

Wonderful Waterfalls and Hikes in Our Own Backyard

Recently a friend and I began hiking and exploring the many waterfalls and trails in the area, in particular the Cumberland Trail (a mini-Appalachian Trail that will eventually run the entire length of Tennessee) that we'd heard so much about recently.

Although the trail is in development, there are several segments already open and many within a thirty-minute drive from Crossville. Eventually this trail will connect seldom viewed waterfalls, unusual rock formations, river swimming holes and scenic overlooks found all along the Plateau. For more information, we visited the very helpful office of the Cumberland Trail Conference in Crossville (931-456-6259), which has maps and a wealth of knowledge and is compiling a book due out later this year on all the trails. (www.cumberlandtrail.org).

Our first hike started at the trailhead to Brady Mountain Trail in Grassy Cove off Hwy 68 and we planned to hike four miles to an overlook (another eight miles goes on to the other side of Grassy Cove) but it was too steep a hike for us beginners. However the next hike on the two mile Twin Rocks Loop Trail segment at the Piney River Park in Spring City turned out to be easier and more to our liking. This trail switch backs up the Plateau and we



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hiked past enormous rock formations and climbed a narrow set of stairs at the end, up to a scenic overlook.

A second trail at this same park ascends along the Piney River, up Shut In Gap Mountain, crossing the Piney River half way via a suspension bridge with a couple of side trails down to the river's rapids and swimming holes. The entire ten mile Piney River Trail is on our calendar for another time but we did hike a few miles, enjoying the spring wildflowers and river views and our rest by a large creek with enormous boulders before turning back.

Another adventure took us to the Piney Falls Nature Area in Grandview. This fairly easy two mile trail resembles an old logging road and stops at a primitive camping spot (permit required). The trails to both the Upper and Lower Falls are not clearly marked but turn right at the camping spot and a narrow trail

will take you to the top of the majestic seasonal 80-foot Upper Falls. Standing at the top, we cautiously looked over the falls as there were no safety fences. The path to the natural pool below has washed out over the years and is very treacherous and not advised except for experienced climbers.

We hope that with the Cumberland's trail's development this segment will soon include a safe trail to the bottom and an easier trail to the smaller Lower Falls which is also very steep and difficult.

Waterfall fever had now set in, so we next hiked the delightful 1.5 mile



Piney Falls Hike in Grandview

Stinging Fork Waterfalls Trail near Spring City. This fairly easy hike led to a view of wide cascading falls over

enormous layered rock formations with beautiful pools below accessible at the end by a rather rocky trail. We also checked out Ozone Falls on Hwy 70 and in five minutes hiked to the top of the 100-foot falls with intricate rock formations. Once again there were no safety barriers, so take care! A separate very difficult trail to the Ozone Falls' soaking pool is to the right.

Continuing each week to work on our hiking merit badges, we have graduated from sneakers to hiking boots and now carry a small pack with essentials such as water, first aid kit, topographical trail map, extra socks, cell phone, light weight sweatshirt, water safe matches and rain poncho. Some granola bars, a picnic lunch and a camera add to the fun and a walking stick is on the to-get list for balance on rocky trails. Committed to a "leave no trace" philosophy, we pack out what we take in. For safety, we tell someone our itinerary and check with them when we return.

We still have more Cumberland Trail segments to hike on our adventure list including Black Mountain Trail (Crab Orchard), Brady Mountain Trail (Grassy Cove), Laurel Snow Falls Trail (Dayton) and Possum Gorge Trail (Bakewell). If you can't find a hiking partner or prefer to join a local hiking chapter or even work on some of the trails being developed, contact the Cumberland Trail office for more information. Like us, you'll soon find yourselves in a private wonderland, enjoying the many scenic waterfalls and vistas hidden in our own backyard.

Ilaka Villa and her father Phil Bourne, own Grandview Mountain Cottages, a green-friendly resort offering upscale country vacation cottage rentals on a 145 acre family farm on the Plateau. You can reach them at (423) 365-4412 or www.grandviewmountaincottages.com