

# Travel Destinations: Visit the Great Smoky Mountains & Pigeon Forge



By

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Summertime is here! That means it's a fantastic time to choose a [travel destination](#) like Pigeon Forge and to explore The Great Smoky Mountains in Tennessee. The area is rich in Appalachian history, especially up in the Smokies where you can still find old cabins, such as the Tipton Place homestead, settled in the 1820s by Revolutionary War veteran William "Fighting Billy" Tipton. After you're done exploring the Smokies, you can spend a few nights in Pigeon Forge, where there are a variety of fun things to do and explore.

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## Great Smoky Mountains:

Part of the precious Appalachian Mountain Trail, the Great Smoky Mountain National Park in Tennessee is a part of the chain that expands through 18 states. The mountains have been around for thousands of years, dating back to Paleo Indians to European settlers. Established as a national park in 1934, more than 1,200 people had to leave their land once it was established. The park is important in preserving the thriving forest and wildlife.

**1. Cades Cove:** Cades Cove is an 11-mile road that is great to explore early in the mornings if you want to sight wildlife. Animals you'll see are turkeys, white-tailed deer, black bears, coyotes, and rabbits. It still has three churches, a working grist mill, barns, log houses, and many other restored 18th and 19th century buildings. You can hike or bike the back-country, too! Just keep in mind that the road opens to motor vehicles at 10:00 am.

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**2. Horseback riding:** If you love horses, then you may want to ride one of the trails in the Smokies. You can book a guided horse ride, hay ride, or take a carriage or wagon ride. There are even five drive-in horse camps so you can explore with your own horse. Riding a horse is a great way to experience nature in the mountains. Just keep in mind that horses are restricted to areas designated only for horse use.

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**3. Picnicking:** Are you looking for an excuse to have a romantic getaway? Grab your partner and go for a picnic in the Smokies! Just be sure to prepare for your picnic before you head into the park. There are specific areas designated for picnics and you should always be sure to never feed the wildlife.

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**4. Camping:** Camping is another great way to experience the Smokies this summer. Whether you're bringing camping gear or an RV, spending a few nights in the mountains will give you a chance to unwind from everyday life. The campgrounds have running water and flushing toilets in the front-country, but back-country may not offer these amenities and you must have a permit and must call ahead of time if you are planning on hiking to your camp destination.

### **Pigeon Forge:**

Surrounded by the Smoky Mountains with a history dating back before the Revolutionary War, Pigeon Forge was once a small farming community before it became a mountain city.

**1. Dollywood:** Need we say more? With the Smoky Mountains as a backdrop to this theme park, Dollywood is home to some of the South's largest festivals. It has more than 40 rides and attractions such as Wild Eagle, FireChaser Express, and Lightning Rod (the world's fastest roller coaster). They even have a water park!

**2. Go-karts and mini-golf:** Pigeon Forge is surrounded by go-karts and mini-golf. It has more than 10 different tracks to choose from, including one that is Nascar themed. Mini-golf is another fun option for your family, especially if your

children are little and don't want to go to the go-karts.

**3. Shows:** Don't leave Pigeon Forge without checking one of their shows out! You can experience live music and country dancing at Country Tonight Theatre and The Smoky Mountain Opry, comedy at The Comedy Theatre Barn or you can find some family-friendly dinner shows like Pirates Voyage Dinner and Show.

**There are a lot of great things to do in Pigeon Forge and the Smokies. Have we missed anything you love to do when you visit? Let us know in the comments below!**