

Unicoi Turnpike Trail

8. Unicoi Gap



Then – In earlier times this mountain pass, known as the “Northwest Passage,” linked eastern Tennessee (then the frontier) to the outside world. The people who passed through the gap, and the events that took place here, are linked to the nation’s history. During the American Revolution, John Sevier’s troops traveled through the gap to invade Cherokee settlements in North Carolina. Sevier was expected an easy fight but after his army of 140 men burned three towns they learned that a sizeable force of Chickamauga warriors was nearby. Sevier and his men quickly retreated, narrowly escaping death. They spent a sleepless night near Unicoi Gap while the Chickamauga warriors taunted them till daybreak. During the Civil War, the gap was a convenient place for bushwhackers to ambush travelers. The Unicoi Turnpike Toll Gate Keeper was one victim of the bushwhackers.

Now – Today, the Unicoi Gap remains an important passage through the mountains from Tennessee to North Carolina. A trail head for the hiking portion of the Unicoi Turnpike Trail, as well as a small parking area, is located at the Gap. Hikers can walk 2 ½ miles from this point down to Doc Rogers Fields at Coker Creek, following in the footsteps of Indians, fur traders, British soldiers, and explorers. The trail is marked with a blue blaze.

TN/NC State Line near Coker Creek

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