

Benton MacKaye Trail - Section 7

Weaver Creek Road (County Road #31) to Bush Head Gap

8.4 miles

General

This section runs east and west across numerous ridges and valleys where the Hayesville Fault crosses the Western Blue Ridge. Elevations on this section begin at 1920' at Weaver Creek Road, descend to 1540' at Cherry Log Creek, climb to 2070', drop to 1620', and finally reach a high of 2090' at Bush Head Gap. The lowest point on the Benton MacKaye Trail in Georgia is at the crossing of Cherry Log Creek (1540'). With the exception of the 0.4 mile nearest Weaver Creek Road, the trail is on private property or public roads. PLEASE STAY ON THE TRAIL ACROSS PRIVATE PROPERTY. THERE IS AN OVERNIGHT SHELTER ON THE SISSON PROPERTY NEAR INDIAN ROCK LAKE (AT 4.2 MILES SOUTH TO NORTH). IF YOU DO NOT PLAN TO USE THIS SHELTER, PLEASE PLAN YOUR HIKE SO THAT IT CARRIES YOU ACROSS THIS SECTION IN ONE DAY AS THERE IS CURRENTLY NO CAMPING ALLOWED ON THE PRIVATE PROPERTY ALONG THE TRAIL. This section is rated "Easiest".

Access

There are three access points to the BMT along this section. At either end is a paved road, accessible year round with the exception of periods of severe ice and snow. An unpaved, county maintained road crosses the trail near the western end of the section and is suitable for year-round travel.

- Weaver Creek Road (Fannin County Road #31): This road becomes Laurel Creek Road at the Fannin/Gilmer County Line where the BMT enters the road at the east (south) end of this section.
- Appalachian Highway (U.S. 76, GA 2, 5, and 515): The BMT crosses this four-lane divided highway at its intersection with Gilmer County Road #158. There is currently no parking here.
- Bush Head Gap: The unpaved Bush Head Gap Road (Gilmer County Road #14) intersects the trail at the west (north) end of this section. The last mile of this road is unpaved; the last 0.2 mile into the gap is steep and rough.

In addition, the route of the trail follows a number of public roads. The following roads are drivable:

- Laurel Creek Road (Gilmer County Road #157) as far as the Laurel Creek Dam. East of this point is not recommended for passenger automobiles.
- Boardtown Road (Gilmer County Road #S1008) for 0.91 mile between Fannin County line and Bush Head Gap Road.
- Bush Head Gap Road (Gilmer County Road #14) for 1.20 mile between Boardtown Road and Bush Head Gap.

Directions from Blue Ridge, GA: Start from the intersection of the Appalachian Highway (U.S. 76, GA 2 and 515) and the Windy Ridge Connector (just east of Windy Ridge Road overpass and 0.8 mile east of McDonald's); turn right if traveling east, turn left if traveling west; go 0.1 mile to Old U.S. 76; turn left; in 0.2 mile, turn right on Aska Road; after 0.8 mile, turn right on Weaver Creek Road; pavement ends after 2.0 miles; 3.7 miles from Aska Road, reach Weaver Creek trailhead (Total Distance: 4.8 miles). Parking is either side of the road just before it narrows into Laurel Creek Road.

Shelters, Campsites, and Water

There are no shelters along this section of the BMT.

There are no campsites along this section of trail. Camping is suggested at the North Fork of Laurel Creek in Section 6 or on the public land near Bush Head Gap in Section 8 prior to entering Section 7. A campsite may be established in the middle of this section in the future.

Water is available at numerous locations along this section. Unfortunately, the purity of each must be regarded with some skepticism due to upstream development.

Points of Interest

Laurel Creek: A scenic mountain creek lined with rhododendron in many places. The BMT parallels this creek for 2.5 miles and follows it through many phases as it glides through a pasture, stills behind a dam, then rushes hurriedly downstream through a narrow valley.

Small waterfalls on stream west of old L&N railroad: For a quarter mile the trail shares an extraordinarily narrow cove past several small waterfalls. Two bridges take the trail back and forth across the stream

Trail Description - South to North

Mileage	Description
0.0	At the point (1920') where Weaver Creek Road (Fannin County Road #31) narrows to become Laurel Creek Road (Gilmer County Road #157), follow the washed-out Laurel Creek Road south.
0.1	Ford the north fork of Laurel Creek. Cross a smaller stream just beyond. Continue along nearly level grade. Pass Forest Service property boundary.
0.5	Old pasture begins along right side of road. Pass old barn site.
0.8	Cross the south fork of Laurel Creek. Despite signs of camping to the left of the road, please refrain as this is private property.
0.9	Old Gilmer County Road #158 (abandoned) comes in on left.
1.1	Pasture ends.
1.2	Cross bridge over Laurel Creek (1710').
1.3	Road comes in from the left.
1.4	Road comes in from the right. Cross high point (1780') with Laurel Creek Dam to left.
1.5	Swing hard left where road comes in from the right. Descend steeply.
1.6	Begin more gradual descent with road coming in from left on bridge across creek. Follow road through dense forest with creek on left. Small stream crosses under road.
1.9	CAUTION: Turn left on road, leaving Laurel Creek Road.
2.1	Old Gilmer County Road #158 comes in on left at old bridge. Swing right through grassy area directly in front of house.
2.5	Reach the Appalachian Highway (U.S. 76, GA 2, 5, and 515). To left leads 3.0 mi. to Cherry Log and 11.6 mi. to Ellijay; to right leads 6.4 mi. to Blue Ridge. Cross Appalachian Highway (1590') in median crossover and turn left. 500 feet later, turn right into dead-end drive.
2.6	Turn left along outside of fence. Turn right and pass through opening in fence. Ascend by switchbacks. The next 2.9 mi. crosses the lands of the Sisson Company.
2.7	Pass along edge of church parking area on ridgeline (1640'). Descend along graded trail down rocky side slope. Enter Sisson Road (unpaved) and turn right.
2.9	Cross Cherry Log Creek (1540') on walkway of bridge. This is lowest elevation on the BMT in Georgia. 200 feet beyond, turn left before old L&N railroad.

Mileage	Description
3.0	Turn right, cross railroad near railroad mile marker 400. Enter cove with stream on left.
3.1	Turn left and cross bridge over stream. Turn right at south side of bridge and ascend along stream with small waterfalls to right.
3.2	Reach picnic table. Turn right and re-cross stream on bridge. Turn left at end of bridge.
3.3	Reach Sisson Road (1630') opposite Mountain View Circle. Turn left and follow Sisson Road. Curve sharply left and pass well house on right. Cross stream and ascend. Continue straight where Cherry Lake Drive comes in on right. Cross stream and ascend.
3.6	Turn sharp right onto old woods road. Pass another well house on right and cross stream. Pass close to back porch of cabin, to right, uphill. Take right fork uphill, cut sharply right at switchback (leaving road), and curve left.
3.9	Reach bottom of boardwalk on Cherry Lake Dam (1740'). Chapel at far end of dam should be used in case of emergency only. Turn right, climbing boardwalk, to Cherry Lake Drive. Turn left, uphill, following Cherry Lake Drive.
4.0	Reach high point (1850') with Anderson Drive coming in on right. Descend to saddle on ridge (1840').
4.1	Turn right on Indian Rock Road, then right onto trail descending cove. Cross stream and turn left.
4.2	Indian Rock Shelter is 100 feet to right. Re-cross stream, enter Indian Rock Road, and pass along left side of Indian Rock Lake
4.3	Cross stream on covered bridge with Indian Rock just beyond to the left.
4.4	Take left fork on old woods road.
4.6	Former route of Benton MacKaye Trail enters at left. Trail leads 0.2 mile to Cohutta Mountain Road and 1.3 miles to Lucius Road. Continue on woods road, ascending more steeply.
4.9	Three Lakes Trail enters on left. Descend, sometimes steeply, along faint roadbed.
5.0	Turn left at Cohutta Mountain Road. Follow road uphill past intersection.
5.1	Pass water tanks and turn right on woods road. Descend steeply along ridgeline.
5.3	Tipton Gap (2090'). Three Lakes Trail descends to left. Turn right off road, climbing steeply.
5.5	Cross Tennessee Valley Divide (2260') and descend on graded trail.
5.7	Turn left onto woods road. Follow road with little change in elevation.
5.9	Cross Tennessee Valley Divide in saddle (2020'). Avoid roads uphill to left, downhill to left, and uphill to right. Turn left on trail 100 feet beyond saddle.
6.0	Reenter woods road.
6.1	Turn left off road and cross stream.
6.2	Reenter woods road.
6.3	Reach Boardtown Road. Turn left and cross Fannin County / Gilmer County line.
7.2	Turn right onto Bushy Head Gap Road. Cross Boardtown Creek (1660'). Ascend along road with large pasture to right.
7.6	Pavement ends.
8.2	With small farm on right, begin steep ascent to Bush Head Gap.
8.4	Reach Bush Head Gap (2090'). BMT continues as graded trail ascending west side of road cut. Roads lead right and left at gap to second home developments. County Road #14 continues ahead 200 feet to an intersection on the left with a Forest Service road where cars may be parked. Beyond, County Road #14 continues 0.25 mile to Fightingtown Creek at the Fannin/Gilmer County Line. It is 5.1 mi. back to the Appalachian Highway via Bush Head Gap, Boardtown, and Lucius Roads. Thence, Blue Ridge is 7.7 mi. to the left and East Ellijay is 11.6 mi. to the right.

Trail Description - North to South

Mileage	Description
0.0	The BMT follows Bush Head Gap Road (Gilmer County Road #14) south from Bush Head Gap (2090'). Descend steeply for 0.2 mile.
0.8	Reach beginning of pavement.
1.1	Cross Boardtown Creek (1660').
1.2	Turn left on Boardtown Road (Gilmer County Road #S1008). Follow this paved road north for 0.9 mile.
2.1	Gilmer County / Fannin County line. Turn right on woods road and ascend.
2.2	Turn right on trail, leaving woods road.
2.3	Reenter woods road after crossing small stream.
2.4	Turn right on trail, leaving woods road.
2.5	Reenter woods road and cross Tennessee Valley Divide. Continue on road ahead and to right. Avoid roads sharply right downhill, to right uphill, and to left uphill.
2.7	Turn right on trail, ascend cove. Swing left on graded trail along north slope of mountain.
2.9	Cross Tennessee Valley Divide (2260') and descend steeply.
3.1	Enter road in Tipton Gap (1990'). Three Lakes Trail descends to right. Climb steeply on eroded road along ridgeline.
3.3	Turn left at high point near water tanks (2210').
3.4	Reach road intersection with Cohutta Mountain Road. Just beyond road to right, turn right, leaving road. Follow trail along gradual downhill through cove.
3.5	Three Lakes Trail enters on right. Descend, sometimes steeply, along faint roadbed.
3.8	Former route of Benton MacKaye Trail enters at right. Trail leads 0.2 mile to Cohutta Mountain Road and 1.3 miles to Lucius Road.
4.0	Cross covered bridge over stream at Indian Rock Lake. Pass south end of dam (1790').
4.1	Turn left below dam, leaving road. Cross stream. Indian Rock Shelter is 100 feet to left. Turn right and re-cross stream.
4.3	Enter road. Reach saddle on ridgeline. Turn left on Cherry Lake Road.
4.4	Cross high point (1850') with Anderson Drive on left.
4.5	Reach boardwalk on right. Leave road and follow boardwalk to top of Cherry Lake Dam. TURN SHARP LEFT, follow edge of spillway, and then curve right behind dam. Turn left onto old road at switchback. Follow old road downhill with stream on right.
4.7	Cross stream and pass well house on left.
4.8	Reach Granny Lake Road. Turn left and follow road across stream and past intersection with Cherry Lake Road. Curve left, descend, and cross stream.
5.0	Pass well house on left and take sharp right curve.
5.1	CAUTION: Turn right off road. Descend along north side of stream.
5.2	Cross stream on bridge, turn left and pass picnic table. Pass small waterfalls on left.
5.3	Reach bridge. Turn right after crossing bridge and follow north side of creek. Cross old L&N railroad and turn left.
5.5	Reach Sisson Road. Turn right and follow road. Cross Cherry Log Creek (1540') on walkway of bridge. This is lowest elevation on the BMT in Georgia. CAUTION: Turn left across road and enter graded trail at steps on road bank. Climb steadily up rocky slope of mountain.
5.6	Cross ridgeline (1640') at parking area for church. Descend by switchbacks. Pass through gate, turn left along fence.
5.8	Reach the west side of the Appalachian Highway (U.S. 76, GA 2, 5, and 515). To left leads to Blue Ridge; to right leads to Cherry Log and Ellijay. Turn left along shoulder of highway (1590').

Mileage	Description
5.9	Turn right to cross highway in paved crossover. Enter Turnpike Branch Road (Gilmer County Road #158) and follow this unpaved road along the north side of a meadow.
6.3	CAUTION: With house immediately to right, TURN SHARP LEFT. Pass through grassy area where the evidence of the road is faint. Follow more obvious route straight ahead where Road #158 (abandoned) disappears across bridge to right.
6.5	Reach Laurel Creek Road (Gilmer County Road #157). (This road is the original route of the BMT.) Turn right on road and cross stream. Climb along road through dense forest with Laurel Creek on right.
6.8	With a road coming in on right across bridge, begin steep ascent.
6.9	Curve hard to the right with a road coming in from the left. Resume easy climb.
7.0	Laurel Creek Dam is to right. Cross high point (1780') where road comes in from left. Descend along washed out road. Road comes in from right.
7.1	Cross bridge over Laurel Creek (1710').
7.2	Pasture borders north side of road beginning here.
7.5	Road #158 comes in on right. Just ahead, please do not camp at site to right of road, despite evidence of previous occupants.
7.6	Cross south fork of Laurel Creek (1780'). Climb along old road with pasture on both sides of road.
7.9	Reenter woods. Cross Forest Service property boundary.
8.3	Ford stream, then cross north fork of Laurel Creek (1870').
8.4	Reach Weaver Creek Road (1920'). The BMT continues (Section 6) to right in woods. Weaver Creek Road leads straight ahead 3.7 mi. to Aska Road and 4.8 mi. Blue Ridge.