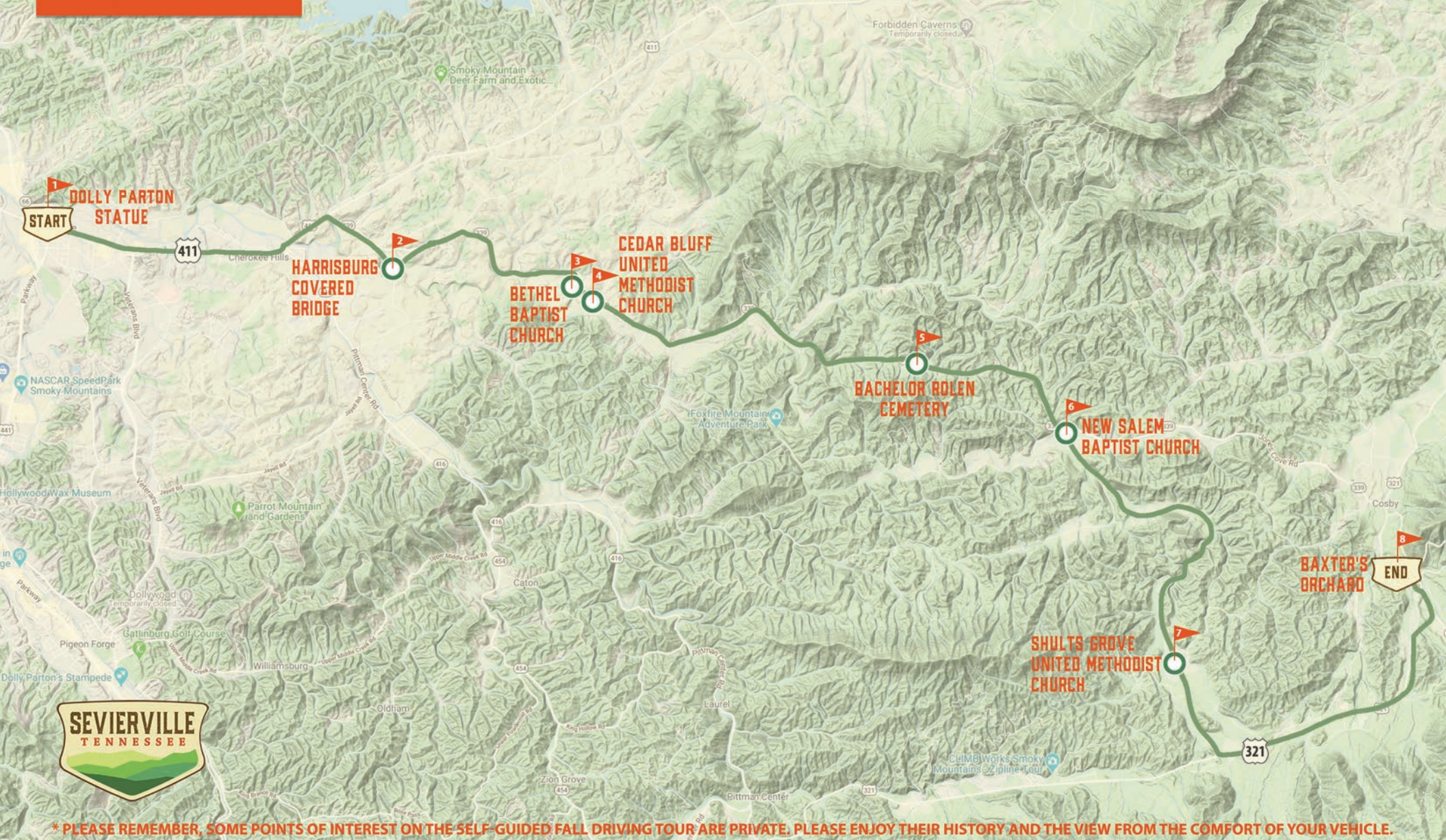


# Rocky Flats Fall Driving Tour

www.VisitSevierville.com/Fall



\* PLEASE REMEMBER, SOME POINTS OF INTEREST ON THE SELF-GUIDED FALL DRIVING TOUR ARE PRIVATE. PLEASE ENJOY THEIR HISTORY AND THE VIEW FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR VEHICLE.

# Rocky Flats Fall Driving Tour

Autumn brings vivid colors to the back roads and hollows of Sevierville and beckons guests to venture off the Parkway that runs through the three cities and to the Smokies. Although you'll find plenty of fall fun along the main road, it's always a treat to discover the hidden gems found in the mountain foothills. In some areas the diversity of flora and fauna rivals that of the neighboring national park. For an opportunity to experience one of the least traveled sections of Sevier County, take a drive through Jones Cove and Rocky Flats, areas rich in history, tradition, and scenic views.

1. Start the tour at the iconic **Dolly Parton Statue** located on the lawn of the historic 1896 Sevier County Courthouse at 126 Court Avenue. Enjoy the vibrant colors of century-old maple trees framing the Beaux-Arts style courthouse before picking up a free "Discover Sevierville Historic Walking Tour" brochure from the kiosk in front of the statue. Spend an hour or two exploring historic points of interest, stop to shop, and even enjoy a meal in Sevierville's quaint downtown area.

Leave Court Avenue traveling north to East Main Street. Turn right at the traffic light. In two blocks the street becomes Dolly Parton Parkway (Highway 411). Continue to the junction of Long Springs Road (Highway 339).

2. In approximately 0.9 miles, turn right onto Harrisburg Road. Continue for 0.2 miles to a Sevier County landmark, the **Harrisburg Covered Bridge**. During fall, this area is accentuated by vibrant golden leaves, which makes for a striking photo against blue skies. Built in 1875 by Elbert Early and his brothers, the bridge is one of a handful of operational covered bridges remaining in Tennessee. Stop long

enough for a photo op and to hear the clapping of the old planks as cars drive through the narrow passageway over the east fork of the Little Pigeon River. Once you are back in your car, follow the road to your left (Old Covered Bridge Road) that will bring you back to Old Newport Highway.

3. Turn right onto Old Newport Highway, travel 0.4 miles, and turn right onto Jones Cove Road. Travel 2.3 miles and turn right onto Bethel Church Road. Just ahead, pull into the parking lot of **Bethel Baptist Church**. Organized in 1804, the congregation is one of the oldest in Sevier County. Today, the handsome red-brick building, surrounded by historic Bethel Cemetery, is the epitome of a country church. Take time to stretch your legs and see the beautiful black granite markers honoring the soldiers representing most every war in U.S. history who are buried there.

4. Turn around in the parking lot and backtrack to Jones Cove Road. Turn right and travel 0.2 miles to Cedar Bluff Road. **Cedar Bluff United Methodist Church** is located just ahead on the left. Originally called Cummings Chapel, this church was founded in 1858 and first met in a wooden building that still stands next to Cummings Chapel Cemetery. The present church was built about 100 years ago. This is a wonderful opportunity to take a photograph of a classic white clapboard country church. Breathe in the crisp smell of freshly fallen leaves and observe the contrast red and yellow maple trees make alongside pin oaks and evergreen cedars.

5. Travel back to Jones Cove Road and turn left. In 3.5 miles you will pass Bethany Baptist Church and Eledge Cemetery. Continue approximately 2.9 miles and look for the **Bachelor Rolan Cemetery** on the left. Turn and take the drive to the top of the hill. This little country graveyard contains about 35 graves and is named for the first person buried there, Archibald Rolan. He was called Bachelor most of his life because he never married. Interestingly his grave is positioned north-south, while all others are east-west. According to oral tradition

Rolan was buried with his money. A few years after his interment, relatives discovered his grave had been disturbed and an empty iron kettle where someone had been digging. The mystery as to who stole the money has never been solved. From the hilltop cemetery, take in a 360-degree view of vibrant fall color on the distant hillsides.

Back on Jones Cove Road, travel 2.5 miles to the old Baxter Grocery Store on the right. No longer in business, this old country store served as a community gathering place. Large trees surrounding the store provided shade for over a century as men gathered there to swap knives, talk politics, and catch up on the latest news of their community.

6. At the store, turn right onto Henry Town Road. Immediately, you will see **New Salem Baptist Church** just before you cross the bridge over Yellow Britches Creek. In 1845, the church was organized in a log schoolhouse. Before the Civil War, three enslaved African Americans worshiped there alongside the white congregation. The present church building was constructed in 1922 after a windstorm destroyed a similar 1914 building.

Just past New Salem Baptist Church, cross a small bridge dedicated to sisters Geneva and Ressa Jenkins. The two grew up in the community and served as U.S. Army nurses on the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines. During the Battle of Bataan, Ressa was evacuated but Geneva was captured and held as a prisoner of war for eighteen months. Both sisters were honored with a hero's welcome when they returned to Sevierville in 1945.

Continue on Henry Town Road for 1 mile and take a left onto Rocky Flats Road. As you travel the length of Rocky Flats Road, roll down your windows and listen to the tranquil sound of Dunn's Creek, which you will cross several times. The rhododendron, dogwoods, spruce, and hemlocks along this road are similar to the foliage in the national park. Soon historic rock walls will

be visible on both sides of the road. Some of the stones weigh several hundred pounds and were drug by mules to the site where early settlers stacked them by hand. Originally used to mark property lines, the ancient moss and lichen-covered walls are both scenic and a reminder of the hard work inherent to mountain living. An extra splash of color is added in the fall when the surrounding deciduous trees take on red and yellow hues.

7. In 4.4 miles, **Shults Grove United Methodist Church** is located on the left at the junction of East Balls Hollow Road. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this church was established in 1914. Jack Rouse Associates of Cincinnati, Ohio chose the unique church as a setting in the production of "Heartsong," a Dollywood film about the beauty and wonders of the Great Smoky Mountains and its people. The film is seen by thousands of people at Dollywood every day. If you brought along a picnic, the pavilion in front of the church is an excellent place for a repast while enjoying the splashing sound from nearby Dunn's Creek. Continue on Rocky Flats Road for 1.3 miles to Highway 321 and turn left.

8. Proceed approximately 0.6 miles to end your tour with a stop at **Baxter's Orchard**. Located in a picturesque valley at the foot of Mt. Guyot, the mountainside is ablaze with vibrant colors each fall - and hundreds of apple trees bearing ripe, ready to pick apples. This is a great opportunity to get out of the car and enjoy a pick-your-own apple experience. Family owned and operated since its opening in 1960, the old-fashioned orchard grows a wide variety of apples including Staymen Winesap, Golden Delicious, and Rome Beauty. They also offer other apple products including cider, jellies, and jams from the freshest apples available.

If you prefer another scenic route on your return, turn left on Highway 321 towards Gatlinburg. Continue approximately 8.6 miles and turn right onto Pittman Center Road (Highway 416). Take this road along the banks of the middle prong of the Little Pigeon River back to Sevierville.