

Branch Out Event Waivers and Policy Agreements

All Branch Out event participants (or their designees) are required to indicate they've read, understand, and agree to Smokies Life's waivers, policies, and fitness/endurance requirements during the registration process.

Event Rating: I understand that this event will travel at a group pace. I understand that most events require walking on uneven surfaces with trip hazards such as exposed roots and rocks. The conclusion of the day could be earlier or later than the designated time depending on multiple factors, including changes in programming, weather, hiking ability of the group, and educational opportunities encountered along the way.

Photo/Video Release: I understand and agree that Smokies Life and/or hired guides may use photos and/or video images of me taken during this trip for promotional purposes to support Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Cancellation/Refund Policy: I understand that Smokies Life operates on a limited budget and is unable to issue refunds for my non-participation of a scheduled event. Instead, I agree my payment will constitute a tax-deductible donation to the Smokies Life Legacy Fund. Events travel rain or shine and follow Great Smoky Mountains National Park Service policies for weather and road conditions. Should an event be cancelled by Smokies Life or NPS, I am entitled, though not obligated, to request a full refund of my registration fee.

Liability Waiver: My registered guests and I assume the entire responsibility, understand, and accept that Smokies Life events could involve risk, danger, and hazards. I release Smokies Life, its officers, directors, members, and contracted event leaders from all liability for accidents, injury, illness, or loss of property for myself and/or my dependent(s). I confirm that I and/or my dependent(s) are physically capable of participating in the described scheduled event. I will alert my guide to any allergies, diseases, physical limitations, injuries, or physical conditions that could be aggravated by activity while participating in the Great Smoky Mountains environment.

Youth Participation: I understand that not every Branch Out event is open to youth participation. Branch Out events that are open to children below the age of 18 will be clearly advertised by Smokies Life. I understand that all participants below the age of 18 must be registered by, and accompanied by a parent or guardian at all times during the event. I understand that each participant in my group must complete an event registration and payment.

What to Bring: I understand I am responsible for my own comfort during this event. In addition to plenty of water, an appropriate amount of food for my comfort, and comfortable hiking shoes, I agree to dress in layers, and bring a backpack and rain gear. I agree that a personal first-aid kit, trekking poles, and any other activity appropriate gear may be helpful as well.

Parking: I understand that if I drive a vehicle into Great Smoky Mountains National Park and park it in one place for more than 15 minutes, I will be required to purchase a parking tag for the duration of my stay. I also understand that parking may be limited or unavailable, and that Smokies Life recommends carpooling when available. For more information about the Park it Forward program, [click here](#).

Activity Rating Scale and Personal Endurance Agreement

Easy: At this Branch Out session, you will have a relaxed experience requiring little or no physical activity.

Distance: 0 – 1 mile

Settings:

- Fairly flat trails
 - Slow, walking pace
 - Frequent stopping to discuss the surroundings
 - Seating often available
 - This event features an accessible surface that makes it possible for individuals of all levels of ability to enjoy an outdoor experience.
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Easy Active: At this Branch Out event, you will have a light-impact experience requiring some physical activity.

Distance: 2 – 5 miles

Settings:

- Uneven trails
 - Potential hazards, including exposed roots, downed trees, water crossings, and rocks
 - Potential wildlife presence, including large fauna, insects, and snakes
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Moderate: At this Branch Out hike, you will have a medium-impact experience requiring some extended periods of physical exertion.

Distance: 5 – 8 miles

Settings & Terrain:

- Mountainous trails
- Some steep ascents and descents.
- Potential hazards, including exposed roots, downed trees, water crossings, and rocks
- Potential wildlife presence, including large fauna, insects, and snakes

Personal Considerations:

This Branch Out event is designed for hikers who:

- are comfortable with extended periods of exertion
 - can independently navigate physically challenging and unplanned situations
 - are comfortable climbing over or under trees and crossing waterways
 - possess the skills and gear required to be safe on the trail, even during inclement weather
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Strenuous: At this Branch Out hike, you will experience intense physical exertion and difficult hiking.

Distance: 9+ miles

Settings & Terrain:

- Remote, backcountry areas
- Mountainous terrain
- Steep ascents and descents.
- Potential hazards, including exposed roots, downed trees, water crossings, and rocks
- Potential wildlife presence, including large fauna, insects, and snakes

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Supporting the park since 1953

Personal Considerations:

This Branch Out event is designed for experienced hikers who:

- are comfortable with extended periods of exertion
- can independently navigate physically challenging and unplanned situations
- are comfortable climbing over or under trees and crossing waterways
- possess the skills and gear required to be safe in the backcountry, even during inclement weather

My Fitness/Endurance: Based on the event rating, I hereby attest that my level of fitness and personal ability to endure the event's potential physical requirements.