CREST TRAILS

THE GRANDFATHER TRAIL - An upper ridge trail of astonishing variety, with spruce and fir, rock walls and pinacles, and open spaces with views of mountains in every direction. The route follows the crest of Grandfather Mountain from the Swinging Bridge Parking Area out 2.4 miles to Calloway Gap. It was along this trail two centuries ago that noted French explorer and botanist Andre Michaux broke into song thinking he had arrived at the highest point in North America. Pace is often deliberate. There are chutes where progress is hand-over-hand and some extra steep sections where hikers use cables and ladders. An alternative to taking the ladders up MacRae Peak is to opt for the more sheltered Underwood Trail (see below).

THE UNDERWOOD TRAIL - Splitting off the Grandfather Trail near the half-mile marker, the Underwood Trail bypasses ladder climbs on MacRae Peak, rejoining the Grandfather Trail at MacRae Gap, about a mile out. The strenuous trail makes a long, steep, rocky turn around Raven Rock Cliffs by way of one long ladder. Going out along Grandfather and returning along Underwood makes an excellent loop hike from the Swinging Bridge.

WEST SIDE TRAILS

THE PROFILES TRAIL - Beginning as a rolling pathway through seasonal wildflowers, this trail crosses the Watauga River and travels through rhododendron thickets and under a hardwood canopy. Upper sections, beginning around Fossco View, get steeper, and there are frequent rest stops with benches and turnouts. Before the trail reaches a view of the Grandfather Profile, hundreds of large boulders were rearranged into a rock walkway called “Peregrine’s Flight”. Springtime, at 2.7 miles in, marks the beginning of a strenuous segment that makes the transition out of the hardwoods and into the Canadian Fraser Zone, climbing 0.3 miles before joining the Grandfather Trail. It is steep and rocky and calls for some carefulfootwork. Your reward is the view at the top.

EAST SIDE TRAILS

There are two points for accessing East Side trails. Most hikers use the Boone Fork Parking Area at mile 299 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The alternative is the Asutis Trail which begins across from Serenity Farm on US 221-the only winter access to the East Side Trails. It’s an easy but rocky hike, ending at Storyteller’s Rock and a view of the Boone Fork, a valley that may have been carved by glaciers. Along the way, there are stream crossings, and a stand of Quaking Aspens.

UAUTSI TRAIL - (US Park Service Trail) A-su-tsi means “bridge” in the Cherokee language. This trail follows an old logging road 1.2 miles. It’s an easy but rocky hike, ending at Storyteller’s Rock and a view of the Boone Fork, a valley that may have been carved by glaciers. Along the way, there are stream crossings, and a stand of Quaking Aspens.

CRAWGAY TRAIL - A steep, demanding hike with lovely vistas. Boulders and crags dot out with views of the Boone Fork. This trail links Nuwati and Boone Trails, and makes a fine loop hike. A hiking option coming down the Boone Trail when returning to cars is to follow Crawgay Trail to the Nuwati.

PLAINTS - (US Service Trail) A-sut-is means “bridge” in the Cherokee language. This shortcut, easy trail (0.4 miles) links Serenity Farm on US 221 and the Tanawha Trail, providing alternative access to Nuwati and Boone Trails and winter access to the East Side Trails.

PROHIBITED MATERIALS & ACTIVITIES:

- No Rock Climbing
- No Weapons
- No Drugs or Alcoholic Beverages
- No Rock Climbing
- No Hunting or Fishing
- No Mountain Bikes, Horses or Pack Animals
- No Geocaching

Mountain Regulations

Backcountry hiking at Grandfather Mountain

Access the trails inside Grandfather Mountain State Park for free from off-mountain trailheads. Access to the trails from the Swinging Bridge requires the purchase of a ticket to the attraction.

Enter Grandfather Mountain State Park from the Swinging Bridge area:

- Hiking is included in the price of admission. To access the start of the Grandfather Trail, please park at the Hiker’s Parking Area, a quarter mile below the summit.
- Guests wishing to camp in the state park are not permitted to park in the attraction overnight.
- Please return to your vehicle at least one hour before closing time. If, in an emergency, you leave your car on the mountain, please call 733-6380 (Top Shop), 733-4377 (Gate) or 733-3969 (Nature Museum) as soon as possible to notify Grandfather Mountain staff. If you do not call, we will send out a search party.

Enter Grandfather Mountain State Park for FREE:

- Guests wishing only to hike or camp can access Grandfather Mountain State Park from one of the two off-mountain trailheads located either on the Blue Ridge Parkway or NC 215. A trail map will be available when you register.
- Plan on hiking back to your car.
- If you plan to have someone pick you up at the Swinging Bridge, the driver of the pick-up vehicle will be charged regular gate admission to come inside the travel attraction to pick you up.
- Grandfather Mountain is not able to provide rides to or from trailheads.

PLEASStay on the Trail. Cutting through switchbacks and exploring areas off the trail can cause erosion, impact rare plants, and generally damage sensitive habitats.

The following policies will help us protect the mountain for future generations.

CAMPING - Camp in designated areas only. Camping in the attraction is not allowed and guests wishing to camp in the state park are not permitted to park in the attraction overnight. A tepee on the map in this brochure pinpoints a campsite. A tepee symbol on a trail sign indicates a camping area close by. Please camp quietly after 9 pm so others can enjoy the serenity. And leave trees as you find them—carving into a tree can eventually kill it.

FIRE - It’s best to bring a gas backpacking stove for cooking. Campfires are permitted only in designated areas in the state park at most lower elevation campsites but not on Grandfather Trail or at Hi-Balsam Shelter. If you decide to use a fire in a permitted area, keep it small and tend it at all times and only collect wood that is down on the ground. Drown fires before leaving camp. Campfires may be banned during dry periods. If you smoke, be especially careful during spring and fall dry spells. Crush cigarettes and carry out the filters.

DOGS - Pets must be on a leash no longer than six feet at all times. Please clean up after your pets.

LITTER AND WASTE - Please carry out everything you carry in. For public health and courtesy reasons, bury all human waste (12") deep, 100 feet from any water resources, campsites, and trails. And thanks for picking up litter left by others!

Backcountry hiking at Grandfather Mountain

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BACKCOUNTRY HIKING
Grandfather Mountain

CREST TRAILS

GRANDFATHER TRAIL - Blue Blazed, 2.4 miles (3.8 km)
Alpine trail that crosses entire summit ridge from trailhead at Swinging Bridge to Calloway Peak. Very strenuous, at times requiring use of cables and ladders, but with spectacular rewards.

MacRae Peak (2 hrs. round trip) 0.9 mi (1.5 km)
Indian House Cave 1.3 mi (2.1 km)
Alpine Meadow 1.5 mi (2.4 km)
Profile Jct./Calloway Gap 1.9 mi (3.0 km)
Cliffside Campsite 2.0 mi (3.2 km)
Watauga View 2.3 mi (3.7 km)
Calloway Peak (5 hrs round trip) 2.4 mi (3.8 km)

UNDERWOOD TRAIL - Yellow Blazed, 0.5 mile (0.8 km)
A bypass trail around MacRae Peak that lets hikers avoid nine ladders and/or severe weather on MacRae Peak and Grandfather Trail. Strenuous and rocky. Includes one ladder.

WEST SIDE TRAILS

PROFILE TRAIL - No Blaze, 3.1 miles (4.9 km) in length from trailhead to Calloway Gap/Grandfather Trail Jct. The trailhead parking area is located 0.2 miles north of the junction of 105 and 184. The lower part of the trail is an easy out-and-back stroll, upper section is gradual but fairly strenuous. Sharp, stony, rocky trail between Shanty Spring and the Grandfather Trail at Calloway Gap.

Foscove View 1.7 mi (2.7 km)
Profile Campsite 2.0 mi (3.2 km)
Profile View (3 hrs. round trip) 2.3 mi (3.7 km)
Shanty Spring (3 hrs. round trip) 2.7 mi (4.3 km)
Calloway Gap (5 hrs. round trip) 3.2 mi (4.9 km)

EAST SIDE TRAILS

DANIEL BOONE SCOUT TRAIL - White Blazed, 3.0 miles (4.8 km) from trailhead. Approx. hiking times noted. Recommended access is from Boone Fork Parking Area on the Parkway via the Tanawha Trail. Moderately strenuous trail to Calloway Peak.

Flatrock View and Cragway Jct. (2 hrs. round trip) 1.3 mi (2.1 km)
Daniel Boone Campsite 1.4 mi (2.3 km)
Briar Patch Campsite 2.2 mi (3.4 km)
Hi-Balsam Shelter 2.7 mi (4.3 km)

Raven's Roost Campsite 3.1 mi (4.9 km)
Calloway Peak (4.5 hrs. round trip) 3.0 mi (4.8 km)

NUWATI TRAIL - Blue Blazed, 1.2 miles (1.9 km)
Trail begins after 0.4 miles on Tanawha Trail from Boone Fork Parking Area. An easy, but rocky, hike.

Nuwati Spring 0.2 mi (0.3 km)
Nuwati-Cragway Trail Jct. 0.6 mi (1.0 km)
Streamside Campsite 0.7 mi (1.1 km)
Hermitage Campsite 0.8 mi (1.3 km)
Storyteller's Rock Campsite 0.9 mi (1.4 km)
Boone Bowl View 1.2 mi (1.9 km)
Refuge Campsite 1.4 mi (2.3 km)

CRAWGWAY TRAIL - Orange Blazed, 1.0 mile (1.6 km)
Rocky, strenuous trail that links Nuwati and Daniel Boone Scout Trails.

Top Crag 0.4 mi (0.6 km)
Flat Rock View and Jct. with Boone Scout Trail 0.6 mi (1.0 km)

ASUTI TRAIL (PARK SERVICE TRAIL) - No Blaze, 0.4 mi (0.6 km)
Connecting trail from Hwy 221 at Serenity Farm to the Boone Fork Footbridge. Winter access to the East Side Trails. Easy hiking.

Flatrock View and Cragway Jct. (1.0 hrs. round trip) 0.4 mi (0.6 km)

ATTRACTION SIDE TRAILS

WOODS WALL - Grandfather Mountain Picnic Area. No Blaze (no painted trail markers), 0.4 mile (0.6 km). Allow 15 min. up, 10 min. down Easy walking trail through a mixed hardwood forest, switching back and forth in a moderate climb to the Mile High Swinging Bridge. The top parking lot and Bridge area are also accessible by a short drive.

BLACK ROCK NATURE TRAIL - A Self-Guided Nature Trail. Yellow Blazed, 1.6 mile (2.6 km). Allow 2 hrs round trip. Trailhead near top of mountain, on the far side of the Trails Parking Area. Gradual, moderately rocky with several interpretive signs explaining features along the route. Trail ends in a loop with views of Grandmother Mountain, Beacon Heights, and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

GRANDFATHER EXTENSION TRAIL - Starting at the Trails Parking Area. Red Blazed, 0.6 mile (0.96 km). This trail extends the Grandfather Trail down to the Trails Parking Area and can be used with the Bridge Trail and Grandfather Trail to make a 3.6 mile loop hike. Ends below the Patio View of MacRae Peak.

Please use good judgment in taking the following into account:

EQUIPMENT - Trails here are often steep, rocky, uneven and slippery. Hikers should wear sturdy boots and carry a daypack with food, water, first aid supplies, rain gear, flashlight, cellular phone and trail map. Please do not attempt these trails wearing sandals, street footwear.

LIGHTNING - Peaks, ridges, ledges and shallow overhangs are all high risk areas for lightning strikes. Stay alert for changing weather patterns (thunderstorms can arrive suddenly in the afternoon) and stay clear of risk areas in an electrical storm.

Backcountry trails can be slick, often steep, rocky, uneven and slippery. Hikers should wear sturdy boots and carry a daypack with food, water, first aid supplies, rain gear, flashlight, cellular phone and trail map. Please do not attempt these trails wearing sandals, street footwear.

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As you hike through nature choose the less worn path. Be considerate of wildlife. Please do not attempt these trails wearing sandals, street footwear.

Grandfather Mountain can host the region’s most severe weather, including electrical storms, winds over 200 mph, deep snow and sub-zero cold. Weather can change quickly. Approach this mountain with respect—hikers have died here from falls, lightning, heart attacks and exposure. The best rule is: When bad weather strikes, leave the backcountry trail as quickly and safely as possible. If you can’t make it, head to the nearest shelter.

HYPOTHERMIA - A cold summer rain can be as dangerous as an arctic wind storm. Carry appropriate weatherproof garments, even in summer months.

TRAIL CONDITIONS - Backcountry trails can be slick, muddy and treacherous. Upper trails in winter often glaze over with ice. Hiking under these conditions falls in the domain of well-equipped experts.

WATER - All untreated water should be boiled. Grandfather Mountain has no wells, springs, or streams. You can purify water by boiling it for 10 minutes, by using purification chemicals or through use of a filtering device.

WATCHING CHILDREN - Adults should lead and follow their hiking groups with young children in the middle. If the hiking party decides to split up, make plans to rejoin at a prearranged time and place to avoid confusion and the possibility of after dark searches for lost hikers.

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS - Hikers with breathing or heart conditions should be cautious of strenuous activity, especially at higher altitudes.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, DIAL 911.