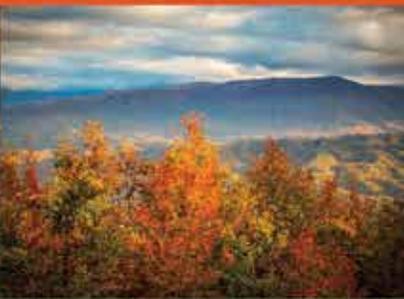


# BLUFF MOUNTAIN Fall Driving Tour



\* 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.

## BLUFF MOUNTAIN Fall Driving Tour

The Great Smoky Mountains are known for having some of the best fall foliage in the entire country. The splendor is usually at its finest in mid to late October when the leaves turn brilliant shades of yellow and red. During that time, many visitors seek the spectacular views of the surrounding mountains and foothills to avoid traffic jams and discover other points of interest.

Leaves change color based on a variety of factors, including light level, temperature, soil conditions, and more. A misconception about fall foliage is that the color change takes place on an exact schedule, and that peak foliage happens at the same time everywhere. However, the range of elevation and variety of trees in the Smokies mean a long leaf viewing season where you can pretty much always find pockets of spectacular color.

An alternative route with plenty of foliage, unique attractions, and intriguing local history begins in Sevierville:

1. Travel to downtown Sevierville to stroll through the historic district, visiting quaint shops and eateries. The first stop is the **Dolly Parton Statue** located on the lawn of the iconic Sevier County Courthouse at 125 Court Avenue. Created by Jim Gray, the six-and-a-half-foot statue was erected to honor Sevierville native Dolly Parton, an internationally acclaimed singer-songwriter, instrumentalist, actress, author, and philanthropist. Built in 1896, the courthouse is an excellent example

of Victorian architecture and features a traditional four-sided Seth Thomas clock in its tower. In the fall, the century-old trees surrounding the courthouse turn brilliant hues of yellow and red.

Leave the courthouse traveling north on Court Avenue. At the traffic light, turn left onto West Main Street, travel 0.5 miles, and turn left onto Hardin Lane.

2. Immediately after turning onto Hardin Lane, the parking lot for **Burchfiel Grove & Arboretum** is located on your left. Stop and pick up a complimentary self-guided brochure that identifies the species of trees along the east and west bank of the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River.

3. Leaving Burchfiel Grove & Arboretum, turn left on Hardin Lane and travel approximately 2.8 miles to see **New Era Baptist Church** sitting atop a hill. Built in 1916, this quintessential country church was organized in 1897. The congregation met in a rural schoolhouse until resources became available to purchase land and build a church.

Continue approximately 0.6 miles and turn right onto South New Era Road. Travel 0.9 miles and turn left onto River Divide Road. After continuing for approximately 1.2 miles, the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River again comes into view on your left and a sweeping view of magnificent Mt. LeConte is visible on a clear day in the foreground.

4. Continue straight onto Sharp Hollow Road. Looking to your left a sign marking **Battle Hill Road** comes into view in approximately 0.4 miles. The name was chosen because a crucial battle was fought

there on a bluff above the river in the fall of 1894. The confrontation pitted an infamous vigilante organization known as the White Caps against the Blue Bills, composed of law-abiding men stoutly opposed to the other organization. Several lives were lost in the fierce battle.

5. As you travel Sharp Hollow, a small mountain stream named Motor Branch trickles along the left side of the road. Continue driving on Sharp Hollow Road until it ends. At the stop sign, turn left onto Goose Gap Road. Travel 0.6 miles and look to your right where, situated on a steep hill side, **Mountain View Baptist Church and Cemetery** comes into view. Organized in 1933, this distinctive rural church house was built in 1938.

6. Continue 0.8 miles and turn right onto Bluff Mountain Road. Travel 0.9 miles where you will see a sign for **Bluff Mountain Inn**. If you turn left onto the property, you will find a rustic gem designed as a casually elegant destination wedding venue, which contains a chapel, an event barn, a landscaped garden, and a honeymoon suite.

*(Note: If you are not accustomed to mountain driving, this next section is narrow, very steep and winding. Proceed with caution.)*

Back on Bluff Mountain Road, you will begin your ascent onto the mountain that is officially named Chilhowee Mountain, a low ridge at the outer edge of the Great Smoky Mountains that stretches between the Little Tennessee River (specifically Chilhowee Lake) to the west and the Little

Pigeon River watershed to the east. While the mountain is about 35 miles long, it rarely reaches a width of more than four miles.

Probably because of its appearance, the section that lies within Sevier County has long been called Bluff Mountain. In fact, if a visitor were to ask a local resident where Chilhowee Mountain is located they might not know what they were talking about. But if someone inquired about Bluff Mountain, most locals could quickly point it out.

The highest elevation on top of Bluff Mountain is 3,069 feet. On a clear day you can see Knoxville, Sevierville, and Maryville from the east end of Bluff Mountain. Water from a spring on the north side of the mountain contains magnesia and other minerals.

7. Continue approximately 3 miles to the top of the mountain and turn left onto Tower Road. Travel 1 mile and you will see a gate on your right leading to the **Bluff Mountain Fire Tower**. The views from this portion of Tower Road are spectacular. While we do not recommend climbing the tower, those who do find it a great place to capture photographs of panoramic views.

Backtrack down the mountain keeping a lookout for deer and wild turkeys as well as dense growth of hardwood forest. At the foot of the mountain use your GPS to determine the best route back to your destination and continue enjoying fall in the Smokies.

