



Approaching Blackstock Knob  
Photo by Jeff Clark [www.internetbrothers.org](http://www.internetbrothers.org)

## The High Peaks and Asheville—MST Segment 3

### PISGAH INN TO BLACK MOUNTAIN CAMPGROUND

By Jim Grode

Segment 3 is where Asheville comes to play. It is the most heavily used part of the MST within the mountains, and you are likely to encounter hikers, dog walkers, and trail runners at any time throughout the year. Virtually all of it is easily accessible from the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), and there are road crossings every few miles for most of the length.

Don't let its accessibility and popularity fool you, however: With elevations ranging from 2,000 feet at the French Broad River to over 6,600 feet at the summit of Mount Mitchell, this segment is quite rugged. Indeed, the

section just west of Asheville hosts the infamous Shut-In Ridge Trail Run, an 18-mile trail run that annually humbles racers from around the country.

Complementing the natural beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains in this area is the vibrancy of Asheville, a city of 80,000 nestled in the French Broad River valley, which regularly makes lists of the top 10 cities in the United States. Crammed with restaurants, shops, art galleries, and breweries, Asheville offers something for nearly everyone and is well worth a layover in your hiking schedule.

## HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE

- The views atop 6,684-foot Mount Mitchell, the highest point east of the Mississippi River
- The Shut-In Trail, which follows the old carriage road from the Biltmore House to George Vanderbilt's hunting lodge on Mount Pisgah (which no longer stands, but a few remnants of which are still visible)
- The cultural and scientific displays at the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center & Headquarters near Asheville
- The fine collection of southern art and crafts at the Folk Art Center also near Asheville. Outside the Folk Art Center, look for the bronze plaque honoring Arch Nichols, who worked tirelessly as a volunteer leader of the Carolina Mountain Club and as a United States Forest Service employee to complete the MST from Mount Pisgah to Mount Mitchell.
- The ruins of Rattlesnake Lodge, a summer lodge built in 1903-4 by Asheville physician Chase Ambler
- In early summer, the azalea and rhododendron displays at Craggy Gardens
- In the fall, brilliant color displays that attract people from all over the country

**Total Distance: 67.7 miles (all on trail except incidental stretches on the BRP, mostly on bridges at highway crossings)**

**Difficulty: Strenuous, with significant elevation changes involving steep climbs and descents and difficult trail tread**

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## Trail Updates

When planning your trip using this guide, take a moment to see whether Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (Friends) has posted any updates about the trail route by visiting Friends' "Trail Updates" page at [www.MountaintoSeaTrail.org/updates](http://www.MountaintoSeaTrail.org/updates).

## Special Note Regarding Access

The BRP closes in winter except for the section through Asheville, making large sections of this segment inaccessible except at major road crossings, which may be too far apart for day hikes. Wintertime hiking in this segment will require careful planning.

## Shuttle Services

Danny Bernstein maintains a list of people who provide shuttle services between Heintooga Rd. (Segment 1A) and Black Mtn. Campground (the eastern end of Segment 3). See [www.hikertohiker.net/hiking/mountains-sea-trail-heintooga-road-black-mountain-campground](http://www.hikertohiker.net/hiking/mountains-sea-trail-heintooga-road-black-mountain-campground).

## Camping and Lodging

Camping is prohibited on all BRP property, on the Bent Creek Experimental Forest, and in Mt. Mitchell State Park except in designated campgrounds. Primitive camping is allowed anywhere in the Pisgah National Forest, which surrounds the BRP for much of this segment east of Asheville. Before setting up a backcountry camp, please confirm that you are in a legal camping area. *Note:* A number of the most obvious backcountry sites are noted in the hiking directions below, but there has been no attempt to completely catalog all suitable sites.

EB Mile 0.0; WB Mile 67.7

Mt. Pisgah Campground, BRP Milepost (MP) 408.6, 828-648-2644. Open between late April and the end of October, this campground has water, restrooms, and showers, and sites are \$16-\$19/night. For online reservations, go to [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) and search for Mount Pisgah Campground.

EB Mile 0.0; WB Mile 67.7

Pisgah Inn, MP 408.6, 828-235-8228; [www.pisgahinn.com](http://www.pisgahinn.com). The inn is open April 1 to October 31 and has rooms ranging from \$138 to \$182 per night.

EB Miles 17.8 to 31.0; WB Miles 36.7 to 49.9

Asheville. There are numerous camping and lodging options in Asheville, from small bed-and-breakfasts to large motels and luxury hotels. None are within a mile's walk of the MST, but taxis are readily available. See the "Additional Information" section for this segment for tourism information about Asheville.

EB Mile 61.7; WB Mile 6.0

Mt. Mitchell State Park Campground, 2338 NC 128, Burnsville, 28714. Open May 1-October 31 with full facilities (restrooms and water), year-round with limited facilities. Camping is \$17/night; make reservations at [www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov) (there is a \$3.00 surcharge for this option) or by calling 877-722-6762.

EB Mile 67.7; WB Mile 0.0

Black Mtn. Campground, 50 Black Mtn. Campground Road, Burnsville, 28714, 828-675-5616. Open April-October, primitive sites, with water, restrooms, and showers. Camping is \$22/night, first come, first serve.

### Special Note Regarding Bear Activity and Requirements

Because of aggressive bear activity, the US Forest Service requires all backpackers to carry bear canisters in the Shining Rock Wilderness Area and nearby Forest Service lands to the northwest of the BRP. This area encompasses parts of Segments 2 and 3 of the MST. As a practical matter for MST thru-hikers, this will probably require carrying canisters between Cherokee (Segment 1A) or Sylva (Segment 1B) and Asheville (Segment 3), as these are the nearest resupply points. For more information, see [www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/alerts-notices/?cid=stelprd3832543](http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/alerts-notices/?cid=stelprd3832543).

## Food/Supplies/Post Office

EB Mile 0.0; WB Mile 67.7	Pisgah Inn restaurant and convenience store
EB Miles 17.8-31.0; WB Miles 36.7-49.9	Numerous restaurants and stores in Asheville
EB Mile 23.2; WB Mile 44.5	Commercial development along US 70, mostly 0.5 mile or more from the trail, including an Ingles supermarket
EB Mile 30.4; WB Mile 37.3	Commercial development along Hendersonville Rd., mostly 0.5 mile or more from the trail, including a Walmart
EB Mile 46.4; WB Mile 21.3	Craggy Gardens Visitor Center gift shop
EB Mile 61.8; WB Mile 5.9	Mt. Mitchell summit parking area concession stand open seasonally; restaurant, also open seasonally is approximately 1.6 miles away on NC 128
EB Mile 67.7; WB Mile 0.0	Black Mtn. Campground office

## Water/Restrooms

Water is generally abundant in this segment, and this guide does not attempt to catalog every potential source, keeping in mind that a decent-sized stream in wet weather may completely stop flowing in dry periods. Only larger, named creeks; those useful for wayfinding; and water sources in areas where they are more widely scattered are listed here. **All surface water should be treated before drinking. Water in the Asheville area may be impacted by urban pollution, and we do not recommend drinking it, even treated.**

In addition to surface water on the trail, water and restrooms are available at a few developed locations:

EB Mile 0.0; WB Mile 67.7	Pisgah Inn restaurant and convenience store  
EB Miles 17.8 -31.0; WB Miles 36.7-49.9	Numerous restaurants and stores in Asheville  
EB Mile 28.4; WB Mile 39.3	BRP Visitor Center & Headquarters  
EB Mile 30.8; WB Mile 36.9	Folk Art Center  
EB Mile 45.6; WB Mile 22.1	Craggy Gardens Picnic Area 
EB Mile 46.4; WB Mile 21.3	Craggy Gardens Visitor Center gift shop  
EB Mile 61.8; WB Mile 5.9	Mt. Mitchell summit  
EB Mile 67.7; WB Mile 0.0	Black Mtn. Campground office  

## Hunting

Hunting is allowed throughout the Pisgah National Forest during the hunting season but is prohibited on Blue Ridge Parkway property and in Mt. Mitchell State Park. See [www.ncwildlife.org/hunting.aspx](http://www.ncwildlife.org/hunting.aspx) for information about seasons and licenses.

## Signs/Blazing

The MST in Segment 3 is generally well marked with the MST blaze—a 3-inch white circle—either painted on or affixed to trees or signposts. Within Mt. Mitchell State Park, the trails are also blazed for the state park trail system, and there are informative signs at all the major trail junctions.

## Dogs

Dogs are allowed on this segment of the MST, but should always be leashed.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Friends office: 919-825-0297 or [info@MountainstoSeaTrail.org](mailto:info@MountainstoSeaTrail.org)

Walt Weber and the Carolina Mountain Club have published an excellent, highly detailed, set of maps and profiles for this segment of the MST entitled *Trail Profiles and Maps: From the Great Smokies to Mount Mitchell and Beyond*. The book, available on Amazon or through a number of outlets in the Asheville area, also includes historical information about, as well as photos and diagrams of, George Vanderbilt's Buck Spring Lodge and Chase Ambler's Rattlesnake Lodge; the ruins of both of these sites are on the MST in Segment 3.

## Trail Maps

Google map of the entire MST: [www.MountainstoSeaTrail.org/map](http://www.MountainstoSeaTrail.org/map)

BRP map: [www.nps.gov/blri/planyourvisit/upload/BLRImap1-1.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/blri/planyourvisit/upload/BLRImap1-1.pdf)

Mt. Mitchell State Park map:

[www.ncparks.gov/sites/default/files/ncparks/maps-and-brochures/mount-mitchell-park-map.pdf](http://www.ncparks.gov/sites/default/files/ncparks/maps-and-brochures/mount-mitchell-park-map.pdf) (Note: This map incorrectly shows the route of the MST as following the Commissary Trail at the shortcut described at EB Mile 60.8, WB Mile 4.3 of this guide; the route described in this guide and on signs in the park is correct.)

National Geographic map 785 (Nantahala and Cullasaja Gorges) and map 779 (Linville Gorge, Mt. Mitchell)

## State and Federal Land Management Agency Sites

BRP website: [www.nps.gov/blri](http://www.nps.gov/blri)

National Forests in North Carolina website: [www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc](http://www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc)

Mt. Mitchell State Park website:

[www.ncparks.gov/mount-mitchell-state-park](http://www.ncparks.gov/mount-mitchell-state-park)

## Links for other points and organizations of interest

Pisgah Inn website: [www.pisgahinn.com](http://www.pisgahinn.com)

Carolina Mountain Club website (trail maintainers in this segment):

[www.carolinamountainclub.org](http://www.carolinamountainclub.org)

North Carolina High Peaks Trail Association and Friends of Mt. Mitchell State Park website: [nchighpeaks.org](http://nchighpeaks.org)



## Tourism links

Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau website:  
[www.exploreasheville.com](http://www.exploreasheville.com)

Romantic Asheville website: [www.romanticasheville.com](http://www.romanticasheville.com)

Yancey County Chamber of Commerce website: [yanceychamber.com](http://yanceychamber.com)



Pink Turtlehead  
Photo by PJ Wetzel, [www.pjwetzel.com](http://www.pjwetzel.com)



## PRIMARY PARKING LOCATIONS

### Pisgah Inn (BRP Milepost [MP] 408.6)

EB Mile 0.0; WB Mile 67.7



N35.40360, W82.75425

### BRP Stony Bald Overlook (MP 402.6)

EB Mile 6.4; WB Mile 61.3



N35.45385, W82.69383

### BRP Sleepy Gap Parking Area (MP 397.3)

EB Mile 12.7; WB Mile 55.0



N35.46579, W82.6294

### BRP Access Road at French Broad River (MP 393.7)

EB Mile 17.8; WB Mile 49.9



N35.50059, W82.59353

### BRP at Hendersonville Rd. (MP 388.9)

EB Mile 23.1; WB Mile 44.6



N35.51806, W82.52976

### BRP at US 74A (MP 384.8)

EB Mile 27.7; WB Mile 40.0



N35.56209, W82.49373

### BRP Visitor Center (MP 384)

EB Mile 28.4; WB Mile 39.3



35.56518, W82.48720

### Folk Art Center (MP 382)

EB Mile 30.7; WB Mile 37.0



N35.59292, W82.48099

### BRP at Craven Gap (MP 377.4)

EB Mile 35.9; WB Mile 31.8



N35.64801, W82.49166

### BRP at Tanbark Ridge Tunnel (MP 376.7)

EB Mile 39.9; WB Mile 27.8



N35.66548, W82.46185

### Craggy Gardens Picnic Area (MP 367.6)

EB Mile 45.6; WB Mile 22.1



N35.69959, W82.39165

### Craggy Gardens Visitor Center (MP 364.5)

EB Mile 46.4; WB Mile 21.3



N35.69979, W82.37983

Coordinates can be entered in your mapping software just like a street address.

## PRIMARY PARKING LOCATIONS (Continued)

### BRP Walker Knob Overlook (MP 359.8)

EB Mile 52.6; WB Mile 15.1



N35.74842, W82.33402

### NC 128 Crossing

EB Mile 57.4; WB Mile 10.3



N35.72585, W82.28308

### Mt. Mitchell Summit Parking Area

EB Mile 61.8; WB Mile 5.9



N35.76622, W82.26525

### Black Mtn. Campground Trailhead

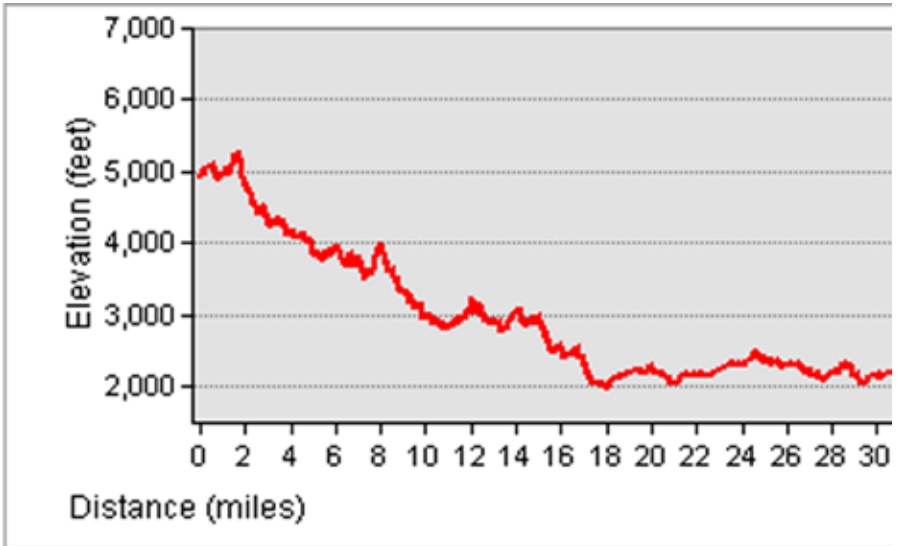
EB Mile 67.7; WB Mile 0.0




N35.75110, W82.22024

Coordinates can be entered in your mapping software just like a street address.

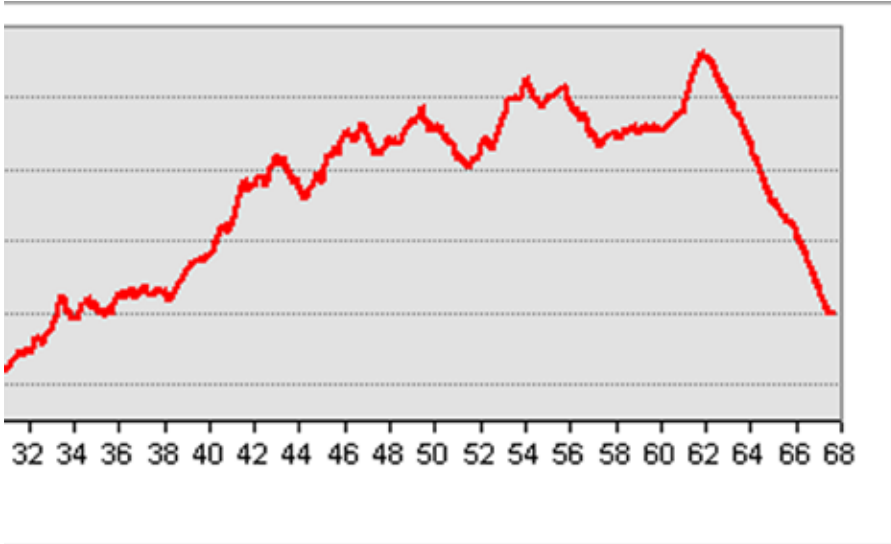
## Segment 4 Eastbound



### Hiking Directions, Eastbound

- 0.0 Begin Segment 3 at parking lot for the Pisgah Inn (MP 408.6). Continue to the back left corner of the parking lot (as viewed from the BRP), then go up stone stairs at MST signpost and kiosk for Mt. Pisgah Trail System. *Note:* The Pisgah Inn, open seasonally, has lodging, a restaurant, and a store with general supplies. The Mt. Pisgah Campground is nearby; to reach it, turn left on the BRP and walk approximately 0.1 mile to the entrance on the right (see the "Camping and Lodging" section for this segment for more information). 
- 0.3 Continue straight past side trail on right, which leads to overlook.
- 0.7 Continue straight past junction with Pilot Rock Trail on right.
- 0.8 Continue straight past junction with Laurel Mtn. Trail on right.
- 1.0 Continue through clearing with wooden benches on the right and a spectacular view. *Note:* This is the former site of George Vanderbilt's Buck Spring Lodge. Walt Weber's book *Trail Profiles and Maps: From the Great Smokies to Mount Mitchell and Beyond* provides an interesting look at the history and current condition of the lodge site.

## Elevation Profile



- 1.1 Continue straight across parking area at Buck Springs Gap Overlook (MP 407.6). **P**
- 1.3 Reach road at parking area for Mt. Pisgah Trailhead (to your left) and walk along shoulder, then return to trail at stairs and sign for “Shut-In Trail.” The trail from here to the French Broad River generally follows the path of, and is sometimes on the bed of, the old carriage road built by George Vanderbilt to connect Biltmore House to Buck Spring Lodge. *Note:* At this parking area (MP 407.6), you are crossing directly over the BRP’s Buck Springs Tunnel, so the next time you reach the BRP, it will be from the other side. **P**
- 3.1 Reach BRP at its junction with NC 151 and turn left to walk along the shoulder of BRP approximately 75 yards, then cross BRP and return to trail at white-blazed signpost. *Note:* There is a small gravel parking area at this junction (MP 405.5). **P**
- 4.3 Cross parking area at Mills River Valley Overlook (MP 404.5) and continue on trail at far side of parking area. **P**
- 5.3 Reach clearing and continue up wooden steps toward MST signpost and Big Ridge Overlook (MP 403.6), then cross BRP and continue on trail at white-blazed signpost. **P**



Pink Lady's Slippers  
Photo by Sharon McCarthy

- 5.8 Cross BRP.
- 6.4 Reach Stony Bald Overlook (MP 402.6) and cross BRP at far end of overlook, returning to trail at white-blazed signpost. **P**
- 7.3 Reach Beaver Dam Gap Overlook (MP 401.7) and walk across the back of parking lot to continue on the trail at far side. **P**
- 8.0 Cross 4,064-foot Ferrin Knob just below remains of old fire tower on right.
- 8.4 Bear right where trail comes in from left. *Note:* Just down the other trail is a small stream that could be usable as a water source during high-flow periods. **💧**
- 9.2 At Y-intersection, bear left down steps.
- 9.3 Cross gravel road leading into Bent Creek Experimental Forest.
- 9.4 Continue straight where trail heads uphill on right.
- 11.5 Continue straight past Chestnut Cove Trail on left.
- 11.8 At Y-intersection, take right fork.



Camping



Lodging



Parking



Food



Restrooms









Supplies





Water



Picnic

- 11.9 At intersection with blue-blazed spur trail to BRP, turn left to stay on the MST. *Note:* The spur trail leads approximately 75 yards to parking at the Chestnut Cove Overlook (MP 398.3). 
- 12.5 Begin descending a series of switchbacks.
- 12.7 Where Sleepy Gap Parking Area (MP 397.3) is visible on right, continue on marked trail behind parking area. 
- 13.3 At Y-intersection, take right fork.
- 14.4 Continue straight past short spur trail to BRP on right.
- 15.6 At T-intersection, continue to right on gravel road. *Note:* There is a gravel parking area on the BRP (MP 359) just to the right of this point. 
- 15.7 Turn off gravel road, following white-blazed signpost up a set of concrete-and-wood stairs.
- 17.3 Cross creek. 
- 17.4 Pass through gate in chain-link fence. You are now entering the North Carolina Arboretum property.
- 17.5 Just before the trail in front of you enters a rhododendron thicket, make a sharp right turn to continue on the MST.
- 17.6 Cross small stream, then go through gate in chain-link fence to leave Arboretum property.
- 17.8 Turn right on BRP access road. *Note:* Parking is available along the shoulder of the access road. 
- 18.0 Turn left on BRP, then cross bridge over French Broad River.
- 18.2 At parking area (MP 393.4), turn right into the woods at MST signpost, then bear left. 
- 18.7 Continue straight where trail comes in from right.
- 18.9 Continue straight across dirt road that passes under BRP.
- 19.6 Cross BRP.
- 19.8 Turn left on BRP, then cross bridge over I-26.
- 19.9 Just past the bridge, turn right on trail marked with MST signpost.
- 20.2 Continue straight past trail on the right.
- 20.3 Continue straight past intersection with closed trail, then past another trail on the right.
- 20.9 Cross footbridge over small creek, then continue straight across gravel road with padlocked gate just to your right.

- 21.0 At T-intersection with MST signpost, turn left then bear right and cross footbridge over Dingle Creek.
- 22.0 Continue straight across gravel road.
- 22.6 Cross footbridge over Fourmile Branch, then cross smaller footbridge over swampy area.
- 22.8 Descend stairs, cross trail intersection, then climb stairs on other side.
- 23.0 Bear right at Y-intersection.
- 23.1 Turn right on BRP and cross bridge over Hendersonville Rd.  
*Note:* There is a parking area just across the road from the trail (MP 388.9). 
- 23.2 Turn left onto trail with MST signpost. *Note:* The access road across the BRP leads to Hendersonville Rd., a major thoroughfare in Asheville. Turning left (south) at the bottom of the ramp leads to a number of shopping options, including a Walmart approximately 0.5 mile away. To the right (north) are historic Biltmore Village and downtown Asheville, about 4 and 6 miles away, respectively, along with numerous smaller shopping centers. 
- 23.4 Turn left on BRP, then cross bridge over railroad tracks.
- 23.5 Turn left onto trail with MST signpost.
- 23.9 Turn left on BRP, then cross bridge over Sweeten Creek Rd.
- 24.0 After the bridge, continue on shoulder of BRP for 50 yards, then turn left onto trail with MST signpost.
- 24.2 Cross footbridge over a small stream.
- 24.4 Continue straight past trail on the right.
- 24.5 At Y-intersection with fainter trail leading to BRP, bear left.
- 24.7 At T-intersection, turn right and follow MST markings.
- 25.0 Continue straight where larger trail joins from left.
- 25.1 Continue straight past old roadbed on right, then cross two small streams.
- 25.5 Cross a small stream.
- 25.8 Bear right at Y-intersection, then cross small creek.
- 26.2 Continue straight across old road.
- 26.3 Cross a small stream.
- 27.1 Cross a power-line cut.
- 27.2 Cross a small stream.



Camping



Lodging



Parking



Food



Restrooms



Supplies












Water



Picnic



- 27.3 Continue straight past trail on right.
- 27.7 Turn left on BRP at gravel parking area (MP 384.8), then cross bridge over US 74A. 
- 27.8 Just beyond end of bridge, turn right on trail with white MST signpost.
- 28.2 Continue straight past small unmarked spur trail to BRP on left.
- 28.4 At Y-intersection, take right fork signposted to Folk Art Center. *Note:* The left fork leads 0.3 mile to the BRP Visitor Center & Headquarters (MP 384), which has exhibits about the natural and cultural heritage of the BRP area as well as restrooms and water. It is open from 9 AM to 5 PM daily year-round.   
- 29.1 Continue straight through power-line cut.
- 29.3 Go down a flight of stairs, then turn left on dirt road and immediately go through tunnel under I-40.
- 29.4 After leaving tunnel, cross railroad tracks and continue straight on paved road to cross bridge over Swannanoa River, then at T-intersection continue straight over stile with white blaze and follow white blazes on BRP viaduct across field.
- 29.5 Cross stile at end of field.
- 30.1 Turn left on the shoulder of BRP, then cross bridge over US 70.
- 30.2 After crossing bridge, immediately turn left onto trail marked with MST signpost.
- 30.4 Continue straight across BRP access road. *Note:* The access road leads to US 70, with heavy strip development in both directions, including an Ingles supermarket approximately 0.5 mile to the right (west).  
- 30.7 Continue straight on sidewalk at Folk Art Center parking lot (MP 382). 
- 30.8 Pass plaque on left honoring long-time Carolina Mountain Club volunteer Arch Nichols. Then continue to follow MST signs across access road and turn right onto gravel trail (a self-guided nature trail). *Note:* Continue straight instead to reach the Folk Art Center, which exhibits fine art and crafts from around the Southern Appalachians and has restrooms and water. It is open daily from 9 AM to 6 PM April-December and 9 AM to 5 PM January-March.  
- 30.9 Continue straight past trail on left.



Lodging



Parking



Food



Restrooms



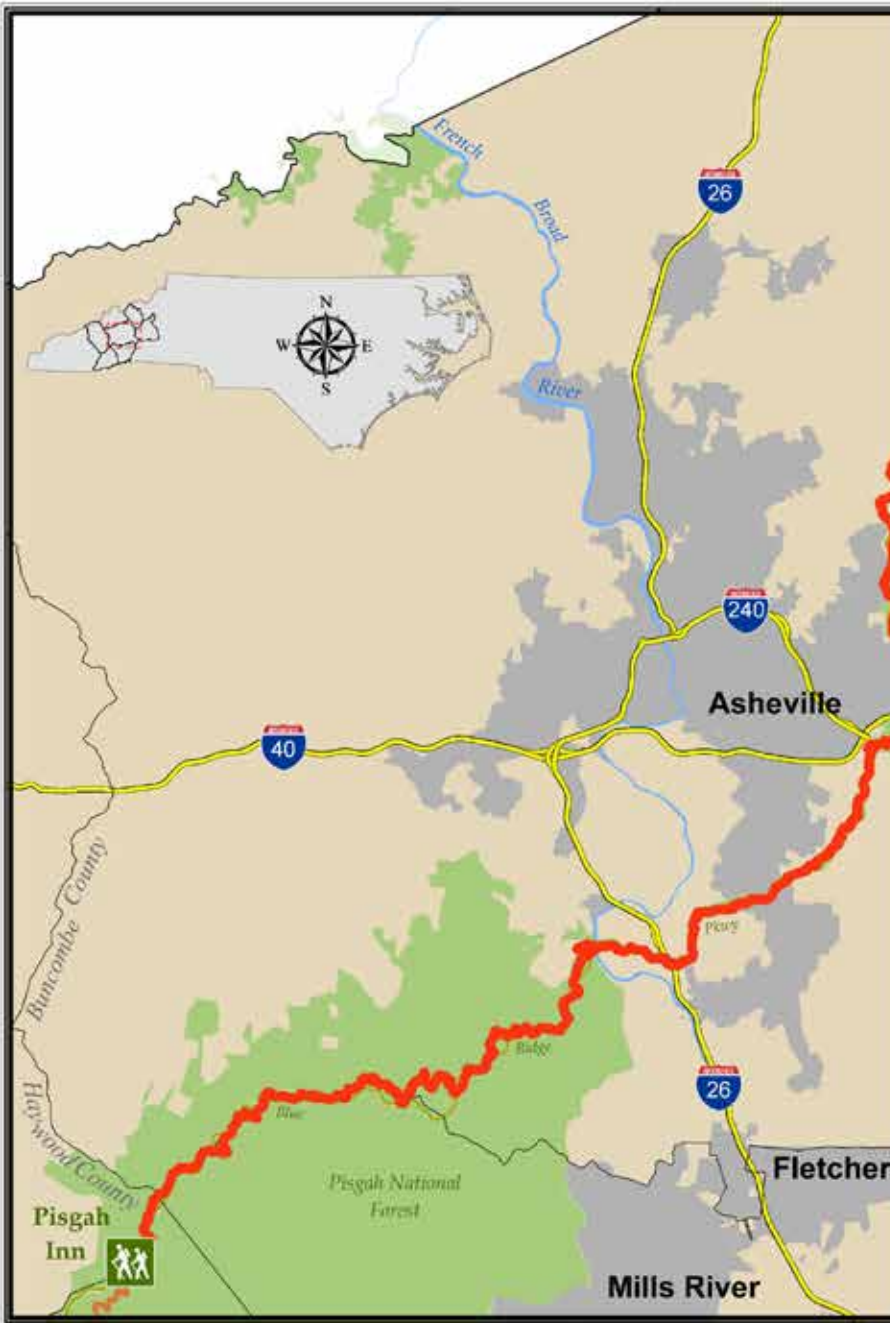
Supplies



Water



Picnic








Map and elevation profile produced for Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail by Curtis Belyea, 2016.





Hiking in the Black Mountains

Photo by Jeff Clark [www.internetbrothers.org](http://www.internetbrothers.org)

- 31.0 Just before a blue blaze on a tree, bear right off nature trail, then cross bridge over Riceville Rd.
- 31.6 Continue straight past trail on left.
- 31.8 Cross BRP at gravel parking lot (MP 381.2). 
- 32.7 Pass blue-blazed spur trail to gravel parking area on BRP on left (MP 380.3). 
- 33.1 Pass spur trail on left leading to rock, known locally as “Lunch Rock,” overlooking Haw Creek Valley.
- 34.0 Continue straight onto old roadbed.
- 34.1 Pass spur trail to gravel parking area on the BRP on the left (MP 379). 
- 34.7 Continue straight past trail on right in sharp curve of MST.
- 35.9 Cross BRP at Craven Gap, then turn right at T-intersection  
Note: there is parking at the access road a few yards to your left (MP 377.4). 
- 36.7 Ascend a short set of stairs.
- 37.0 Cross stream, then take the left fork at the Y-intersection. 



Camping



Lodging



Parking



Food



Restrooms

















Supplies






















Water









Picnic

- 37.6 Continue straight across Elk Mtn. Scenic Hwy. at gravel parking area. 
- 38.0 Pass trail on left, leading to gravel parking area on Ox Creek Rd. 
- 38.3 Continue straight past spur trail on left, leading to Bull Gap gravel parking area on Ox Creek Rd. 
- 38.4 Begin ascending a series of switchbacks.
- 39.7 Continue straight past the ruins of Rattlesnake Lodge, a summer home built by Asheville physician Chase Ambler in 1903-4. *Note:* The trail leading down to your right is the first of two trails leading to a parking area on the BRP at Tanbark Ridge Tunnel (MP 376.7) approximately 0.5 mile away. 
- 39.9 At remains of an old fireplace, cross second trail on right leading to BRP parking area approximately 0.5 mile away, then cross small stream. 
- 40.1 Turn left at a hairpin turn.
- 40.5 Cross a small stream—note the springhead on the right—then, at Y-intersection, take right fork (left fork has blue blaze). 
- 43.1 Descend ladder.
- 43.3 Ascend ladder.
- 44.4 Turn left on BRP and walk along shoulder approximately 100 yards before returning to trail at MST signpost at edge of grassy clearing.
- 45.0 At Y-intersection, take left fork.
- 45.1 Continue straight across Craggy Gardens picnic area access road (MP 367.6). 
- 45.6 Continue straight past short spur trail on left leading to Craggy Gardens picnic area, with restrooms, parking, and picnic facilities. *Note:* To reach the trail from the top of the parking area, follow the trail marked with a blue blaze and the MST logo, then turn left on the MST.   
- 45.7 Where trail comes in at sharp angle from left, follow white arrow to right.
- 46.2 Continue straight through old CCC shelter.
- 46.4 Turn left where trail is signed to Douglas Falls, then turn right at T-intersection. *Note:* Continuing straight leads about 100 yards to the Craggy Gardens Visitor Center (MP 364.5), with water, restrooms, a gift shop, and parking.    

- 47.4 Pass Douglas Falls Trail on left.
- 48.7 Continue straight onto paved road next to building.
- 48.8 Leave paved road where trail heads into woods on left.
- 48.9 Cross BRP.
- 49.0 Continue straight through Graybeard Mtn. Overlook (MP 363.4). 
- 51.3 Continue straight through Glassmine Falls Overlook (MP 361.2). 
- 52.6 Cross BRP at Walker Knob Overlook (MP 359.8), then continue past yellow-blazed trail on left and follow MST sign onto trail parallel to and on right of road. You will soon begin ascending a long series of switchbacks. 
- 53.4 Reach summit ridge and turn right.
- 54.1 Cross 6,320-foot summit of Blackstock Knob.
- 55.8 Begin descending a series of switchbacks.
- 56.2 Cross a small stream that may not have water during dry seasons. 
- 56.4 Continue through clearing with nice lunch rock on right overlooking city of Asheville's water-supply reservoir, then turn left at T-intersection. *Note:* The trail to the right leads to a rock outcrop with views.
- 57.4 Pass through stile, then cross NC 128 at gravel parking area (which can be easy to miss in a car), pass by trail on right and merge onto wider trail, which is the Buncombe Horse Range Trail. 
- 57.5 Cross stream, then continue straight at sign toward Camp Alice. 
- 57.6 Cross Right Prong of South Toe River. 
- 58.4 Cross South Fork of Upper Creek. 
- 60.5 Cross Lower Creek. 
- 60.8 Turn sharply left onto Commissary Trail at the sign marked with orange diamonds as well as MST white circles. Then pass a second sign to enter Mt. Mitchell State Park. *Note:* If you continue straight, which is also the Commissary Trail, you can avoid the 1.4-mile-long, 900-vertical-foot climb to the summit of Mt. Mitchell. If you choose this alternative, walk 0.5 mile then return to the MST at Mile 63.4.
- 61.0 Continue straight past gravel road on right.
- 61.1 Cross Lower Creek, then turn right at sign onto Camp Alice Trail. From this point, you will climb steeply through spruce-fir forest on a trail that is marked with blue squares as well as the MST white circles. *Note:* If you continue straight here, the Mt. Mitchell State Park office is 1.2 miles ahead. 

- 61.5 At sign, pass trail on left and continue on Old Mitchell Trail, marked with yellow circles as well as white circles, then almost immediately take a switchback up the hill. *Note:* The trail to the left is also the Old Mitchell Trail and leads down 1.5 miles to the park office.
- 61.6 Switchback left where the trail straight ahead is blocked with branches, then switchback right.
- 61.7 At T-intersection with sign, turn right to stay on Old Mitchell Trail. *Note:* The trail to the left (the Campground Spur Trail) leads 0.3 mile to the Mt. Mitchell State Park Campground. See the "Camping and Lodging" section for this segment for information about camping here. 
- 61.8 At T-intersection, turn right on paved trail. *Note:* Turn left on the paved trail and walk 100 yards to reach the Mt. Mitchell parking lot, with water, restrooms, and a concession stand. The Mt. Mitchell State Park restaurant is approximately 1.6 miles away on the road from the parking lot.    
- 61.9 Pass Mt. Mitchell State Park Environmental Education Center on left, then turn left off paved trail onto Balsam Nature Trail. *Note:* Continue straight on the paved trail for 500 feet to reach the summit of Mt. Mitchell.
- 62.2 Continue straight past Balsam Nature Trail on left, then pass sign marked "Black Mountain Campground 5.5 miles."
- 62.6 Pass state-park boundary sign.
- 63.4 Turn left at T-intersection in clearing with power-line cut, turn left to continue on Mt. Mitchell Trail and MST. *Note:* In the next 0.4 mile, you will cross this power-line cut 5 times while descending a long series of switchbacks.
- 63.5 Pass campsite on right, then bear right onto Mt. Mitchell Trail at Y-intersection where Buncombe Horse Range Trail continues to left. 
- 63.8 Cross power-line cut for the last time in this series.
- 64.0 Pass campsite on left. 
- 64.5 Pass campsite on left. 
- 64.7 Bear right at Y-intersection with Mt. Mitchell Trail. *Note:* A few yards down the Mt. Mitchell Trail is Setrock Creek, a good water source. 



- 65.2 Pass campsites on right and left. 
- 65.3 Cross Setrock Creek. 
- 65.4 Cross power-line cut.
- 65.9 Continue straight past Old Mt. Mitchell Trail on left (this is a different trail than the Old Mitchell Trail you followed a few miles ago).
- 67.4 Cross wooden bridge over Little Mtn. Creek.
- 67.5 Continue straight across road, turn left at T-intersection, then bear right at Y-intersection.
- 67.6 At T-intersection, turn right on road.
- 67.7 Turn right at camp office, cross bridge over South Toe River, and reach parking area on South Toe River Rd. near Black Mtn. Campground and end of Segment 3. *Note:* To reach the parking area by car from the BRP, take NC 80 (at MP 344) toward Burnsville. After the small community of Busick, turn left onto South Toe River Rd. This road will eventually turn to gravel and follow the river. At the gravel road intersection, turn right and continue to follow the road right. The parking area is on your left just before a bridge and the entrance to the Black Mtn. Campground on the right. See the "Camping and Lodging" section for this segment for information about camping at the Black Mtn. Campground.    



Camping



Lodging



Parking



Food



Restrooms



Supplies













Water












Picnic

## Hiking Directions, Westbound

- 0.0 Turn left out of the parking area on South Toe River Rd. near Black Mtn. Campground to begin Segment 3, then cross bridge over South Toe River and turn left at sign pointing to Mt. Mitchell. *Note:* To reach the parking area by car from the BRP, take NC 80 (at MP 344) toward Burnsville. After the small community of Busick, turn left onto South Toe River Rd. This road will eventually turn to gravel and follow the river. At the gravel road intersection, turn right and continue to follow the road right. The parking area is on your left just before a bridge and the entrance to the Black Mtn. Campground on the right. See the "Camping and Lodging" section for this segment for information about camping at the Black Mtn. Campground.    
- 0.1 Bear left at Y-intersection with trail to Briar Bottom Group Camping.
- 0.2 Continue straight past trail on right, turn right at signpost for Mt. Mitchell Trail, then continue straight across road.
- 0.3 Cross wooden bridge over Little Mtn. Creek.
- 1.8 Bear left at Y-intersection to follow Higgins Bald Trail.
- 2.3 Cross power-line cut.
- 2.4 Cross Setrock Creek. 
- 2.5 Pass campsites on right and left. 
- 3.0 Continue straight past Mt. Mitchell Trail on right. *Note:* A few yards down the Mt. Mitchell Trail is Setrock Creek, a good water source. 
- 3.2 Pass campsite on right. 
- 3.7 Pass campsite on right and begin ascending a long series of switchbacks. 
- 3.9 Cross power-line cut. *Note:* In the next 0.4 mile, you will cross this power-line cut 5 times.
- 4.2 Continue straight past trail on right marked Buncombe Horse Range (the trail you are continuing on is also called the Buncombe Horse Range Trail), then pass campsite on left. 
- 4.3 Reach the power-line cut for the last time at a well-marked junction and turn right onto the Mt. Mitchell Trail, which is marked with














blue diamonds as well as the MST white circles. *Note:* If you continue straight, you will be on the Commissary Trail, which avoids the 1.1-mile-long, 900-vertical-foot climb to the summit of Mt. Mitchell. If you choose this alternative, walk 0.5 mile then return to the MST at mile 6.9.












- 5.1 Pass state-park boundary sign.
- 5.5 Pass sign marked "Black Mtn. Campground 5.5 miles" (in the other direction), then pass Balsam Nature Trail on right.
- 5.8 Continue straight onto paved trail, then pass Mt. Mitchell State Park Environmental Education Center on right. *Note:* Turn left on the paved trail and walk 500 feet to reach the summit of Mt. Mitchell.
- 5.9 Turn left onto Old Mitchell Trail at sign. *Note:* Continuing straight on the paved trail for 100 yards leads to the Mt. Mitchell parking lot, with water, restrooms, and a concession stand. The Mt. Mitchell State Park restaurant is approximately 1.6 miles away on the road from the parking lot.    
- 6.0 Turn left at sign to stay on Old Mitchell Trail. *Note:* The trail straight ahead (the Campground Spur Trail) leads 0.3 mile to the Mt. Mitchell State Park Campground. See the "Camping and Lodging" section for this segment for information about camping here. 
- 6.1 Make two quick switchbacks, left then right. At the second one, a trail from the left is blocked.
- 6.2 At sign, pass trail on right and continue on Camp Alice Trail, marked with blue squares as well as white circles. *Note:* The trail to the right is the continuation of the Old Mitchell Trail and leads down 1.5 miles to the park office.
- 6.6 Turn left on gravel road, then cross Lower Creek. *Note:* If you turn right here, the Mt. Mitchell State Park office is 1.2 miles ahead. 
- 6.7 Continue straight past gravel road on left.
- 6.9 Pass sign to leave Mt. Mitchell State Park, then make a sharp right turn onto the Buncombe Horse Range Trail just before a small stream.
- 7.2 Cross Lower Creek. 
- 9.3 Cross South Fork of Upper Creek. 
- 10.1 Cross Right Prong of South Toe River. 



Sunlight filtering through clouds over Asheville  
Photo by Matt Mutel

- 10.2 Continue straight past sign marked for Buncombe Horse Range Trail, South Toe River Rd., and Camp Alice, then cross stream. 💧
- 10.3 At Y-intersection, take right fork with white marker, then cross NC 128 at gravel parking area (which can be easy to miss in a car) and pass through a stile. *Note:* If you continue straight until you reach the road, you went too far but can turn right on the road and go 100 yards to the correct crossing, marked with MST signs. (P)
- 11.3 At Y-intersection, take right fork then continue through clearing with nice lunch rock on left overlooking city of Asheville's water-supply reservoir. *Note:* The left fork leads to a rock outcrop with views.
- 11.5 Cross a small stream that may not have water during dry seasons, then begin ascending a series of switchbacks. 💧
- 13.6 Cross 6,320-foot summit of Blackstock Knob.
- 14.3 Just before trail straight ahead almost disappears, turn left and head down a steep hill. You soon begin descending a long series of switchbacks.
- 15.1 Continue past yellow-blazed trail on right, then cross BRP at Walker Knob Overlook (MP 359.8). (P)
- 16.4 Continue straight through Glassmine Falls Overlook (MP 361.2). (P)
- 18.7 Continue straight through Graybeard Mtn. Overlook (MP 363.4). (P)
- 18.8 Cross BRP.

- 18.9 Bear right on paved road.
- 19.0 At building on your right, continue straight onto trail.
- 20.3 Pass Douglas Falls Trail on right.
- 21.3 Turn left, then right at T-intersection. *Note:* Going left at the second turn will take you about 100 yards to the Craggy Gardens Visitor Center (MP 364.5), with water, restrooms, a gift shop, and parking.    
- 21.5 Continue straight through old CCC shelter.
- 22.0 At Y-intersection, take left fork.
- 22.1 Continue straight past short spur trail on right leading to Craggy Gardens picnic area (MP 367.6), with restrooms, parking, and picnic facilities. The unmarked trail is between two signs noting that the MST is closed to horses and bicycles. *Note:* To reach the trail from the top of the parking area, follow the trail marked with a blue blaze and the MST logo, then turn right on the MST.   
- 22.6 Continue straight across Craggy Gardens picnic area access road, continuing on trail to left of gravel road. 
- 22.7 Turn right at T-intersection.
- 23.3 Turn right on BRP and walk along shoulder approximately 100 yards before returning to trail at MST signpost.
- 24.4 Descend ladder.
- 24.6 Ascend ladder.
- 27.2 Pass blue-blazed trail on right, then cross a small stream—note the springhead on the left. 
- 27.6 Turn right at a hairpin turn.
- 27.8 Cross a small stream, then, at remains of old chimney, cross trail marked with blue blaze. The trail to the left is the first of two trails leading to the parking area on the BRP at Tanbark Ridge Tunnel (MP 376.7) approximately 0.5 mile away. 
- 28.0 Continue straight past second trail to BRP parking area and ruins of Rattlesnake Lodge, a summer home built by Asheville physician Chase Ambler in 1903-4. 
- 29.2 Begin descending a series of switchbacks.
- 29.4 At Y-intersection, take left fork. *Note:* The right fork leads to Bull Gap gravel parking area on Ox Creek Rd. 
- 29.7 Pass trail on right leading to gravel parking area on Ox Creek Rd. 

- 30.1 Continue straight across Elk Mtn. Scenic Hwy. at gravel parking area. 
- 30.7 Cross stream. 
- 31.0 Descend a short set of stairs.
- 31.8 Just before a Y-intersection, where the left trail passes a blue-blazed tree, take steps down and to the left as shown by a white arrow, then cross the BRP. *Note:* Continuing straight leads to parking area at Craven Gap (MP 377.4). 
- 33.0 Continue straight past trail on left in sharp curve of MST.
- 33.6 Pass spur trail to gravel parking area on the BRP on the right (MP 379). 
- 33.7 Where roadbed is blocked by brush pile, bear right up wooden steps.
- 34.6 Pass spur trail on right leading to rock, known locally as “Lunch Rock,” overlooking Haw Creek Valley.
- 35.0 Pass blue-blazed spur trail to gravel parking area on BRP on right (MP 380.3). 
- 35.9 Cross BRP at gravel parking lot (MP 381.2). 
- 36.1 Continue straight past trail on right.
- 36.7 Cross bridge over Riceville Rd., then, at T-intersection where tree on the left has a double white blaze, turn left. This is beginning of the Folk Art Center’s self-guided nature trail.
- 36.8 Continue straight past trail on left.
- 36.9 At sidewalk, turn right and cross access road to pick up sidewalk around parking lot. Then pass plaque on right honoring long-time Carolina Mountain Club volunteer Arch Nichols. *Note:* Turn left instead to reach the Folk Art Center (MP 382), which exhibits fine art and crafts from around the Southern Appalachians and has restrooms and water. It is open daily from 9 AM to 6 PM April-December and 9 AM to 5 PM January-March.  
- 37.0 At end of parking lot, bear left onto trail marked with MST signpost. 
- 37.3 Continue straight across BRP access road. *Note:* The access road leads to US 70, with heavy strip development in both directions, including an Ingles supermarket approximately 0.5 mile to the right (west).  



Camping



Lodging



Parking



Food



Restrooms



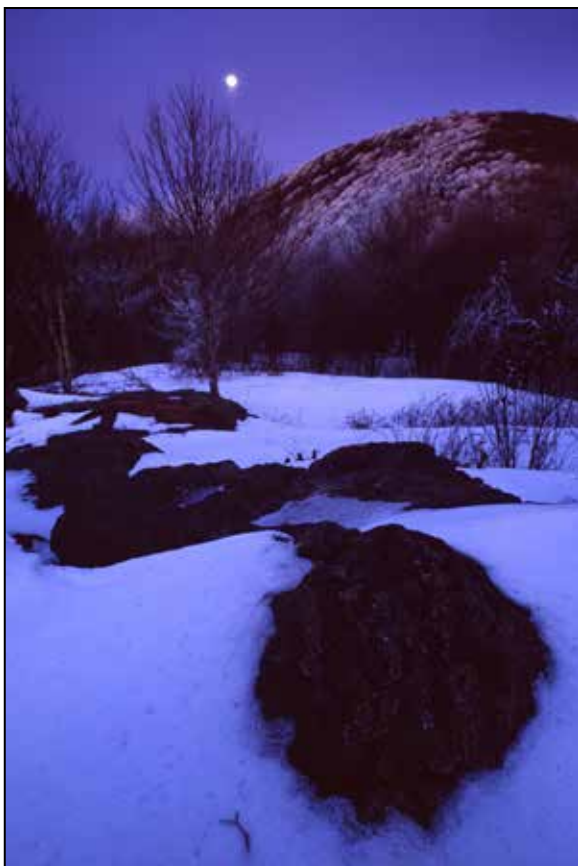
Supplies



Water







Picnic








Evening at Bee Tree Gap, Great Craggy Mountains  
Photo by Stephen Schoof

- 37.5 Turn right onto BRP shoulder and immediately cross bridge over US 70.
- 37.6 Turn right into the woods at MST signpost.
- 38.2 Cross stile with white blaze, then follow white blazes under BRP viaduct across field.
- 38.3 Cross stile at end of field, continue straight on bridge over Swananoa River towards railroad tracks, then cross railroad tracks and pass through tunnel under I-40.
- 38.4 At end of tunnel, turn right on white-blazed trail, then go up stairs.



- 38.6 Continue straight through power-line cut.
- 39.3 Where trail to the BRP Visitor Center comes in from right, bear left towards US 74. *Note:* The BRP Visitor Center & Headquarters (MP 384) is 0.3 mile down the trail on the right. It has exhibits about the natural and cultural heritage of the BRP area as well as restrooms and water. It is open from 9 AM to 5 PM daily year-round.   
- 39.5 Continue straight past small unmarked spur trail to BRP on right.
- 39.9 Turn left on BRP, then cross bridge over US 74A.
- 40.0 At parking area at end of bridge (MP 384.8), turn right onto trail marked with MST signpost. 
- 40.4 Continue straight past trail on left.
- 40.5 Cross a small stream.
- 40.6 Cross a power-line cut.
- 41.4 Cross a small stream.
- 41.5 Continue straight across old road.
- 41.9 Cross small creek, then continue straight past trail on right.
- 42.2 Cross a small stream.
- 42.6 Cross two small streams, then continue straight past old roadbed on left.
- 42.7 At Y-intersection where larger trail continues down to the right, bear left on smaller trail.
- 43.0 Bear left at Y-intersection.
- 43.2 Continue straight past fainter trail leading to BRP on left.
- 43.3 Continue straight past trail on the left.
- 43.5 Cross footbridge over a small stream.
- 43.7 Turn right on BRP, then cross bridge over Sweeten Creek Rd.
- 43.8 At end of bridge, turn right onto trail with MST signpost.
- 44.2 Turn right on BRP, then cross bridge over railroad tracks.
- 44.3 Cross bridge over railroad tracks, then turn right on trail with MST signpost.
- 44.5 Turn right onto BRP, then cross bridge over Hendersonville Rd. *Note:* The access road across the BRP leads to Hendersonville Rd., a major thoroughfare in Asheville. Turning left (south) at the bottom of the ramp leads to a number of shopping options, including a Walmart approximately 0.5 mile away. To the right (north) are historic Biltmore Village and downtown Asheville, about 4 and 6



- miles away, respectively, along with numerous smaller shopping centers.  
- 44.6 After passing access road, and just before gate, turn left on trail marked with MST signpost. *Note:* There is a parking area just across the road from the trail (MP 388.9). 
- 44.7 Continue straight past trail coming in from right.
- 44.9 Descend stairs, cross trail intersection, then climb stairs on other side.
- 45.1 Cross small footbridge over swampy area, then larger footbridge over Fourmile Branch.
- 45.7 Continue straight across gravel road.
- 46.7 Cross footbridge over Dingle Creek, bear left and slightly uphill, then turn right at MST signpost.
- 46.8 Cross gravel road with padlocked gate just to your left, then cross footbridge over small creek.
- 47.4 At Y-intersection, bear right, then continue straight past intersection with closed trail.
- 47.5 Continue straight past trail on the left.
- 47.8 Turn left on BRP, then cross bridge over I-26.
- 47.9 Just past the bridge, turn right on trail marked with MST signpost.
- 48.1 Cross BRP.
- 48.8 Continue straight across dirt road that passes under BRP.
- 49.0 At Y-intersection, where left trail is marked with a blue diamond with an arrow, continue straight as shown on MST signpost.
- 49.5 Bear right at a Y-intersection, come out to parking area (MP 393.4), then turn left on BRP and cross bridge over French Broad River. 
- 49.7 Just after crossing bridge, turn right on BRP access road.
- 49.9 Just past road gate, turn left on trail marked with white-blazed signpost and informational sign titled “Shut-In Trail.” The trail from here to the Mt. Pisgah Trailhead parking area generally follows the path of, and is sometimes on the bed of, the old carriage road built by George Vanderbilt to connect Biltmore House to Buck Spring Lodge, his hunting lodge on Mt. Pisgah. *Note:* Parking is available along the shoulder of the access road. 
- 50.1 Pass through gate in chain-link fence, then cross small stream. You are now entering the North Carolina Arboretum property.



Mt. Mitchell summit  
Photo by Jake Blood

- 50.2 At T-intersection, turn left.
- 50.3 Pass through gate in chain-link fence to leave the Arboretum property.
- 50.4 Cross creek. 💧
- 52.0 Turn left on an old gravel road.
- 52.1 At open area showing signs of erosion, leave gravel road to the left and follow white-blazed signpost up the trail. *Note:* There is a gravel parking area on the BRP (MP 359) just to the left of this point. Ⓟ
- 53.3 Continue straight past short spur trail to BRP on left.
- 54.4 Where a trail comes in at a sharp angle from below on the right, continue straight on MST.
- 55.0 Where Sleepy Gap Parking Area is visible on right, continue on marked trail behind parking area, then begin climbing a series of switchbacks. Ⓟ



Camping



Lodging



Parking



Food



Restrooms












Supplies



Water



Picnic

- 55.8 At intersection with blue-blazed spur trail to BRP, turn right towards MST signpost. *Note:* The spur trail leads approximately 75 yards to parking at the Chestnut Cove Overlook (MP 398.3). 
- 55.9 Continue straight where trail comes in at sharp angle from right.
- 56.2 Continue straight past Chestnut Cove Trail on right.
- 58.3 Continue straight where trail heads uphill on left.
- 58.4 Cross gravel road leading into Bent Creek Experimental Forest.
- 58.5 Turn left at T-intersection.
- 59.3 At Y-intersection, bear left up trail marked "Shut-In Trail." *Note:* Just down the other trail is a small stream that could be usable as a water source during high-flow periods. 
- 59.7 Cross 4,064-foot Ferrin Knob just below remains of old fire tower on left.
- 60.4 Reach Beaver Dam Gap Overlook (MP 401.7) and walk across the back of parking lot to continue on the trail at far side. 
- 61.3 Cross BRP, then walk through Stony Bald Overlook (MP 402.6) and return to trail at far right corner of parking area. 
- 61.9 Cross BRP.
- 62.4 Cross BRP at Big Ridge Overlook (MP 403.6), then turn right at MST signpost at far right corner of parking area and follow trail down wooden stairs and into the woods. 
- 63.4 Cross parking area at Mills River Valley Overlook (MP 404.5) and continue on trail at far side of parking area. 
- 64.6 Turn left to walk on shoulder of BRP approximately 75 yards, then cross at the junction with NC 151 and enter woods on trail marked with white blazes and wooden vehicle barriers. *Note:* There is a small gravel parking area at this junction (MP 405.5). 
- 66.4 Reach road at parking area for Mt. Pisgah Trailhead (to your right) and walk along shoulder approximately 50 yards, returning to the trail at white-blazed signpost. *Note:* At this parking area (MP 407.6), you are crossing directly over the BRP's Buck Springs Tunnel, so the next time you reach the BRP, it will be from the other side. 
- 66.6 Continue straight across parking area at Buck Springs Gap Overlook (MP 407.6). 
- 66.7 Continue through clearing with wooden benches on the right and a spectacular view. *Note:* This is the former site of George Vander-



Camping



Lodging



Parking



Food



Restrooms



Supplies



Water



Picnic

bilt's Buck Spring Lodge. Walt Weber's book *Trail Profiles and Maps: From the Great Smokies to Mt. Mitchell and Beyond* provides an interesting look at the history and current condition of the lodge site.

66.9 Continue straight past junction with Laurel Mtn. Trail on left.

67.0 Continue straight past junction with Pilot Rock Trail on left.

67.4 Continue straight past side trail on left, which leads to overlook.

67.7 Come down stone stairs to parking lot at the Pisgah Inn (MP 408.6) and the western end of Segment 3. *Note:* The Pisgah Inn, open seasonally, has lodging, a restaurant, and a store with general supplies. The Mt. Pisgah Campground is nearby; to reach it, turn left on the BRP and walk approximately 0.1 mile to the entrance on the right (see the "Camping and Lodging" section for this segment for more information).



Camping



Lodging



Parking



Food



Restrooms



Supplies



Water



Picnic