up the south bank, cross by stepping on rocks, then work your way back down the north bank to the trail.

2.46 miles A trail branches off to the right and goes up the mountain side. This side trail goes to the site of the old stage coach way-station which served the Hill's Turnpike during the first half of the 19th century. The site was partially excavated during the summer camp seasons of 1982 through 1984. The scouts who worked on the project found evidence of cabins, a blacksmith's shop, and what they assumed was a trading post. According to retired camp ranger Harvey Raper, the station was a major rest stop on the now long forgotten Hill's Turnpike which stretched from Hillsboro, Tennessee, to Dalton, Georgia. The site excavation was directed by archaeologist Jim Glass. Glass's research indicated at least 18 buildings used to sit atop the bluff at this point. Even today, the faint outline of the old turnpike and piles of rock which over a hundred years ago were the fireplaces for the cabins can be seen. The old turnpike came up the mountain at Brooks Point. Brooks is the next point below the one on which you now stand. The old road went past this point, curved in the 19th century through what 20th century Skmont campers call the winter or "primitive" camping area. The old stage road then went down into what is now Lake Talidandaganu, intersected the current main camp road, and wound down the plateau. It may have intersected at Coalmont with the McMinnville-Chattanooga Stage route. The camp road which goes to the waterfront area past Lakeview campsite, according to Mr. Raper, is apparently on the old turnpike's 19th century roadbed.

The perimeter trail continues along past the way station path, bearing slightly to the left and up.

2.47 miles "Indian writing" on the right side of the trail. The ancient drawing is etched into the top of a rock on the east side (the right). The heavily weathered marking is difficult to see, but the rock in which the glyph is carved is just a step or two off the trail on the right.

Just beyond the glyph rock a secondary trail crosses the perimeter trail and goes down the hill to the left and leads to the rock face you saw from the other side of the stream. The cross trail which goes off to the right and up

the steep bank winds up the mountain for 50 to 100 yards and also leads to the old long-abandoned stage road and the archaeological site of the old station. The cliffs here show signs of the visits of travelers from the 1800s. The challenge here is to keep from defacing the cliff face and sandstone boulders with our names and other markings. Reviewing the outdoor code is certainly appropriate at this point:

Take nothing but photographs. Leave nothing but footprints.

Glass said the stage coach used to stop at the bottom of this mountain near a now forgotten spring old-timers call Lane Springs. The springs is not shown on modern maps. Stage passengers would disembark and climb the now barely visible trail up the side of this cliff to the top. The stage coach was pulled up a narrow, steep road and met its passengers at the station. Glass said evidence his workers unearthed indicated the site was burned near the end of the Civil War, and he speculated the fire was related to the war.

To visit the side of the cliff in which a number of names are etched, drop your pack at the trail intersection, and take the side trail to the left winding down the steep rock face. Follow the path as it turns sharply to the right, cross or crawl under the downed tree on your left, turn sharply to the left and walk to the face of the cliff. The footing here is not sure because of the loose rock and shale. Do not get too close to the precipice. You'll see a 3 or 4 story rock corner sticking out of the mountain face. Early visitors, probably stage coach passengers, apparently scratched their names into the rock.

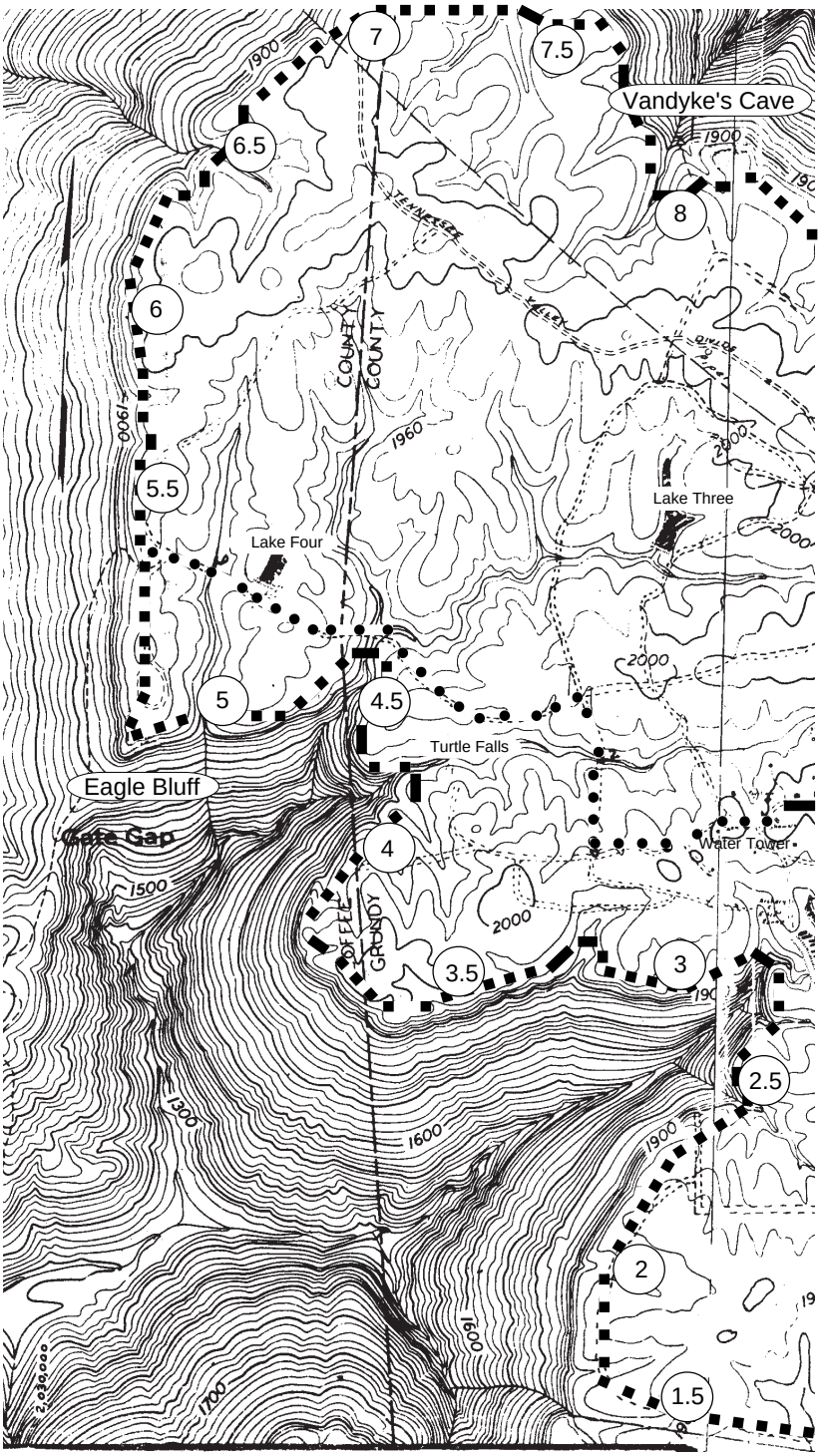
One of the names still readable on the rock face in the 1990s is that of "J F Ross 1847." This may be evidence that the leader of the Cherokee Nation during the dark era of the Trail of Tears, Chief John Ross, may have stood here, and perhaps it was he who carved the name. Most of the names along the rock face are heavily weathered and are difficult to read. You'll be able to see the date 1801 by the name W. T. Miller. Close by is the date "Aug 24 1882".

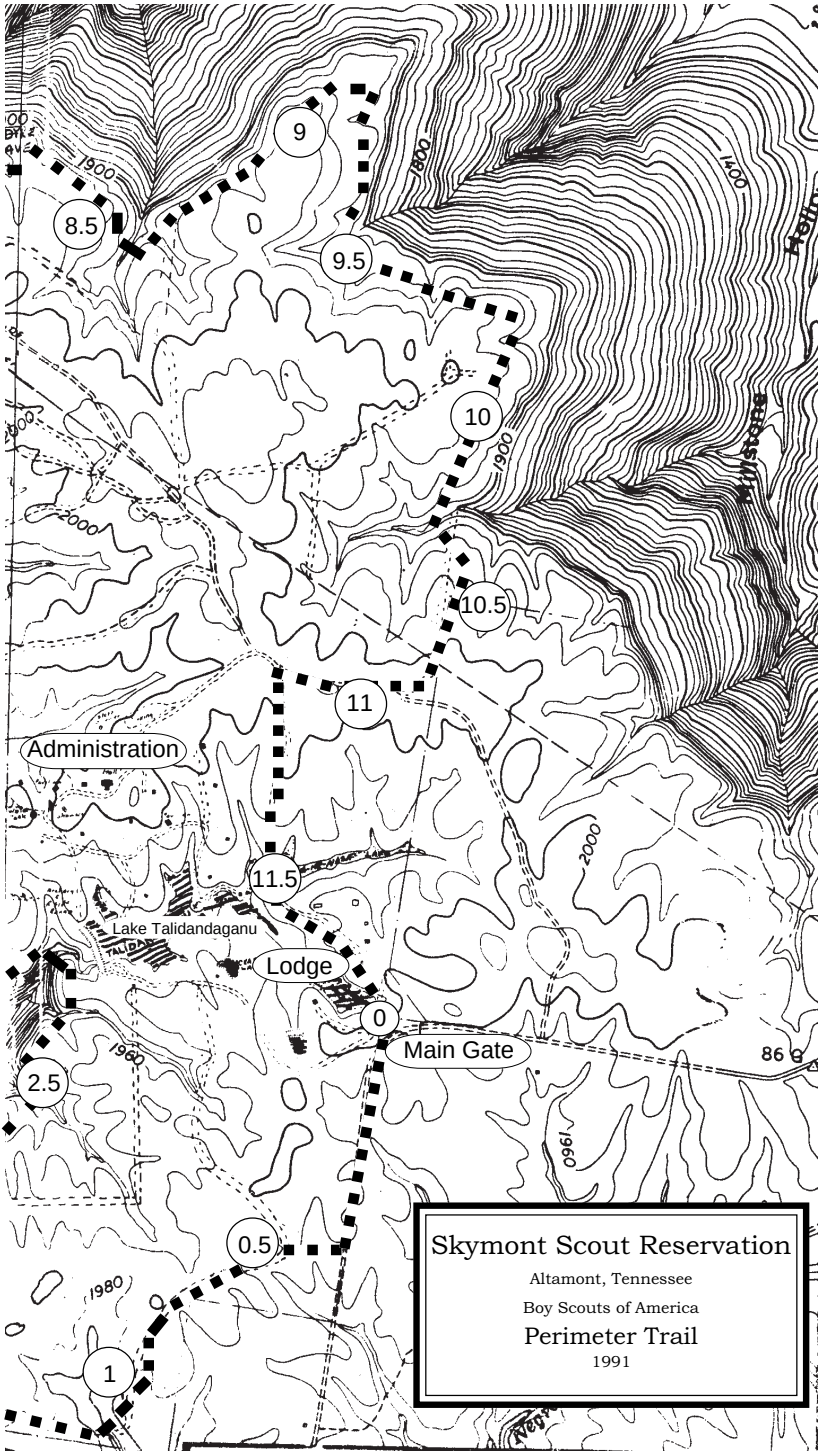
Once again, *hikers are cautioned not to deface the markings.* The writings represent a real link to the earliest residents of the plateau on which Sky-mont rests.

The water flowing over the side of the cliff continues down the mountain from this elevation (1960 feet) to Beans Creek in Lusk Cove below (elevation 1080 feet).

You will return to the trail by retracing the path from the rock face. When you come to the Perimeter Trail, turn left and continue north. In just a few steps to the right is a rock outcropping that could be a base for a 2 person shelter.

Winter time near VanDyke's Cave


7
7.5
Vandyke's Cave
6.5
8
6
5.5
Lake Four
Lake Three
5
4.5
Turtle Falls
Eagle Bluff
Gate Gap
4
Water Tower
3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
COUNTY
COUNTY
GRUNDY
1900
1960
2000
1500
1300
1600
1700


Skymont Scout Reservation
Altamont, Tennessee
Boy Scouts of America
Perimeter Trail
1991
0
0.5
1
2.5
8.5
9
9.5
10
10.5
11
11.5
Main Gate
Lodge
Administration
Lake Talidandaganu
1900
1800
1400
2000
1960
1980
86

Overlook to Eagle's Bluff

The two-and-a-half miles from the overlook area to Eagle's Bluff, is the most strenuous portion of the trail. As you leave the overlook, the trail starts downhill. It is well marked. The trail improvements completed in the fall of 1990 make this section easy to follow. Some roots and sharp stobs remain on the path, and you'll need to pay particular attention to your footing. After a few feet the trail turns sharply to the right and begins a steep but fairly short climb. This part of the trail is well blazed. It seems as though there's a white blaze on almost every trailside tree. The roaring you hear is from the waterfall created by run off from Skymont's Lake Talidan-daganu. During the rainy season (winter and early spring) the torrent can be heard for a half mile or more.

The trail passes through portions of the Skymont COPE (Challenging Outdoor Physical Encounter) course. Until 1987 or 88 the COPE course had a national reputation for its rigor, high adventure, and safety record. Several secondary trails branch off from the PT. The trails go to the old COPE event areas.

2.79 miles You are now just below the dam which forms the lake. The trail winds down to the stream crossing. In wet weather a beautiful cascade exists to your right and a waterfall is on the left approximately 100 yards beyond. During the wet seasons, you need to be careful to keep your feet and gear dry. Crossing during heavy rainfall can be dampening experience!

On the opposite bank you see the rock face of the plateau wall. To your right you see water cascading down the mountain. The stream is swift and it is deep. During wet weather the better place to cross is up stream (to the right of the trail). In summer time and dryer weather you will be able to cross at several places.

The side of the mountain after you get across the stream is steep and slippery. Proceed west along trail. You are following the southern rim of the plateau. The trail is well marked, but it is not level. Beautiful scenery is off to the right. Seeing the water pouring down the side of the mountain gives new meaning to the word "cascade."

2.86 miles One of the old COPE course "events" is tied off to a tree you're passing. A heavy steel cable is bolted through the tree's trunk. This is a steep climb up from Cascade Valley.

When you reach the top of the mountain the trail is well marked and fairly level. The growth of mountain laurel is often heavy through the section. The trail goes slightly downward, then up, then down and up. One of the

first scouters to hike the trail after the 1990 improvements dubbed this particular section “Larry’s Laurel Plateau,” and the name has stuck.

The trail continues to be well marked through this section. On your left is almost a shear drop into the valley below. That valley is “Lusk Cove,” and is named for one of the early settler’s in this region of the Cumberland Plateau.

3.0 miles The three-mile-point is just passed an erosion prevention project and almost directly between two trees (a big one and a little one) both with white blazes.

3.04 miles The trail takes a sharp turn up and to the right. The trail markings along this section are numerous and were apparently painted with scouting exuberance.

Caution must be exercise along this part of the trail. The trail is uneven and some deep holes in the trail are hidden by leaves and undergrowth.

3.11 miles The old barbed wire fence lays on the ground next to the trail and can be a hazard to the unaware.

The trail now goes up and down through several shallow gullies. The valley continues on your left and you proceed traveling to the southwest.

The sloppy blazes become neat white rectangles again. You hike down into another little draw, the bottom of this hollow is dry but in the most wet times of the year. the fence is now on your left as you move down into the draw. In the summer time the foliage here is thick.

You continue to wind up and down and around and down into another little gully

3.28 miles A stone cairn stands beside the trail. Several cairns of stone have been erected by trail workers. This is the first one.

3.30 miles A second stone cairn guards the side of the trail. This one was erected during the trail work weekend in the fall of 1990.

3.32 miles You pass a third cairn and the white blazes end for a short distance. The trail now takes a sharp turn to the right and climbs up the hill past a huge old tree with a blue blaze on its trunk. After you pass the tree you see another white blaze on a tree up ahead.

3.48 miles Trail takes a sharp turn to right at blue arrow painted on tree. Loosing the trail can be easy at this point if hikers are not observant. The fence is now on your left.

3.54 miles A rock strewn gully with the fence on your left and the trail going up the side of the hill. The trail continues to follow the old barbed wire fence line.

3.60 miles Pass between two blazed trees. Cross the fence and follow the blazes on the north side. You may see a few old blue marks on the south side. The trail was moved from its original location to the north several yards at this point. The move was supposed to improve your footing.

3.64 miles The trail moves through a slight clearing and winds off to the right.

As the trail begins to follow the bluff around to the north you continue see spectacular views of the farm land in the valley to the west. The trail follows the old property line fence around the horseshoe.

3.66 miles The trail goes under the fence stretched overhead. You must get down low to cross under.

You see the whole valley off to the right of the trail. The mountain just to the right across the gap is Big Butte. The valley to the right of the butte is Henry Cove. The valley to the left is Lusk Cove. Your elevation here on the top of the plateau varies from 1900 to 2000 feet. The elevation down in the valley varies from 1080 to 1100 feet. So, on average, you're about a thousand feet above the valley floor (give or take a few feet).

You'll cross the fence line a couple of times and, once again, be cautious of the old barbed wire which continues to lay along much of the trail.

3.74 miles Trail swings slightly to the right.

3.85 miles Shallow gully crosses your path.

3.98 miles The trail cuts to the right over the old barbed wire fence again. At this point there's a big rock in the ground, right in the middle of the trail.

4.0 miles The four mile point is between two trees. Two blazes are painted on the smaller tree—a white blaze on top of a blue blaze.

4.19 miles The trail passes through another little gully. Water flows here much of the year, but crossing the stream presents no significant problem.

4.29 miles Standing on the crest of a steep slope leading down to "Turtle Falls." You're a little over a mile from Eagle's Bluff. The trail crosses a

bolder strewn stream which falls into the valley below. The waterfall gets its name from the number of box turtles found in and around the stream during the summer. The stream contains some water even in the dryer seasons of the year. During the winter and other high water periods crossing here is difficult.

4.30 miles Still on the downward slope, you come to two white blazes. During wet seasons the best way to cross is to turn right off the trail at these blazes and bushwhack your way high along the bluff and begin to work down to the water until you can step across the creek.

The opposite bank is steep, slippy, and dense with foliage. The trail is only slightly improved through this section, and you may not see many trail blazes.

After you complete the crossing, the trail continues around the small protruding point of the plateau shown on the map. The trail is not well marked, but it is fairly well defined. That is, you can see the trail even if you do not see blazes.

4.41 miles Turn left at the old barbed wire fence and a blue-blazed tree. The fence is now on your right, and we continue to follow blue blazes across an emerald bed of moss.

You'll come to a sharp turn to the right. You may miss the turn unless you notice the blue arrow painted a little below eye level on a tree. The arrow points to the right, and the trail turns sharply right and goes up the hill to the fence. Keep the fence on your right.

You pass through a little clearing, the fence is still on your right. You'll descend into another valley with another swift flowing stream.

4.57 miles The trail works down into another big gorge. The crossing here is not nearly as difficult as at the "Turtle Falls." During the dry season crossing is a simple matter of stepping across from rock to rock. The stream is wide and swiftly flowing during high water, and many rocks are under water. Two old logs reach down from the trail and almost cross the stream. A better fording place is a short distance up stream.

4.59 miles The white blazes pickup on this side of the creek. You'll make a steep climb out of the stream valley. This little valley could be a good place for a small troop or a patrol to camp. Sites for three to four tents can be found near the water.

4.66 miles The trail takes a sharp turn to the right. The trail makes a steep climb out of the creek bed.

You are surrounded by heavy mountain laurel and other undergrowth. The trail meanders up, down, and around. Follow the blazes and proceed in a southeasterly direction to the Eagle's Bluff. The walking is smooth and easy, well developed, well marked.

Off to your left is a vista of Cumberland Plateau scenery.

4.75 miles The trail takes another turn to the right then a few steps later a sharp left.

4.77 miles A tree which at one time marked what was then thought to be the 4.5 mile point.

4.99 miles You'll pass a huge, huge boulder off to the left… ...almost as though forest spirits were playing "boulder ball" and left one here when the game ended.

5.0 miles You come to another ravine with water flowing freely at the bottom. This stream is the last water source before Eagle's Bluff. The trail stretches almost straight down one side and then up the other continuing to follow the white blazes.

5.06 miles Overlook, green moss, rocky cliff, and rock filled field.

5.17 miles Eagle's Bluff (about four to five hours from the beginning of the trail, between two and three hours from the overlook camp site). You'll want to stop and rest here. Take some time to enjoy the fine views to the west and south. The bluff area might also be a spot to set up an overnight camp site. The major problems with camping on the bluff are no nearby water source during dry weather and the wind whipping up, over, and around the bluff. Just past the open bluff area and up the hill, however, a fire road ends in a loop; and level space for five to eight tents does exit. The wind whipping up through Henry Cove makes camping here during harsh weather of questionable wisdom.

Eagle's Bluff to Vandyke's Cave

5.17 miles As you leave the bluff hike up the hill to the fire road at the top. The original path of the perimeter trail at this point, on the very edge of the plateau, needs considerable leveling. The new fire road parallels the old trail in this section, and during the reblazing and clearing, the trail was moved up the slope to the fire road. Until the old trail (marked by blue blazes) is improved along this quarter mile stretch you want to hike along the road until it turns sharply to the right.

5.22 miles Up the hill from the bluff to the higher plateau. You should be standing in the fire road loop. Follow the road north.

5.43 miles The road turns off to the right (east) and the trail continues (north) on into the forest and along the rim of the plateau. To the left (west) the old road winds down the mountain side into Lusk Cove across Gate Gap and to Bean Creek on the valley floor below. The road was blocked some years ago in an effort to prevent deer poachers from coming up onto the plateau. This part of the bluff varies in elevation from 1900 to 1980 feet. The floor of the valley just below where you now stand, Henry Cove, is 1140 feet above sea level. In other words, as you reenter the forest and follow the trail along the edge of the plateau you're approximately 800 to 840 feet above the valley.

If you turn right and following the white blazes on the fire road going east, you will hike right into the Skymont summer or "main" camp area. The trail to main camp (about three miles), like the perimeter tail itself, is marked with well defined white blazes.

> If, at this point, you decide to leave the perimeter trail and take the branch trail to main camp, follow the fire road to the right. You'll come to a fork. Go right, and follow the white blazes. The trail crosses two streams, one of which is nearly uncrossable in wet weather. The white blazed trail leads to the Skymont activity field (just to the west of the camp's water tower).

The perimeter trail does not turn; however, and continues north. The trail is wide, it is clear and it is marked well with white rectangle blazes. In this area during the spring and early summer stay on the trail (or road) to prevent damage to heavy moss growth on rock outcroppings.

After a short distance you'll see red, yellow, and blue trail markings down at fence line. The newer version of the trail follows the white marks on top of the ridge on level footing.

You see farm land in the valley to the west all along this north-south section. The valley is Henry Cove.

5.86 miles The white blazes end for a few feet, and you hike down into a draw. This depression is a good location for an overnight camp site. Water during dry seasons is available to the east at Lake Four (refer to the map on page 18). During winter and early spring water is usually available at the bottom of this ravine in the little creek. Remember, you must treat any water from the lake before you use it to cook or to drink. Treat the water with iodine tablets or bleach. Use one or two iodine tables for each quart of water. If you treat with bleach, use about a teaspoon per quart of

water. The water should stand at least 30 minutes before it is used. (Some sources claim the water is not really safe unless boiled for a minute).

5.93 miles Coming out of the draw you hike up the hill following white trail markers. Do not use the lower route of old trail. In other words, do not follow the orange or red slashes!

5.99 miles At the 5.99 point of the trail you are standing with a white painted tree stump on your right.

6.0 miles - The Halfway Point Trail developers erected a stone cairn at the six mile mark. The pile contains six stones—one for each mile you've covered since the red bird house at the beginning of the trail. This is the "half-way point" of the trail.

A great deal of poison ivy grows on the trees in this area, and the trail along this section is bordered on one side with a string of rocks.

6.18 miles A white tree stump stands on the left side of the trail. The next quarter-mile or so contains some fairly strenuous terrain.

6.33 miles Don't miss the two weirdly shaped trees on your right. Their trunks take a sharp turn to one side two or three feet from the ground, then make a 90 degree angle to grow straight up and into the forest canopy.

6.36 miles The trail reaches the edge of a bluff and begins to go downhill. The trail is so surrounded with white blazes some hikers insist upon calling this area "Blaze Valley."

At the bottom of the valley you'll cross a small creek.

6.46 miles The creek is dry in summer, but during the winter and early spring, it is a pleasant babbling brook. Now, you climb "Rock Hill."

6.50 miles A small rock seat almost to the to top of "Rock Hill" marks the 6.5 mile mark of the trail.

6.64 miles The trail proceeds past the huge old "mystery oak" which may be one of the few trees left from the logging operations which clear cut this area in the 1920s and 30s.

6.72 miles ...a small dry ravine.

6.78 miles Pipeline Overlook ("beauty spot") Trail comes from the south (approximately 230°) and extends in a northerly direction (approximately 50°) View facing 330° is panoramic and awesome. The cut through which the pipeline comes up the mountain opens onto the full valley

beneath the Cumberland Plateau. The little community down on the floor of the valley is Winton Town, Tennessee.

The pipeline right-of-way intersects the complete reservation from west to east. On clear days hikers can stand on the ridge at this point and observe the route of the pipeline as it goes down the mountain and across the valley below.

The white blazed Perimeter Trail continues through the pipeline right-of-way zigging to the left and then zagging to the right.

6.96 miles Cross over a small (usually dry) creek bed.

7.0 miles "Joshua's Highway" rock formation. The granite formation protruding from the mountain here has opened (probably due to an ancient earthquake), splitting into a natural walled "highway" which runs parallel to the trail. A "seven-mile cairn" stands beside the trail.

7.08 miles Trail takes a sharp turn to the right and goes up a slight incline.

7.12 miles Trail comes to an intersection of the trail with an old road coming into the camp property and a fire road paralleling the property line. Angle off the older trail on a bearing of approximately 115°, and follow the fire road. The older path (the original course of the Perimeter Trail) is blazed with yellow, orange, and blue. The old road which crosses the trail comes up onto the plateau from the valley. The fire road (which the white blazed version of the Perimeter Trail follows for a distance) circles around the northern reservation property line. To the south of the fire road you see a great deal of scrub timber. Four sets of blazes exist here, and they may be confusing. The darker blue and red blazes mark the old trail. Just to the south of the old markings the newer white blazes mark the new course of the trail.

7.32 miles An old deer blind stands a short distance off the right side of the trail. Deer poachers apparently climbed into the fork of the tree and waited for game to come into range.

7.35 miles The trail forks off to the left. The road turns off to the right. Follow the white blazes. Blue, yellow, and red blazes also adorn the trees along this short segment of the trail.

7.41 miles Follow the switchback down the side of the ravine. The creek bed at the bottom is usually dry.

7.46 miles The trail switchbacks up the side to the top passing a tree with a blue blaze painted over with white.

7.50 miles The new trail rejoins the old fire lane at the top of the ravine. The old trail continues along the edge of the cliff, but the new path follows the fire lane proceeding in a south southeasterly direction (approximately 150°). The old trail is just to the left and just a few feet further to the left is the cliff and a fairly abrupt drop into the valley.

7.71 miles The trail goes down a little incline into a flat area. Continue on a slight curve to the right...

7.84 miles ...down another slight ravine and cross a creek bed. Water is found here during wet seasons.

7.85 miles A large white arrow on the tree points the trail off the road to the right. Leave the fire road and follow the white blazed trail to the left into the valley.

During the spring wet season a waterfall exists about 30 yards down the cliff... clear, cool, spring water. Barry Ligon refers to these falls as "Harvey's Shower Stall."

7.95 miles Trail leaves fire lane and cuts across the ravine to Vandyke's Cave, crossing another mountain brook. The trail passes three overhangs with spring-feed streams. The third stream or waterfall is at the cave entrance.

The best camping area at this point is off the trail to the *right.* The camp site is up the yellow-blazed side trail. Refer to the map on page 18. The side trail is indicated by the dashed map symbol coming out of the 8-mile mark. On the other side of the campsite the side trail intersects with an old fire road. The fire road then joins the camp road paralleling the pipeline right-of-way.

There's room at the campsite for six to twelve two-person tents. Water is available year-round from cave entrance. Like every site along the trail, this is a low-impact camping area. If you build a fire, make certain no trace of the fire area remains when you leave. Pack-out all of your trash.

Vandyke's Cave, like almost every cave in the South Cumberland, is the result of water action over thousands of years. The mountain is composed primarily of limestone. The action of water flowing through the mountain continues to eat away at the limestone and forms caves. The source of the name for Vandyke's Cave is obscure, but several people who live in the area said they suspect it carries the name of an early settler.

If you decide to enter the cave, remind the people in your group of the basic rules of safe caving. You and each other member of your group should

have at least three sources of light. Wear protective gear on your head. Caving experts recommend that you wear a hard hat. Explore in groups of three, and carry with you some fresh water. Your group should include experienced cavers. The National Speleological Society recommends at least half the members of a caving party be experienced in the basic techniques of safe caving.

Vandyke's Cave to Lakeside Lodge

8.0 miles The eight mile marker is just a little beyond Vandyke's Cave. It is a tiny tree with blue marks on top of orange marks on top of an old red mark. You'll pass a big rock and a stump in the road.

8.10 miles On your right is a forked tree trunk. At the time these notes were being written, someone had placed a large flat rock in the fork. This section of the trail is a bit hard on the feet and ankles. The angle of the trail does not lend itself to comfortable hiking. Shortly after the steeply sloped trail the path moves up the hill for better walking and the barbed wire is on the left.

8.31 miles Barbed wire fence begins again. Trail here is not blazed well, and you may find yourself on the wrong side of the fence. Keep an eye on the white blazes.

8.31 miles The trail crosses a stream bed. The stream is dry during the summer—only moist rocks and moss. During the winter and early spring the stream flows freely and creates a waterfall over the edge of the bluff.

In July this overhang area is quiet, cool and filled with the buzzing of insects (probably nearby honey bees working sour wood trees). Refer to the map. You are at the cut just beyond Vandyke's Cave and below the 1900 foot elevation mark.

8.40 miles A stone cairn stands beside the trail. You have covered almost 8.5 miles.

8.52 miles Rock ledge - looks like a concrete wall protruding from the side of the bluff. The trail steps right over the wall formation and at the huge old tree you proceed to the right and move up the hill about 20 yards. Once again the trail tends to follow the fence line.

8.59 miles The trail crosses another stream bed. In January, 1991, the beginnings of a little bridge stretched across the creek bed. Even without the bridge, however, the crossing is very easy.

You're moving out onto the point on the map. The valley, Lusk Hollow, is at the bottom of the bluff on your right. To your left is the forest covered plateau of the Skymont Reservation. This part of the trail is not strenuous. The hiking now is simply putting one foot in front of the other!

8.94 miles A "V" tree trunk stands beside the trail as you continue to move toward the point of the plateau just above McGee Springs on the valley floor 800 to 900 feet below.

9.0 miles The nine mile point is beside a jumbled pile of rocks to the right of the trail. You are very close to the "big point."

9.03 miles This is the big point on the map overlooking the valley In the winter the point is a natural door into the valley below. Some wags call the rock formation to the left the "Lesser Stone Door." Former camp ranger Harvey Raper says during the fall you can see the rock crusher across the hollow from McGee Springs. The springs are just below the point where you now stand. The quarry is on the other side of the hollow (to your right—north northeast) at the mouth of Cedar Hollow. During the fall and winter you may be able to see the community of Sanders Chapel across the way. During the summer, however, the point seems isolated in a green eternity of leaves and vines. (The original measurement of the trail, the one accomplished by measuring the map, indicated this was the 8.5 mile mark. However, the actual on-location measurement completed in January, 1991, determined that this point is 9.03 miles from the zero mile bird house .)

The trail now makes a sharp curve to the right and begins to move back down the point.

9.16 miles Cross a normally dry stream bed.

9.25 miles "Lunch Table Rock" is just to the left of the trail hanging over the valley. It is a beautiful place to sit and rest... perhaps even to snack or lunch and have a cup of fresh water. The rock is one of several large limestone formations which hang over Millstone Hollow.

9.38 miles A stream—flowing during wet seasons, but dry during the summer months. The old rusted barbed wire represents potential trouble for the unwary hiker and should be avoided.

9.42 miles The trail crosses another creek. This one is dry except in the most wet weather. The fence is on your left.

9.5 miles The nine and a half mile marker is near the point where two dead trees reach into up into the forest roof.

9.55 miles A huge long dead tree lays across the trail. You begin to move up an incline as the trail angles to the left.

9.94 miles If you refer to the map on page 19, the trail is at the second point projecting from the point over Millstone Hollow. It takes a sharp turn to the south to follow the edge of the bluff back into the plateau.

10.04 miles A large tree painted with a white "9 1/2" stands beside the trail. This point actually is slightly beyond the 10 mile spot on the trail. When the trail was reopened the original mileage was figured by TVA cartographers directly from the map. The cartographers, of course, could not take into consideration all of the twists, turns, ups, and downs of the actual trail. As described earlier in the guide, in January 1991, the author and his chief assistant physically measured each foot of the trail with a circular foot counter. The physical measurement proved the TVA calculations generally accurate. However, the overall difference between the map and the actual terrain at this point of the trail is about a half mile. That is the reason the trail guide says you are standing at the 10.04 mile marker and the mileage on the tree says you are at the 9.5 mile point! The bottom line is—you have really hiked ten miles and 226 feet when you stand at this point. Slightly less than two miles of trail remain to be hiked.

Now take a steep but short climb and hike on.

10.41 miles This all season stream needs a bridge, and steps should be constructed on the SSE face of the stream bank. When you cross here, be especially cautious about the slippery footing on the far bank and the barbed wire fence very close to the left side of the trail.

10.47 miles Take a sharp turn to the right and proceed up hill. The trail is well marked. The trail is wide, and it follows an old fire road.

10.50 miles A big white hollow stump next to a white blazed tree marks the 10 and a half mile marker.

10.54 miles The trail bares off to the left then swings to the right.

10.58 miles Take a turn to the left and continue to follow the white blazes...

10.76 miles ...trail crosses the pipeline right of way. Remain on the road as it curves around to the right on the south side of the pipeline clearing You're heading toward the main camp road (to parking area and administration buildings).

10.85 miles A side trail veers off sharply to the left. The trail is thinly marked with blazes, but it continues along the well defined dirt road.

11.00 miles A large tree stands on the very left edge of the road. In fact the road swings slightly around to the right to skirt the tree's trunk. This tree marks the 11 mile point.

11.13 miles You have reached the main gravel road which goes from the camp entrance to the administration building-parking lot area To your right is the main camp parking area and administration building. To the left the Perimeter Trail continues along the road to the lodge and the zero mile point. To complete the perimeter hike, turn left.

11.43 miles The gate on your right closes the road which goes to the camp chapel that stands on the shore of Lake Talidandaganu.

11.50 miles The road crosses the northern finger of the Lake Talidandaganu bed.

11.74 A gate, usually open, crosses the trail, and you continue along the main camp road.

11.77 miles The trail and the main camp road pass directly in front of the camp lodge.

12.00 The bird house marks not only the 12 mile point... but also the beginning of the trail—the zero mile marker.

To continue on the Perimeter Trail for another round, cross the lawn to the asphalt road and follow the now familiar white blazes.

On the other hand (or the other foot?), if you rest for a few minutes and turn around, you have a different trail... a new perspective. The Skymont Perimeter Trail in the other direction is a different trek. What has been up is now down, and what was down is up. Front is back and back is front! So... let's go again! About face! Heft that pack onto your shoulders... and hit the trail! From this new reality the Skymont Perimeter Tail is 24 miles in length, and you are half way through -- only 12 miles to go to the end (or is it the beginning?)

Happy hiking!

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Advancement Requirements

The following is a list of the requirements for advancement which might be completed while hiking the perimeter trail. When you plan your expedition on the trail, you might plan with these requirements in mind.

Tenderfoot

1. Present yourself properly dressed before going on a camping trip. Show the camping gear you'll use. Show the right way to pack and to carry it.
2. Spend at least 1 night on a patrol or troop campout. Sleep in a tent you have helped pitch on a ground bed you have prepared.
3. Demonstrate how to whip and fuse the ends of a rope.

3b. Demonstrate 2 half hitches and a tautline to pitch a tent.

4. Explain the rules of safe hiking, both on the highway and cross-country, during the day and at night. Explain what to do if you are lost.

10. Identify local poisonous plants and tell the treatment for them.

11b. Demonstrate first aid for the following: simple cuts and scratches, blisters on the hand and foot, minor burns and scalds, bites and stings, poisonous snake-bites, nosebleeds.

Second Class Requirements

1a. Demonstrate how a compass works and how to orient a map. Explain what map symbols mean.

1b. Using a compass and a map you've drawn, take a 5-mile hike (or 10 miles by bicycle) approved by your adult leader and your parent or guardian.

2a. Since joining your troop, participate in five separate troop or patrol activities (other than troop or patrol meetings), two of which include camping overnight.

2b. On one campout, demonstrate proper care, sharpening, and use of knife, saw, and axe.

2c. Use the tools listed in requirement 2b to prepare tinder, kindling, and fuel for a cooking fire.

2d. Light the cooking fire. Assist in mean preparation and cleanup.

2e. On one of the campouts, select your patrol site and sleep in a tent that you pitch.

5. Identify or show evidence of at least 10 kinds of wild animals (birds, mammals, reptiles, fish, mollusks) found in your community.

6a. Show what to do for "hurry" cases of stopped breathing, serious bleeding, and internal poisoning.

6b. Prepare a personal first aid kit to take with you on a hike.

6c. Demonstrate first aid for the following: object in the eye, bite of a suspected rabid animal, puncture wound, second degree burn, heat exhaustion, and shock.

First Class

1. Demonstrate how to find directions during the day and night without using a compass.

2. Using a compass, complete an orienteering course that covers at least 1 mile and requires measuring the height and width of designated items (tree, tower, canyon, ditch, and so forth).

3. Since joining your troop, participate in ten separate troop or patrol activities (other than troop or patrol meetings), three of which included camping overnight.

4. On one campout, serve as your patrol's cook. Prepare a breakfast, lunch, and dinner menu that requires cooking; secure ingredients; supervise you assistants in fire building; and prepare the meals. Lead your patrol in saying grace at the meals, and supervise cleanup.

6. Identify or show evidence of at least 10 kinds of native plants found in your community.

7a. Demonstrate tying the timber hitch and clove hitch and their use in square, sheat, and diagonal lashings by joining two or more poles or staves together.

7b. Use lashing to make a useful camp gadget.

8a. Demonstrate tying the bowline (rescue) knot and how it's used in rescues.

8b. Demonstrate bandages for injuries on the head, the upper arm, and collarbone, and for a sprained ankle.

8c. Show how to transport by yourself, and with one other person, a person from a smoke-filled room and with a broken leg for at least 25 yards.

Merit Badge Requirements

Backpacking

1. Do the following:
   (a) List 10 items which are essential to be carried on any overnight backpacking trek and explain why each item is necessary.
   (b) Describe 10 ways you can limit the weight and bulk to be carried in you pack without jeopardizing your health or safety.
2. Do the following:
   (a) Define limits on the number of backpackers who should be in a backpacking crew.
   (b) Explain the reason for the upper limit and the lower limit in a backpacking crew.
3. Tell environmental considerations that are important for backpackers and describe five ways to lessen their impact on the environment. Describe proper methods for disposing of solid and liquid wastes.
4. Demonstrate two ways to purify water and tell why water purification is essential.
5. Demonstrate that you can read topographic maps. While on a hike, use a map and compass to establish your position on the terrain at random times and places.
6. Tell how to prepare properly for and deal with inclement weather while on a backpacking trek.

7. Do the following:
   (a) Describe prevention, symptoms, and treatment for first aid situations that are most likely to occur on a backpacking trek.
   (b) Tell first aid considerations for cold, hot, wet, and dry weather traveling.
8. Do the following:
   (a) Explain the advantages and disadvantages of three different types of backpacking stoves using at least three different types of fuel.
   (b) Demonstrate that you know how to operate a backpacking stove safely and to handle liquid fuel safely.
   (c) Prepare at least three meals using a stove and fuel you can carry in a backpack.

9. Do the following:
    (a) Plan a patrol backpacking hike.
    (b) Properly pack your own gear and your share of the crew equipment and food. Protect it against inclement weather. Show that your pack allows you to get quickly to items you may need on the trail and provides for comfort, balance, and neatness. Show how to use effectively a pack frame and hip strap to distribute the weight on your body.
    (c) Conduct a prehike inspection of the patrol and its equipment.
    (d) Carrying your pack, complete a hike of at least 2 miles.
10. Take three backpacking treks. Each must consist of at least three days duration with two different overnight campsites, and each cover at least 15 miles. Carry everything you will need through out the trek.
11. Do the following:
    (a) In addition, assist in planning and take a backpacking trek of at least 5 days with at least three different campsites, and covering at least 30 miles. Your written plan submitted to your counselor must include route, food and menus, equipment, and emergency notification. Prepare light weight, reasonable priced trail menus. Carry everything you need throughout the entire trek.
    (b) On returning, tell what you did to get in shape for this trek and how you might do it differently again.

Hiking

1. Explain and show, where possible, the main points of good hiking practices.
2. Make a written plan for a 10-mile hike. Include map routes, a clothing and equipment list, and a list of things for a trail lunch.
3. Take five hikes of 10 continuous miles each, on 5 days.
4. Take a hike of 20 continuous miles in 1 day.
5. Within a month of the last hike and after taking all six hikes, make a short report of each of the six hikes. Give dates, routes covered, weather, and any interesting things you saw.

About the Author

Dr. Kittrell Rushing is a journalism professor at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He's taught at the University of Mississippi and at Oral Roberts University. Rushing was a broadcast journalist for a number of years before he became a college teacher.

Rushing's scouting experience began back in 1953 when he received the Bobcat as an new member of Pack 27 in Memphis. Rushing was a member Memphis' Troop 19 through high school. He was nature director for three summers in the early 1960s at the Chickasaw Council's Kamp Kia Kima in the Ozark Mountains. At the time of this Trail Guide's publication, Rushing was an assistant scoutmaster with the Cherokee Area Council's Troop 30.