

Self-Driving Tour #3

Toccoa Ranger District Fall Color Tour

Morganton – Suches - Dahlonega – Apple Orchard Alley



GEORGIA'S BLUE RIDGE

Surrounded by Beauty



This driving tour, produced by the U.S. Forest Service, is beautiful any time of year, but is especially beautiful in the fall. The drive begins and ends at the intersection of Georgia Highway 5 and 515 in Blue Ridge. Round trip mileage is 102.4 miles and approximate driving time without stops is three to four hours. The drive offers some great opportunities for stops and side trips and can easily become a day trip.

The Chattahoochee National Forest covers 749,550 acres in North Georgia, managed by five ranger districts. The Toccoa Ranger District consists of 147,017 acres of forested public lands in parts of five counties (Fannin, Gilmer, Union, Lumpkin and Dawson) in north Georgia. For more information, contact the Toccoa Ranger District at (706) 632-3031.

Total Miles	Pt to Pt	Directions/Description
0.0	0.0	Begin your trip by going east on Highway 515 toward Blairsville.
4.0	4.0	Turn right on Georgia Highway 60 toward Morganton.
4.5	.5	Turn left at stop sign on GA Hwy 60.
6.0	1.5	Turn right on GA Hwy 60 toward Dahlonega.
13.5	7.5	Wilscot Gap. The Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) crosses here. The trail in Georgia stretches 78.6 miles from Springer Mountain to Double Spring Gap on the Tennessee border.
17.2	3.7	Old Skeenah Mill. On the left is the Skeenah Creek Campground. The Old Skeenah Mill was built in 1848 by Willis Woody, who brought his family to the Skeenah Valley in 1839. The Mill is listed on the National Register for Historic Places. A water-powered sawmill was also located on the creek. The Skeenah Mill was once a popular place for neighbors to gather and chat as they waited for their wheat or corn to be ground.
17.9	.7	The Swinging Bridge. On the right is Forest Service Road 816, and the second crossing of the Benton MacKaye Trail. A side trip of four bumpy miles will lead to a 260' suspension bridge over the Toccoa River. Park at the berm and walk in ¼ mile to the bridge. This is a beautiful area with huge old growth hemlocks.
20.5	2.6	Chattahoochee National Fish Hatchery. Forest Service Road 69 on the right will take you to the Chattahoochee National Fish Hatchery and Frank Gross Campground on Rock Creek. The fish hatchery raises a million rainbow trout each year to stock the streams and lakes of north Georgia. Visitors can tour the hatchery and visitor center, picnic, hike, camp or fish.
20.8	.3	Deep Hole Recreation Area. On the right is the entrance to Deep Hole Recreation area on the Toccoa River. Deep Hole is a year-round campground with six picnic sites and a canoe launch. It is the beginning of the Toccoa River Canoe Trail, a nationally designated river trail.
21.5	.7	Cooper Creek Road. A six-mile trip on Cooper Creek Road will take you to two National Forest campgrounds with hiking trails and access to Cooper Creek, a popular trout stream.



		Suches. You are now entering Suches, which is the highest “community” in the state called “the Valley Above the Clouds.” Elevation in “downtown” Suches is 3,000 feet, according to <i>Bill’s Guide to Suches</i> . The area is a popular route for motorcyclists, who stop at TWO (Two Wheels Only) near Highway 180, also called Wolf Pen Gap Road. Wolf Pen Gap is known as the “winding-est” road in the state, according to <i>Bill’s Guide</i> .
32.8	11.3	Woody Lake. On the left is Woody Lake and just above the lake is the house of Arthur Woody, the “Barefoot Forest Ranger.” He was the first forest ranger of the Toccoa Ranger District and is recognized for preserving the land and revitalizing the area’s deer and trout population.
34.5	1.7	Woody Gap Vista. The Appalachian Trail crosses Highway 60 at Woody Gap.
36.1	1.6	Chestatee Overlook. The overlook is on the left. For the next 11 miles the road will twist and turn as you approach Dahlonega, with some stunning views along the way.
47.2	11.1	Dahlonega, GA. Dahlonega was the site of the first major gold rush in the U.S. in 1828. Be sure to stop at the Dahlonega Gold Museum Historic Site in middle of the downtown area. You might even take time to pan for gold at the Consolidated or Crisson Gold Mine.
48.7	1.5	Stay on Highway 52 west. Highway 60 turns left toward Gainesville.
53.0	4.3	Turn right on Highway 52 west.
57.7	4.7	Jake and Bull Mountain Horse and Bicycle Trails. Turn onto Nimblewill Church Road to access these horse and bicycle trails.
67.1	9.4	Amicalola Falls State Park & Lodge. The 729-foot waterfall is the highest in the Southeast. Visitors can also hike in to the southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail. The park includes cottages, a lodge and restaurant.
		Burt’s Farm. On the left, near the turn off to Amicalola Falls is Burt’s Farm, open seasonally for the fall pumpkin harvest, hayrides and more.
68.6	1.5	Apple Orchard Alley. Intersection of Highway 52 and 183. Turn right to continue on Highway 52 west. The section ahead is known as Apple Orchard Alley. You will have the opportunity to stop at orchards as you travel toward Ellijay.
91.4	22.8	Ellijay, GA. Ellijay is known as the “Apple Capital of Georgia.” Thousands of People come each year to attend the Apple Festival in October. To visit Olde Downtown Square in Ellijay, turn left. To return to Blue Ridge (11 miles), turn right.

A Word to the Wise ... *The law of the forest is “leave no trace.” Please pack in all you will need and pack out all your trash. If you build a fire, never leave it unattended. Use good judgment when hiking, particularly around waterfalls where rocks are often wet, moss covered and slippery. If hiking during hunting season, wear a brightly colored vest. Unexpected encounters with animals can be pleasurable or problematic. A hawk or owl soaring silently above is a pleasure. Watch for woodpeckers, turkeys and mountain grouse near the forest edges. The flash of a white-tail deer is an every day occurrence. More rare is sighting a black bear or bobcat. Most animals will flee the presence of humans, but be on the lookout for copperheads, wasps, yellow jackets and other biting, stinging critters.*