



# GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

## Visitor Experience Stewardship Newsletter

February 2023

# Roadside Protections



Great Smoky Mountains National Park installed permanent roadside protection measures at busy park destinations to eliminate unsafe, damaging roadside parking. Over the last decade, extremely high use at several park destinations has resulted in unsafe conditions for motorists and pedestrians, increased roadway congestion, and damaged roadsides.

### Roadside protections were installed at key destinations that met any combination of the following criteria

#### Safety concerns for motorists and pedestrians

Parking along road shoulders can result in unsafe conditions as pedestrians walk in the roadway and motorists veer into oncoming traffic to avoid pedestrians.



Pedestrians walking along Newfound Gap Road near Alum Cave Trailhead.

#### Increased Congestion

Parking along road shoulders can increase congestion as narrow roadways are constricted sometimes even making it hard for emergency vehicles to access some areas in a timely manner.



Vehicles parked inappropriately along Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail.

#### Resource Damage

Parking along road shoulders damages vegetation leading to increased erosion as well as damage to the pavement itself.



Rutted area and broken no parking signage at Big Creek Day Use Area.

# Parking Norms

Planning to Park in Great Smoky Mountains National Park? Let us help you prepare! Great Smoky Mountains National Park is a busy place and we want to help you “Park it Forward” so your only surprises when you get here are good ones. The park has 850 miles of trails and 384 miles of roads with so much to explore! Across the park there is plenty of room for everyone, BUT not at the same destination, at the same time, on the same day.

## Three tips to help you have a great experience:

### Tip 1: Choose Wisely

- At busy locations you'll need to **plan ahead** to improve your chances of finding a parking spot.
- Cooler times of year, mid-week, and early mornings or late afternoons are the best times to secure parking.
- You might also want to consider **arranging a shuttle** from one of the local providers linked from our website.



### Tip 2: Park Smart

- When you get to your destination, make sure you **avoid marked no-parking zones**.
- Parking in areas not specifically designed for parking - damages resources, adds to congestion, and is unsafe along busy roads.
- When you park in designated parking areas, **make sure all four wheels of your vehicle are within the pullout or lot**. Wheels should never be in a roadway.



### Tip 3: Get a Parking Tag

- If you plan to park for more than 15 minutes anywhere in the park, make sure you have a valid parking tag displayed in the front, lower passenger side of your vehicle.
- Daily, weekly and annual tags are available to purchase online. Parking tags can also be purchased at the park's visitor centers.
- The parking tag must include a license plate number matching the vehicle in which it is displayed.



## Parking is limited & first come, first serve

- Alum Cave Trailhead - 69 total parking spaces
- Chimney Tops Trailhead - 34 total parking spaces
- Rainbow Falls Trailhead - 48 total parking spaces
- Grotto Falls Trailhead - 17 total parking spaces
- Laurel Falls Trailhead - 39 total parking spaces
- Big Creek - 31 total parking spaces
- Newfound Gap Overlook - 141 total parking spaces
- Clingmans Dome - 167 total parking spaces
- Deep Creek Picnic Area - 67 total parking spaces



## Sit Back, Relax & Ride a Shuttle

Don't stress about finding parking. Relax and enjoy a shuttle ride from local communities to park destinations. Most shuttle services run March through October.

**Why ride a shuttle?** It's busy here and parking is limited. Parking is available first come, first serve. Having a parking tag does not guarantee parking will be available at your desired location. Did you know more people visit Great Smoky Mountains National Park than Yellowstone, Grand Canyon and Yosemite combined? Demand for parking often exceeds capacity at the most popular destinations in the park.

Contact one of the authorized shuttle companies listed below to book your transport. Schedules and routes vary. Several companies offer stops at popular destinations such as Newfound Gap, Alum Cave Trailhead, and Chimney Tops Trailhead. Visit the websites below for details. Park staff cannot book your shuttle for you.

- [AAA Hiker Shuttle](#) - 865-322-0691
- [A Walk in the Woods](#) - 865-436-8283
- [Bryson City Outdoors](#) - 828-342-6444

- [Great Smoky Mountains Eco Tours](#) - 865-900-5979
- [Rocky Top Tours](#) - 865-429-8687
- [Smoky Mountain Rides](#) - 865-562-2833