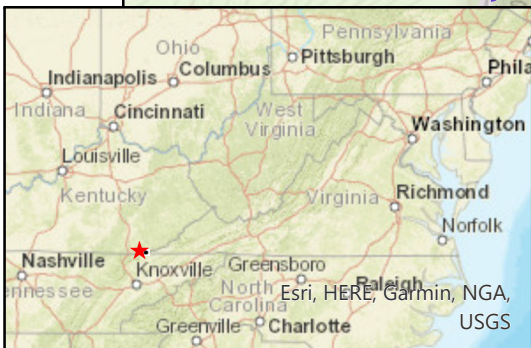
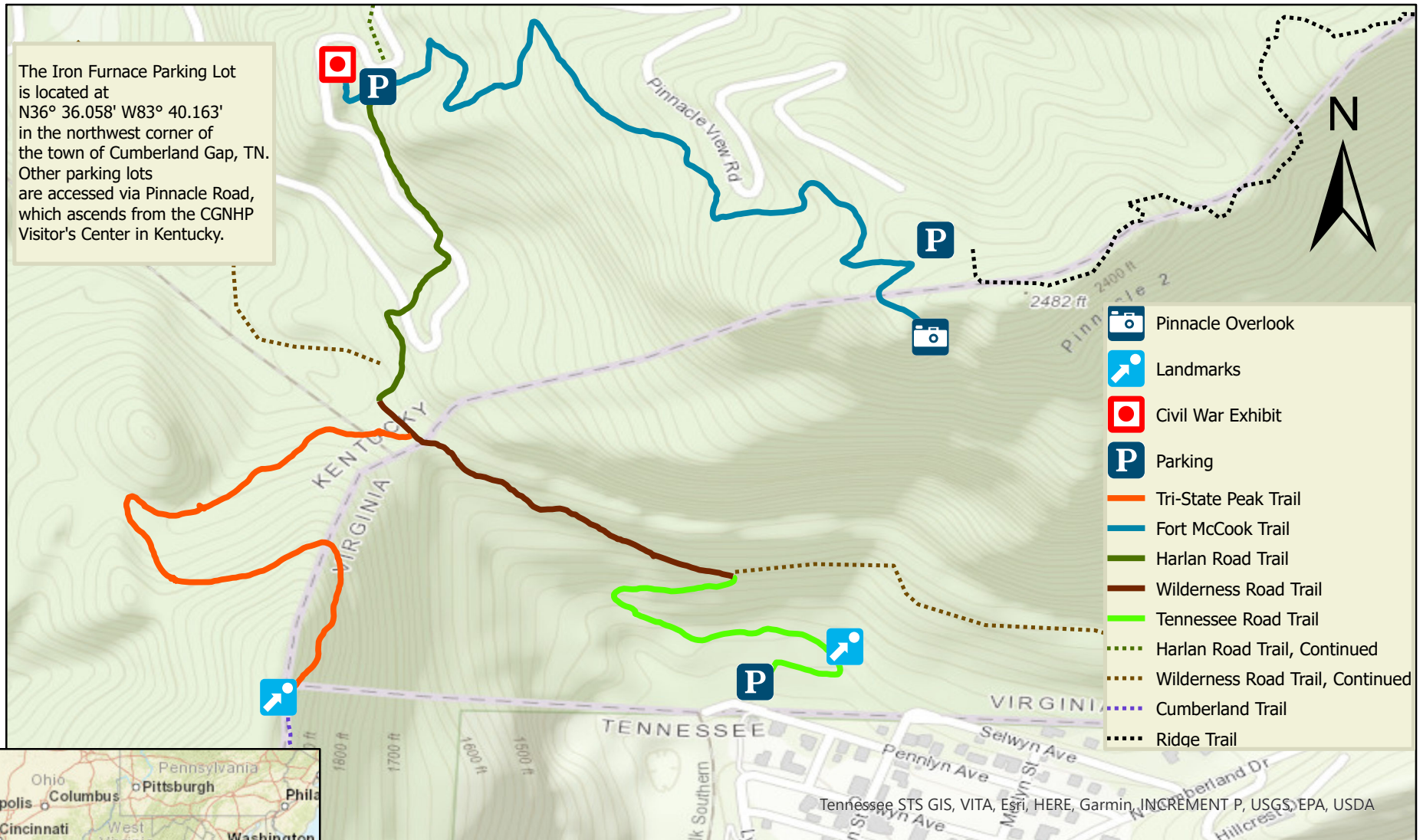
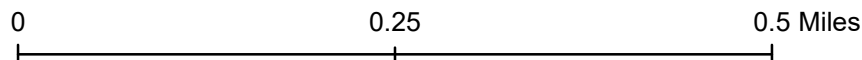


# Tri-State Peak/Pinnacle Hike

## Cumberland Gap Nat'l Historical Park, VA



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## Tri-State Peak/Pinnacle - Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, VA

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
5.0 mls	3	1	1	2	N/A
<b>Hiking Time:</b>	3.0 hours with half hour for lunch				
<b>Elev. Gain:</b>	1,500 ft				
<b>Parking:</b>	Park at the Iron Furnace Parking Area. 36.60097, -83.66939				

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)



*By Trail Contributor: Jeff Monroe*

The Cumberland Gap National Historical Park is located at the far southwestern point of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Cumberland Gap is a notch in the nearly 100 mile long Cumberland Mountain where three states meet: the southwestern tip of Virginia, the southeastern corner of Kentucky, and the northeastern corner of Tennessee. This relatively short hike, located within the park, has a number of interesting features that make it fun to explore. Part of the journey on this hike is on the old Wilderness Trail, dating back to the 1700s, when it was blazed and hiked by Daniel Boone – one of the oldest trails in the United States. Part of the route is in Virginia, part in Kentucky, and a pavilion on Tri-State Peak allows you to stand in three states at once. Finally, the hike ascends to Pinnacle Overlook, the most famous overlook in the park with spectacular views spanning from the parking lot starting this hike east to peaks in the Great Smokey Mountains National Park.

Cumberland Gap seems like a long way from anywhere! From the north and east, this trailhead is over a two-hour drive west of Abingdon and Interstate 81. Access to the trailhead parking requires driving into Tennessee, even though the trailhead parking is a few feet north of the Tennessee state boundary in Virginia. This National Historical Park features a wonderful and incredibly inexpensive campground, free backcountry campsites, a visitor's center with interesting exhibits, and over 80 miles of hiking trails. It is definitely worth the effort to reach and explore over multiple days.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – Start the hike at the Iron Furnace Parking Area, located just over the border from the town of Cumberland Gap, Tennessee. There is room for a dozen vehicles here and an overflow parking area across the street in Tennessee. The trail starts at the back end of the main (paved) parking area. From the parking lot, you can look up and see Pinnacle Overlook above. A sign indicates that the hike starts out on a paved path known as the "Tennessee Road Trail."
  - ▶ **Mile 0.1** – Cross a stream, pass a switchback, then view the iron furnace that gives the parking lot its name. Continue on the Tennessee Road Trail, which is wide and flat at this point, but the rest of the hike is on unpaved trails.
  - ▶ **Mile 0.3** – Come to a T intersection and turn left onto the Wilderness Road Trail. The Wilderness Road Trail follows the path of the original Wilderness Road through Cumberland Gap, blazed by Daniel Boone in 1775 and used by native tribes for hundreds of years before that. The trail currently extends 8.5 miles, linking Cumberland Gap with the park's campground and then to Virginia's Wilderness Road State Park to the east along U.S. 58. It is important to note, however, that the Wilderness Road Trail is also the roadbed of U.S. 25 before the 1996 opening of a nearby four-lane road tunnel which diverted the earlier route of the highway. Therefore, this path does not have a continuous use as a trail and the US Park Service reconstructed the route into a trail after vehicles began using the tunnel.
  - ▶ **Mile 0.6** – After a short, somewhat steep section, reach the actual Cumberland Gap, marked by a sign and trail intersection. The Wilderness Road Trail continues west, but for now turn left onto the Tri-State Peak Trail and ascend. In about 100 feet is a stone marker constructed in 1915 by the Daughters of the American Revolution commemorating "Daniel Boone's Trail."
  - ▶ **Mile 0.8** – Pass an exhibit discussing a Civil War encounter in September 1862, in which Union troops retreated safely thanks to extensive explosions at a warehouse on this site. Shortly after that is a side trail to the remains of Fort Foote, originally constructed by the Confederates in 1861 to protect cannons during the Civil War - one of eight similar forts placed along both sides of the road to prevent enemy movement through the Gap. The Gap area and forts changed hands multiple times before landing in Union control at the end of the War.
  - ▶ **Mile 1.2** – The trail continues to ascend until it reaches the wooded summit of Tri-State Peak at 1990 feet elevation. A powerline cut is just on the other side of the summit pavilion, but if you are doing this entire hike, the general lack of views is no big deal – really great views lie ahead! The pavilion shows the state lines and where they meet, allowing the hiker to stand in three states at one time. It also contains plaques about each state, so you can answer the question, "which state is larger, Virginia or Kentucky?" (They are nearly equal in size!) The plaques are old, however – Virginia has not had an official state song since 1997. The trail continues on Cumberland Mountain to the south, but reportedly deteriorates quickly due to lack of maintenance. After checking out the Tri-State Pavilion, retrace your steps back to the Wilderness Road Trail.
  - ▶ **Mile 1.8** – Return to Cumberland Gap and turn left on the Wilderness Road Trail.
  - ▶ **Mile 1.9** – The Harlan Road Trail heads uphill to the right. Take this trail. (The Wilderness Road Trail continues another half mile past this point to a parking lot – do not go straight on this trail.)
  - ▶ **Mile 2.0** – Cross a park road twice in quick succession. This is the Pinnacle Road, which drivers use to access the Pinnacle Overlook parking lot.
  - ▶ **Mile 2.2** – Ascend to a parking area. To the left is a side trail that ascends to a Civil War era cannon and several exhibit signs but provides no views. Check that out if interested, or take a right from the parking lot onto the Fort McCook Trail, which ascends. Note that there is no sign here telling you that you have switched to the Fort McCook Trail. Just keep heading uphill. (Straight across the parking lot and on the other side of the Pinnacle Road the Harlan Road Trail continues – do not take this.)
  - ▶ **Mile 3.0** – Ascend to the parking lot for the Pinnacle Overlook. On the opposite end of the parking lot, the Ridge Trail begins, and travels over the ridge of Cumberland Mountain for nearly 15 miles to White Rocks overlook, on the other end of the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park. The Ridge Trail can be backpacked, even though there is no camping on trails in this hike description. Cut right prior to the parking lot and take the paved path out to the Pinnacle Overlook. Although this is the only viewpoint on this hike, the views here are spectacular! I experienced these views twice on the same day, driving first at dawn when I was alone - experiencing clear conditions to the east of the Gap and total cloud cover west of the Gap. Later in the day, I hiked to the Overlook joining others who had driven, where I could look down to the parking lot that marks the start of this hike, or to the horizon and see Clingman's Dome in Great Smokey Mountains National Park – the highest point in Tennessee, over 75 miles away.
- After soaking up this view, return down the path and avoid the stairs, which takes people back to the other end of the parking lot. Take a left when you reach the parking lot, descending on the trail you used to get to the overlook.
- ▶ **Mile 3.9** – Descend to the parking lot hiked through earlier, but take a left onto the Harlan Road Trail and continue descending.
  - ▶ **Mile 4.3** – After again twice crossing the Pinnacle Road, come to a T intersection at the Wilderness Road Trail. Take a left here and continue straight when reaching the sign for Cumberland Gap.
  - ▶ **Mile 4.6** – Reach the intersection with the Tennessee Road Trail. Take a right here and stay on this trail back to the trailhead parking lot.
  - ▶ **Mile 5.0** – Arrive back at the trailhead parking lot. Be sure to look up to see the Pinnacle Overlook high above!