

Hike Description TN River Gorge

Signal mountain is the southern tip of the Cumberland range. The trail follows bluff tops and ridges 1,800 and 2,000 ft. above sea level, drops into ravines lush with hemlocks towering over tangled growths of laurel and rhododendron, and crosses Middle, Julia, and Suck creeks. The view from Edwards Point covers a long stretch of the "Grand Canyon of the Tennessee," with historic Williams Island below on the left and the city of Chattanooga in the background.

The full length of Raccoon Mountain rises across the river from Edwards Point. The Tennessee River Canyon at this point was the scene of Chickamauga Indian attacks on the state's earliest white settlers traveling by flatboat to what is now Nashville. During the Civil War, soldiers signaled, via lookouts on the points or outcropping bluffs, from Signal Point to Edwards Point and so on down the canyon and around the bend to Bridgeport, Alabama.

Two primitive campsites are located on the first 11 miles of the trail, and camping is permitted only at these sites. It is possible for backpackers to enjoy a one-way trip, stopping overnight at one of the campsites, if the backpackers arrange for someone to drop them off, or to meet them, at one of the parking areas. The National Park Service recently closed the Signal Point Parking area after 10pm, and vehicles will be impounded if left after 10pm. Fortunately, overnight parking at the trailhead in Prentice Cooper is permitted. It is difficult, if not impossible, to hike the 11 miles in one day because the trail crosses several rock fields.

1. From Signal Point National Park to Middle Creek with a side trip to Rainbow Falls, a mighty rumbler in wet weather. This jaunt takes about three hours; six to eight hours are required to hike round trip from Signal Point to Edwards Point or from Signal Point one way via Edwards Point to Tenn. 27. Between Edwards Point and Tenn. 27, the trail follows the tops of the bluffs some 2.5 miles with beautiful views of the Suck Creek gorge, then drops down to a campsite on North Suck Creek. At this point the trail continues across a 225-ft. swinging bridge over North Suck Creek to Tenn. 27.
2. Starting on the Suck Creek Mountain side, look for the Prentice Cooper State Forest sign on Tenn. 27 and travel to the new parking lot near the fire tower. This section attracts many backpackers. It takes three to four hours to hike down to the roadside park on Suck Creek Road (Tenn. 27). Treats include vistas from high places, the Poplar Spring campsite (the water is potable), and abundant vegetation in interesting rock formations. Large jack-in-the-pulpits grow under the bluffs, and the purple rhododendron (*Rhododendron catawbiense*) blooms here a full month earlier than the same species on Roan Mountain.
3. An interesting side hike is available on a leg of the Cumberland Trail across Tenn. 27, starting at the roadside park (the present end of section 9). This leg consists of approximately 30 miles of two loops in Prentice Cooper State Forest. Pot Point Loop Trail overlooks the Tennessee River canyon at many points, and Mullins Cove Loop includes spectacular views of Mullins Cove in the canyon.

Attention!

Hunters take pride in their record of keeping hunting safe while sharing the public lands, and are very careful to look past their target before shooting. Hunter orange makes you much more visible to hunters and increases their confidence that they are aware of the location of any hikers or other hunters before firing. For this reason, hunters are very uncomfortable when hikers not wearing blaze orange enter big game hunt areas. Most hunters feel that not wearing hunter orange is discourteous and disrespectful. As a courtesy to hunters, we STRONGLY recommend that hikers wear hunter orange during the fall and spring in ALL Wildlife Management Areas.

The managed hunt dates will be posted on our website as soon as they become available to the webmaster. Please check the managed hunt dates if you are planning a fall hike.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Call TWRA at 1-800-262-6704, or visit their website at <http://www.state.tn.us/twra>

- Call the Tennessee Division of Forestry at 423-634-3091
- Call the Cumberland Trail Conference at 931-456-6259

Photos of Snoopers Rock Overlook, Mushroom Rock and map provided by volunteer Don Deakins

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

Directions to trailhead:

Follow U.S. 127 to the Town of Signal Mountain and follow the directional signs to Signal Point National Park parking area. Note that the National Park Service recently closed the Signal Point parking area to overnight parking. The trail starts about halfway between the parking area and the Tennessee River Gorge Overlook.



Location	GPS Waypoint in WGS
Trailhead & Parking	N35 07.966 W85 25.165
Indian Rock House	N35 07.662 W85 25.127
Lawson Rock Overlook	N35 08.244 W85 23.426
Signal Point Trailhead	N35 07.224 W85 21.996
Mushroom Rock	N35 09.656 W85 23.222
Snoopers Rock	N35 06.110 W85 25.450
Hemlock Branch Campsite	N35 06.087 W85 26.298
McNabb Gulf Campsite	N35 04.445 W85 26.218