

Max Patch on the Appalachian Trail in Madison County, North Carolina



Take in the most beautiful view on the AT in Madison County. On Max Patch, you are at 4,629 feet and, on a clear day, have a 360-degree panoramic view of the Great Smoky Mountains to the south and a glimpse of Mt. Mitchell (at 6,684 feet, the highest peak east of the Mississippi) to the east. If you have encountered crowds when you have visited National Parks, you will be pleasantly surprised by this spot. The bald was cleared and used as pasture for grazing sheep and cattle in the 1800s. Today, it's a 350-acre tract of open land where you can hike the loop trails, enjoy a picnic or the wildflowers. At night, it's the perfect spot for star-gazing.

Sites on Max Patch Bald:

- A 1.4-mile short loop trail that crosses the summit.
- The 2.4 mile loop trail circles the mountain for outstanding views from all the sides.
- Hike north on the Appalachian Trail to Lemon Gap (6.2 miles away)—this is a beautiful hike with little elevation change. Going south takes you into Tennessee and Great Smoky Mountains.

Driving Directions: GPS Location: N35° 47.8' W082° 57.8'

From downtown Hot Springs: Follow Highway 209 (7.3 miles) to Meadow Fork Road (State Road 1175). There is a sign here and at all the other junctions to direct you to Max Patch. Go 5.3 miles to Little Creek Road (State Road 1181). Follow Little Creek Road (1181) which will turn into a gravel road for 3.5 miles to a T intersection which is Max Patch Road (State Road 1182). Turn right onto Max Patch Road and go for 1.6 miles to Max Patch parking.

From Asheville via Leicester Highway NC 63: From Patton Avenue intersection of Leicester Highway/NC 63 for 26 miles. Turn right on NC Highway 209 and continue for another 1.7 miles and turn left onto Caldwell Mountain Road—this is the first left after the Spring Creek Community Center. After 2.1 miles turn left on Meadow Fork Road. Follow Meadow Fork for 1.5 miles to the top of the mountain and turn right on Max Patch Road. Continue on Max Patch Road for 5.2 miles to parking access.

From I 40 Exit 24 (near Lake Junaluska): Take NC Highway 209 north for xx miles, go 1.7 miles past the junction of NC 63 and turn left onto Caldwell Mountain Road—this is the first left after the Spring Creek Community Center. After 2.1 miles turn left on Meadow Fork Road. Follow Meadow Fork for 1.5 miles to the top of the mountain and turn right on Max Patch Road. Continue on Max Patch Road for 5.2 miles to parking access.

Hiking the Trail:

- To hike north on the trail to the Smoky Mountains in Tennessee, go to the top of the summit from the parking area and go to the right side of the bald for the Trail marker.
- To hike south on the trail to Lemon Gap, go to the top of the summit from the parking area and go to the right side of the bald for the Trail marker.

