



Walk the Trail

Muster Grounds trail: At the Muster Grounds , you can hike on the trail that the militia originally took. The trail starts behind the Visitor Center on the other side of a bridge that is reached by hiking along Wolf Creek and around a small pond. From the Visitor Center, the total distance of the hike is 1.4 miles round trip (.7 miles each way), though the actual trail is a little shorter, as it does not officially start until you cross the bridge. It ends at Stone Mill Road, so you can't mistake the end. The trail is flat and easy. It starts as a grass path along the creek and then becomes a manicured gravel trail. There are a few picnic tables midway. The round trip hike takes about 30-45 minutes. Working with AEP to get more trail secured and established along Wolf Creek near the "Stockyard Trail". This is in the works and coming soon.

Choates Ford Trail: The Choates Ford Trail is in Bluff City. One end of the trail begins at the Bluff City Middle School (337 Carter Street, Bluff City, TN 37618). An official trail marker can be found in the courtyard. The other end of the trail is at a swing bridge that crosses the Holston River a little ways upstream from the actual Choates Ford River crossing, which is where the Overmountain Men crossed the river. This is a shallow and narrow section of the river that can be crossed on foot or horse. No ferry operated there at the time. The actual Choates Ford is just west of a modern railroad bridge. The Choates Ford Trail follows the streets of Bluff City and runs from the school down Carter Street and turns right on Main Street until coming to the parking area for the swing bridge three blocks later. To complete the trail you must cross the bridge to Silver Grove Road on the other side of the river. A short, earthen trail runs from the parking area to the bridge. The distance is 1 mile, round trip. The streets are hilly and the spur trail to the bridge is hilly, but the overall hike is not very difficult. The walk through the city is not the way the Overmountain Men marched. They crossed the Holston River at Choates Ford and then marched in a direct route to the present day Middle School. This cannot be done today due to the fact that the entire area is now developed.

Rocky Mount trail: Rocky Mount trail departs Rocky Mount and follows River Road along the Watauga River. After 3.3 miles, the trail turns left onto a dead-end road where you walk through an open field along the river for 0.7 miles and then climb a steep hill and out on a paved road above the city of Watauga. You walk down the hill and into town. The is a little less than 5 miles. Then the trail follows paved roads until it comes out down at the Watauga River again across from the city of Elizabethton. You walk west along the River Road for 0.3 of a mile and then veer off into the fields along the river. You follow the river through the fields for 0.25 of a mile to the crossing point of the river at the Sycamore Shoals where you will cross the river at 2 pm. Total walking Distance is 8.5 miles with easy to moderate difficulty.

Sycamore Shoals trails: There are 2 OVT trails in Elizabethton. The **first** one starts at Riverside Park and is known as Linear Park Trail. The trail begins at Riverside Park, a city park along the Watauga River. The park runs east to west alongside West Riverside Drive. The parking lot for Riverside Park is just west of the intersection of Ash Street and West Riverside Drive near a baseball field. This puts you in the middle of the Trail. The majority of the trail runs west (to the left if you are looking at the river) from the parking lot, but the start is actually at the east end of the park. If you want to hike the trail from the beginning, you will have to walk the .3 miles to the other end of the park and retrace your steps, or you could park at the other end, which is at the corner of Walnut Street and West Riverside Drive. There are no parking spaces at the east end, but you can park on the shoulder of the road and walk down a steep embankment to the official trail starting point.

The trail is a paved path that runs along the Watauga River to the west (left) and ends at industrial park. Not sure but may not have a parking lot at the other end, so have to walk to the end of the trail and back. According to an NPS document, the trail is 2 miles long (4 miles round trip).

The **second** one is at Sycamore Shoals and is called Sycamore Shoals Mountain River Trail is located within the Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park. The trailhead is on the right side of the park (if you are facing the Fort) next to tennis courts. There is a parking lot at the tennis courts as well.

The trail is a 1-mile round trip, gravel path that follows the Watauga River and passes by the site of the September 25, 1780, encampment of the Virginia and North Carolina militiamen. It is completely flat and easy and offers wonderful views of the river. There are a few information panels along the trail as well. You can pick up a trail map at the Visitor Center and it is recommended to do so as there are a few loops at the far end that might throw you off.

Roan Mountain Community Park Trail: (1-mile round trip according to an NPS document). Roan Mountain Community Park is located behind the Post Office building near the corner of US-19E and TN-143 (143 takes goes to Roan Mountain State Park). There are three entrances to the park. The trailhead is nearest to the entrance at the intersection of the two roads, which is the eastern end of the park, away from the baseball fields. If you pull in there, immediately take a left on a small road called Watson Avenue (there may not even be a sign). Watson Avenue makes a sharp right turn and continues a little ways before dead ending at a field and an abandoned house. At this sharp turn, a dirt road branches off it. The trailhead is at the end of this very short dirt road. The trail follows Buck Creek. The trail runs the length of the park.

Birchfield and Yellow Mountain Trails: 5.3 miles one-way. This is located at the Hampton Creek Cove State Natural Area, address to the Hampton Creek Trailhead is 760 Hampton Creek Rd, Roan Mountain, TN 37687. This trail is rigorous and steep as it climbs the Roan Mountains and crosses the Appalachian Trail.

Rose Creek Trail: One end of the Rose Creek Trail can be found on the opposite side of the Blue Ridge Parkway from the Heffner Gap Overlook parking area at Mile Post 325.9. This trail runs 1.4 miles one way, crossing Rose Creek and ending at the Altapass Road parking area.

Unimin trail: Walk from Unimin parking lot to field next to Robert Sevier's gravesite. This follows close to the original trail.

This trail is not publicly accessible except for when they open it once during the Annual March.

The Orchard Trail: The trail is located at the Museum of North Carolina Minerals, which is just off the Blue Ridge Parkway at Milepost 331. From the parking lot, look uphill across the field and you will see the trailhead. It appears to ascend an overgrown hill with no discernible path. Just hike up this hill and at the top you will find another Overmountain Victory Trail marker at the entrance to a trail that goes into the woods. NPS document states that the trail is 5 miles long, one way.

This trail I (NPS) am still trying to understand. There's the trail marker right up hill behind the Mineral Museum, which has been fairly well maintained. Then there is another section of the trail across the street which I've been doing some maintenance on. My understanding is that this has been poorly maintained over the years. I have done some work on it, and am working with the Orchard at Alta Pass folks to see if they're still interested in maintaining it long-term. This trail goes along the Blue Ridge Parkway, and is very pretty. I'll report back more on this trail once I've been able to take a GPS on it.

Trail #308 and Road #1238—Near the North Cove Encampment Area: This trail is in the Pisgah NF, South of Spruce Pine and North of Lake James SP. It is 3.8 miles one-way. One the Linville Gorge/Mount Mitchell National Geographic Map for the Pisgah NF, it is labelled as Trail # 308G. This is a beautiful area and is also part of the Mountains to Sea Trail. This area is called the Grandfather Ranger District.

It is accessible by driving State Route 1238 (aka Old NC Highway 105) if you're coming from Lake James. You take a left onto Forest Service Road 106. Drive down a short ways and there is a pull off with an interpretive sign and the OVNHT marker. The left (south) side of 106 is the Mountains to Sea Trail and also OVVI. You can also access it just off 221 on SR 1560, but I am unsure of its accessibility. I'll get back to you on this.

Lake James Trail: The Overmountain Victory Trail at Lake James State Park near Nebo, North Carolina, is located in the Paddy Creek Area of the park. When driving along NC-126, look for the signs directing you to Paddy's Creek. You will find the trail along the road to Paddy's Creek on the left just before you cross a bridge over the creek. However, parking for the trail is on the other side of the bridge, so you have a short walk back to the trail. The parking lot is also the trailhead for the Holly Discovery Trail, a nature trail for kids. NPS document claims that the trail is 1.5 miles one way. The trail comes out on NC-126 on the other side, but there is no parking at that end. Aside from a descent/ascent at each end of the trail, it is flat and easy. Most of the trail is through the forest, though a portion at the beginning skirts Paddy's Creek. There are no side trails, so it's impossible to get lost, but just in case, the trail is marked with white blazes (white triangular patches attached every-so-often to trees).

Paddy's Creek Trail: The Paddy's Creek Trail at Lake James State Park near Nebo, North Carolina, is located in the Paddy Creek Area of the park. When driving along NC-126, look for the signs directing you to Paddy's Creek. You will find the trail along the road to Paddy's Creek on the right just after you cross a bridge over the creek. Parking is located on the left. The Overmountain Victory Trail is located on the other side of the bridge. The Lake James trail map states that this trail is 1 mile long, but does not indicate if this is one way or round trip. The trail is listed on the NPS's Overmountain Victory Trail brochure, but is not listed on the NPS's Publicly Accessible Trail Section document and no official Overmountain Victory Trail marker is at the trailhead (there is a marker for the Overmountain Victory Trail). Not sure if this trail really is an official trail segment.

Catawba River Greenway: The Catawba River Greenway is a paved walking and biking path that runs along the Catawba River in Morganton, North Carolina. One end of the trail begins at the Catawba River Soccer Complex and the other end begins on Lenoir Road. The trail is 3.8 miles long (may be 5 miles not sure which is correct), one way, and is flat and easy. There are other trails that intersect with it, so you can access the Greenway at other places aside from the end points. Download a map of the Greenway system: [Morganton-Greenway-System](#)

Eastern Leg (Wilkes Surry) Trails

Surry County Muster Field Trail: If you are standing on the hill that overlooks the muster field, you can see the start of a segment of the official Overmountain Victory Trail on the lower right-hand side of the field. (the Surry County Muster Field Trail). To get to the start of the trail, if you are at the overlook, take a right out of the parking area and continue down NC-268 for a hundred yards or so to the driveway of the Elkin County Municipal Park. When the driveway spills into the parking area, go right and try to park as close to the Muster Field as possible. The trailhead is just below the overlook.

The trail starts as a wide, gravel path through the park, turns into a narrow path once it leaves the park, becomes a sidewalk, and then eventually becomes an earthen trail as it leads down to the Yadkin River one mile away. Once you get to the river you can follow the trail for a few more miles before it comes to an end at private property. Do not walk across this property. The trail is three miles one way.

The first section of the trail runs through Elkin Park. There are two trails running parallel to each other. A one-mile oval track is laid out over the park grounds with the section closest to the river being the Overmountain Victory Trail segment. You start at one end of the oval and at the far end the Muster Field Trail branches off the oval and continues out of the park as it follows alongside North Front Street. You will eventually come to an intersection with West Market Street and there will be no indication as to which way to go. Take a right and cross the bridge, then cross the street. You will see a small parking area and an Overmountain Victory Trail marker at the start of a sidewalk-like trail. Follow the sidewalk until it ends at another road next to a church (West Main Street). The trail continues on the other side and is marked with a sign stating that private citizens are letting you walk on their land, so stick to the path. The trail is now a path cut through the grass.

Smoot Park Trail: The Smoot Park Trail is a paved hiking and biking path that runs from Smoot Park to Memorial Park in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. The trail is part of the Yadkin River Greenway, a series of paved trails in the Wilkesboro area. While the entire Greenway is supposedly an official part of the Overmountain Victory Trail, the trail at Smoot Park is the only trail in the Greenway with an official OMVT sign at the start.

This 1.2 mile (one way) trail runs right along the Yadkin River and is almost completely flat. This is not a loop, so unless you have somebody to pick you up at the end, you will have to walk back. The trail is mainly used for exercise and I

doubt anyone on it could care less that it's part of the Overmountain Victory Trail. To most people, it's just a paved trail from Smoot Park to Memorial Park. It does have some nice views of the river and other pleasing scenery.

W. Kerr Scott Reservoir: There are 2 sections of the OVNHT at Kerr Scott totaling 11 miles of trail. NPS is inventorying these trail sections.

One trail is a 5.7 mile (one way) trail called the Overmountain Victory Trail runs between the Bandit's Roast Campground and the Visitor Center at the W. Kerr Scott Dam and Reservoir, which is located just southwest of Wilkesboro, North Carolina, near the town of Goshen. To get to the Visitor Center, take Reservoir Road off of NC-268 near the north end of the lake. To get to the Bandit's Roost Campground, take Jess Walsh Road off of NC-268. The park has many other trails to hike and you can pick up a trail map at the Visitor Center or at the campground registration station.

The campground is not a day use area, so you actually have to be camping to enter. Fortunately, the trailhead is just outside the entrance gate. Unfortunately, there are only three parking spots and they seem to be filled up by people registering to camp. If you are visiting the park simply to hike the trail, it is best to start at the Visitor Center trailhead, which is right next to the ample parking area. There is no entrance fee to get to the Visitor Center. Due to the trail's length, I only suggest hiking it in its entirety if you have a ride back from the opposite end.

The trail's terrain is like that of a roller-coaster, constantly going up- and downhill. However, it is the easiest hilly trail that I have ever hiked. Hills are either long climbs with low elevation gains or steep gains that are very short, no more than climbing up a short set of stairs. The trail crosses various terrain and is always hilly.

The trail passes no historical sites and offers only a few glimpses of the lake. Most of the time you know the lake is there, but trees and brush block the view. The trail is very narrow, so be on the lookout for hikers and bicycles.

There are no side trails, so it's a straightforward trail with not much chance of getting lost. The trail is marked with white triangles painted on the trees every so often.

Morganton to Kings Mountain

Rutherfordton Trails: The NPS brochure shows two trail segments at Rutherfordton. There is a short out-and-back trail that runs along an old section of railroad tracks. The trail is about a mile long (2 miles round trip), completely flat, often exposed to the beating sun, and about as uneventful as any trail can be. In fact, other than to say you walked all of the Overmountain Victory Trail segments, there is no reason whatsoever to hike this trail. The trail is closed to bikes and motorized vehicles. Can start the hike at either end of the trail. One starting point is on Rock Road near the intersection with Pineview Drive. If you are visiting the Gilbert Town encampment site, this is the place to start for it is just a mile down the street. There is a business at 631 Rock Road that you can park at, though first step inside and ask before hiking. The other end of the trail is near the intersection of Long Street and US-64. There is a gas station and a few other businesses that you might be able to park at.

There is a second trail shown on the NPS park brochure, but no idea as to what it was, other than it looked like it might just be a section of Highway 108 that ran through the historic downtown, for the militia men did come that way.

Alexander's Ford Trail: The Alexander's Ford Trail begins at Gray's Chapel Church. The trailhead is actually reached before you get to the church; look for the gravel parking lot on the right side of the road. To get there, if traveling on NC-108 from Rutherfordton, take a left on County Line Road S, which is before the town of Pea Ridge. The road changes names and soon goes by Gray's Chapel Church Road. The paved portion of the road ends at the church, though it continues on as a dirt road.

A sign at the start of the trail claims that it is ADA compliant (American Disabilities Act). Based on the trail I hiked, no disabled person is going to make it to the end.

While much of the trail is completely flat, and most of the terrain is that of a Pea Gravel road, there are three very steep hills. The first has a detour around it, a trail that forks off to the right and then creates a series of gradually sloping switchbacks to the bottom of the hill, making it perfectly feasible for somebody in a wheelchair. The ADA trail merges back with the main trail at the bottom of the hill.

However, the other two hills have no such detours and there is simply no way a wheelchair bound person is going to make it down or up those hills without assistance, and even then the assistant better be in great shape to push the chair up the hills.

The trail exits the forest at the very end, spilling into a field that was the Alexander's Ford encampment site on October 5, 1780, though there is no sign stating so. Today the field is partially overgrown with trees.

The trail ends at the bank of the Green River. Not sure where the exact crossing point is, but the militia men did cross in this area.

Lake Whelchel Trail: An official trail segment of the Overmountain Victory Trail runs along the southern shore of Lake Whelchel, a reservoir near Gaffney, South Carolina. It is an out-and-back trail, unless you can find a ride at the opposite end. One trailhead is located off of Boat Landing Drive, a road that dead ends into a picnic/swimming area and boat launch for the lake. The trailhead is outside the gates on the right near an information board and the trail starts off by running along side the fence. If you park inside the gate at the parking lot, be aware that the area has opening hours and your car could get locked in if you don't get back in time. Hours are posted on the gate.

The trailhead on the other side is tricky to find. It is located on Pleasant School Road next to UPS's security fence around its property. There is no parking for this trailhead other than pulling off to the shoulder of the road. If you have a great desire to hike the trail, have somebody drop you off at the UPS trailhead and pick you up at the boat dock. It takes no more than a half hour to hike it (one way).

The trail runs along the lake, often times on a ridge high above the water. Though on a ridge, it is fairly flat, for you start off high above the lake. Every now and then you can get a good view of the lake, but for the most part, the view is blocked by trees. Obviously, this is not the actual trail that the Overmountain Men marched along, as there was no Lake Whelchel back in the 1700s. However, they did march along the river that was dammed to make the lake, so the trail qualifies as an "official" trail segment, which is to be within a half mile of the original route.