

OUTDOOR FUN & ADVENTURE - STANDING INDIAN BASIN

(3-4 Day Summer Camping Itinerary)

Nearby Town: [Franklin, NC](#)
Miles Out: 15.8
Elevation: 3000+ Ft.

Before you go checklist:

- Reserve a campsite for your tent or camper at (828) 524-6441
- Make sure you have more than enough supplies (Ex: Food, Water/Containers, First-Aid, Firewood, Matches, Weather-proof tarp, Chairs, Hammock, etc.)
- Recreational Gear (Ex: Day Hike Essentials , [Fishing Equipment & License](#), Camera, Binoculars, Knife, etc.)
- Leave your worries behind...

Matt's Overview:

Just a short and scenic ride outside of Franklin, the Standing Indian Basin Area boasts outdoor fun for the entire family. Growing up in the area I have spent many days and nights here and it's one of my favorite spots to get-away to. In this itinerary I make recommendations on some of the best activities to do while here. From [Hiking](#), [Fishing](#), Picnicking, Swimming or just relaxing in a cool summer shade; what could be more rejuvenating than this get-away? Prepare yourself for extreme relaxation and enjoyment if you decide to visit the Standing Indian Basin Area.

DAY 1

Getting there
Setting up camp
Exploring your surroundings

DAY 2

Two distinctly different Hikes:
[Pickens Nose Trail](#)
[Wasilik Poplar Trail](#)

DAY 3

[Kimsey Creek](#)
[Kimsey Creek Trail](#)

DAY 4

[Mooney Falls & Trail](#)
[Big Laurel Falls & Trail](#)

To get there:

From Franklin head West on U.S. Hwy 64 for 12 miles. Near the 12th mile be looking for a brown sign reading, "Wallace Gap, Appalachian Trail & Standing Indian Campground." This sign directs you to Old Murphy Road on your Left. Continue on this road for 2 miles until you reach FR 67 and signs for [Standing Indian Campground](#). Take a right and continue for 1.8 miles to the campground entrance.

A tip from Matt:

To find even more recommendations and detailed advice from our Local Expert, search the links throughout this itinerary. There you'll find individual POI info pages with: Knowledge that solidifies us as your "Local" guide, Highlights, Difficulty Ratings, [Interactive Map](#) with appropriate zoom level and more. All on [StayAndPlayInTheSmokies.com](#)

Matt's recommendations for supplies in Franklin:

Roomful of Nuts
2728 Georgia Road
Franklin, NC 28734
(828) 524-0242

Recommendations: At "Roomful of Nuts" John & Susan have a wonderful selection of all natural/organic bulk trail mixes, dried fruit and nuts to take on your day hikes. Tell them Matt with "Stay And Play In The Smokies" sent you.

Loafer's Glory Convenience
4717 Old Murphy Rd.
Franklin, Nc 28734
(828)369-7418

Recommendations: Get your official N.C. Fishing License on your way up to Standing Indian Basin Area. Located just off of U.S. Hwy 64 West. Tell them Matt with "Stay And Play In The Smokies" sent you.



DAY 1

When you arrive at Standing Indian Campground simply find your reserved campsite (it is recommended that you reserve ahead of time) and start setting up your camp. The campground hosts will see to it that your reservation name and dates will be posted at your campsite number. Take some time to do a supply check and if you've forgotten something visit the small general store that sits on the Right just as you enter the campground and possibly find what you need. You may also want to take some time to "scout" out my directions I provide for each activity below once you have camp set, to better prepare for your weekend. Or, go for a stroll around one or all five of the peaceful loops that make up the campground area and explore your surroundings. If you have children in your group take them down to the [Nantahala River](#) (which runs through the middle of the campground) and let them splash around or skip some stones in the calming clear water just above the main bridge. Take the Lower Ridge Trail to access the small beach area you can see looking upstream for the perfect spot to take them. After getting familiar with your surroundings, head back to your camp for some supper around the campfire and a good nights rest to get you ready for the weekend ahead.

DAY 2

The Summer nights here can get quite cool so you will probably be waking up to a crisp & cool morning. Once you're up, have some breakfast and coffee to give yourself some time to wake up. Take some time to pack a few snacks and plenty of water. You will also want to check any equipment you will be taking today and be sure you are wearing the proper gear. I suggest taking a day pack of some kind to hold your camera, binoculars, rain jackets, hat, etc, as well as any snacks and water you are taking. Today you will be trekking two very different trails. First, you will be hiking to one of the biggest Yellow Poplars in the Eastern U.S., the John Wasilik Poplar. Second, you will be hiking to a summit that has towering views over the Southern Nantahala National Forest and beyond, Pickens Nose.

Hiking the The Wasilik Poplar Trail:

This nice little hike through a forest of hardwoods will lead you down a well-worn but rugged (exposed roots) trail to the Wasilik Poplar. This Yellow Poplar is magnificent to behold, and although it was "topped" by a recent hurricane that came through, it still commands respect from it's forest surroundings. The tree is dead now but still stands and is a very unique place to visit by yourself, with family or with a group. At a roundtrip distance, the hike is 1.4 miles.

To get there: From the main campground head straight out of the entrance the way you came in on FR #67 for 1.3 miles and small parking area on your Right. Once you park the trail that runs perpendicular to your vehicle is the Appalachian Trail. You'll notice a sign with hiking trails and mileages on it, the Wasilik Poplar Trail isn't highlighted here. When standing at the sign you need to look straight ahead of you and down into the forest. You will see a small brown, but faded, U.S. forest service sign with "John Wasilik Poplar" on it. This is your starting point.

Hiking the Pickens Nose Trail:

One of the most unique hikes in the area, Pickens Nose Trail follows a ridge line of thick Rhododendron and Mountain Laurel "tunnel" forests to wonderful views (off of both sides of the ridge) of the Southern Nantahala Wilderness to the North & West and into Georgia looking South. This hike is only about 1.5 miles roundtrip so take your time with this one and shoot for a clear day to take advantage of the towering views of the forests below. All at an elevation of 4,880 ft.

To get there: From the entrance of Standing Indian Campground continue past it on FR 67 for 0.3 miles to the pavement/gravel break. Travel another 8 miles on FR 67 (gravel) until you come to a fork, you'll see a sign pointing for "Albert Mtn" to the Left and "Coweeta" to the Right. Take the Right on FR 83 towards "Coweeta Hydrological Laboratory" for 1.1 miles to trailhead and parking on your Right.

DAY 3

Today you will catch some of the prettiest fish our mountain streams have to offer in Kimsey Creek. Enjoy this peaceful little cove in which the creek flows out of, taking in the fresh mountain air. And if you have someone in your group who doesn't feel like fishing but still wants to accompany a friend or significant other for the day, they can stroll up Kimsey Creek Trail which follows the creek upstream while you fish for dinner!



To get there: From the Standing Indian Campground, access Loop 3 at the very back of the loop. This paved & gated road is the entrance to “Kimsey Creek Group Camp.” Once you enter the gate you will see and hear Kimsey Creek with group campsites on either side of the creek. Go up the Right side and past the rock fire pit to pick up the Kimsey Creek Trail. Follow this for trail to an old roadbed up the Right hand side of the creek for approx. 0.4 miles until you reach a footbridge across the creek. Get in here and fish upstream.

Fishing in Kimsey Creek:

If you are not familiar with small creek/stream fishing in the Appalachian Mountains, you are in store for a challenging yet rewarding adventure. In Kimsey Creek the fishing regulations are designated as “Wild Natural Bait”, meaning you can fish with natural bait, like worms. However, you may only use a single-hook and the limits on amount of fish you can keep (4 Trout) and size (7 inch minimum) are strictly enforced. You will need a valid N.C. Wildlife Fishing License available at a number of locations in Franklin (Click [HERE](#) for businesses that issue them). This gorgeous little creek is well populated with Brown and Rainbow Trout, with Brown being the dominant species. If you fish the headwaters, you might have the chance to catch the prized gem of our mountain streams, the Appalachian Brook Trout, the only “Native” trout to our waters. This creek follows the Kimsey Creek Trail and it is a must to wade due to the heavy Rhododendron thickets that populate the creek banks. My suggestion is to either spinner fish this creek with a lightweight spinner or use a rock nymph and “tip” it with a wax worm. I have had success using both. Dry fly fishing is also popular for this creek. Expect to catch fish anywhere from 5 inches (which you must release) to 9 inches in length.

DAY 4

Today is your final day at Standing Indian Campground, so sad! However, there is still waterfall adventure to be had. If you must leave today, we recommend packing the majority of your camp up this morning to save some time when you get back from “Mooney Falls” and “Laurel Falls” on today’s journey. These two creeks (Mooney Creek and Laurel Branch) and falls combine to create the headwaters of the Nantahala River not far from where both of the falls splash into pools below. Bring a change of clothes, river shoes and some towels in your day pack because you might just work up a need to take a dip in your very own lagoon!

Mooney Falls:

Mooney Falls splashes off of and cascades down rock into Mooney Creek below. The trail to Mooney Falls is fairly steep with a couple of switch-backs so be careful here, especially with smaller kids. We recommend taking in Mooney Falls first today since it’s the easiest to access at 0.2 miles and located just off of FR #67 with “Mooney Falls Trail” sign telling you where to park and the direction to head in. Parking is very slim and limited here.

To get there: From the main campground head towards the entrance. At the “Yield” sign and median you will need to take a right (FR 67). At 0.3 miles from here the paved road turns to a well maintained gravel road that any vehicle will do just fine on. Continue for another 5.8 miles (passing Laurel Falls Trail) to trailhead for Mooney Falls Trail.

Laurel Falls Trail:

This is stop number 2 for today’s journey. You have already been to Mooney Falls, so now you will take a short but fairly easy hike to Laurel Falls on Laurel Branch. There are two sets of falls here. Most folks just know of the main and obvious falls at the end of the trail, but there is another long cascade above these that will require a bit of scrambling to get to. Both falls/cascades offer a unique swim/dip experience to be had IF you can handle the clear cold waters! The trail is approx. 1 mile in length for a roundtrip total. If you decide to scramble to the upper falls, please be careful. We only recommend this to experienced hikers.

To get there: From Mooney Falls Trail you will need to turn around. This can be done in the middle of FR 67. After you’re turned you will head back down FR 67 for 0.7 mile to Laurel Falls Trail on your Left. Parking here is slim as well but try to get out of the road as much as possible. This is a trailhead for two trails (Timber Ridge Trail which will head to the Left after you cross the footbridge at the creek and Laurel Falls Trail that will go Right after you cross the footbridge). Go Right after you cross the footbridge.