

Hike Description Rock Creek Gorge

Length: 9.9 miles; rating: moderate. This segment is very popular with day hikers.

The Cumberland Trail is marked with white blazes 2" x 6". Intersections or sharp turns are marked with double blazes. Destination side trails (such as Leggett Point Overlook) are marked with yellow blazes.

The Rock Creek Connector Trail (1.2 miles):

This 1.2 mile trail provides the link from the recently paved Lower Leggett Trailhead to the Rock Creek Loop and Upper Rock Creek sections of the Cumberland Trail. Begin at the paved lower Leggett Rd. parking area. There is a paved handicap trail leading from the parking area down to and along Rock Creek. Begin on this trail to the sign; from there take a right turn and follow the blue blazes. The trail initially affords views of the creek below, then turns into the woods for 1.2 miles and intersects the Rock Creek Loop.

The Rock Creek Loop (3.3 miles plus .3 mile trail to overlook):

Begin at the lower Leggett Rd. Trailhead and follow the Connector Trail 1.2 miles to its junction with the Loop, or alternately begin at the upper Leggett Rd trailhead and hike 0.13 miles to the first junction. From there, one can either turn right and switchback down to Boiling Springs (0.23 miles, blazed blue), or continue on along the main trail (blazed white). From this junction, another .16 miles along the main trail through an old pine plantation will bring the hiker to the junction with the Leggett Point overlook side trail (blazed yellow). This 20 minute round trip (.3 miles one-way) is well worth the effort. An easy, gently rolling hike on an old road bed, the Overlook Trail opens up into a panoramic view of the Rock Creek gorge below. It is from here that hawks, eagles, and other birds are spotted. From the junction with the Overlook Trail another 0.17 miles brings to an end the pine plantation and the beginning of the descent into the gorge. For a mile after leaving the pine thicket, the trail crosses 3 footbridges over gulches and in 1.18 miles from the junction with the Overlook trail, the hiker will reach the junction with the Connector trail (1.2 miles to the lower Leggett Rd. trailhead.) By continuing on along the main trail another 1.42 miles, the junction with Upper Rock Creek trail is reached. From this junction, one can either turn up to the Upper Leggett Rd. trailhead, thus closing the loop, or turn left and cross the Boiling Springs log bridge.

Upper Rock Creek Gorge Trail (4.93 miles):

This hike presses the Cumberland Trail west up Rock Creek Gorge to the Rock Creek ford and continues to the Retro Hughes Road Unimproved Trailhead Parking area. The trail offers the Boiling Springs, Flat, and Rocky Branch log bridge crossings and the Rock Creek Overlook all in the first 0.6 miles, the Leggett Branch crossing in 1.6 miles, and upper Rock Creek bridge at 2.3 miles. The long elevated rock platform (we call this puzzling) - 442 feet start to finish - is located just before the hiker reaches Leggett Branch. A campsite is currently located at the 2.1 mile marker along Rock Creek. This site, eventually to be relocated, can accommodate a small group of folks and 2 - 3 tents.

To preserve this natural and scenic area, please practice Leave No Trace principles.

Driving directions:

Lower Leggett Road Paved Trailhead: Coming north from Chattanooga on US 27: Turn west (left) on Leggett Road just north of the Sale Creek community. The lower Leggett parking area is on the left at 1.4 miles. It is a paved parking lot with plenty of marked parking spaces.

Upper Leggett Rd. Trailhead: The upper Leggett Road parking is another 2.1 winding miles further up the road. Continue through the curve on Leggett Rd. and climb to the top of the escarpment for 2.1 miles to a lightly graveled parking area on your left. The trailhead is only 50 ft. back down the road...look for the blazing. At present, it is unimproved and there is parking for 3-4 cars.

Retro Hughes Road Unimproved Trailhead Parking: Coming north from Chattanooga on US 27: At the first stoplight (Bakewell) beyond the US 27/ TN 111 split turn west (left) on Retro Hughes Road. Proceed 6.7 winding miles, climb onto the plateau, to the trailhead on the right, immediately past a logging road entrance. At present there is no paved lot, but there is parking on the right side of the road along the service road used by the logging company. The trailhead will be developed and paved in the future. Plenty of parking is currently available along the road. Please do not block the logging road.



GPS Readings For Important Points (in WGS 84 format):

Location	GPS Waypoint
Lower Leggett Road Trailhead	N35 23.166 W85 08.135
Upper Leggett Road Trailhead	N35 24.606 W85 07.856
Leggett Point Overlook	N35 24.335 W85 08.241
Boiling Springs Bridge	N35 24.697 W85 08.085
Rock Creek Overlook	N35 24.794 W85 08.304
Flat Branch Bridge	N35 24.858 W85 08.331
Rocky Branch Bridge	N35 24.933 W85 08.469
Leggett Branch	N35 25.226 W85 09.197
Rock Creek Campsite	N35 25.210 W85 09.544
Rock Creek Bridge	N35 25.298 W85 09.704
Retro Hughes Road Trailhead	N35 24.173 W85 11.021

