

Around The Firefly Lodge, Gatlinburg

Sample plan: the host is fictional; every tip and number is genuinely researched.

Welcome. Everything below is measured from the Parkway in downtown Gatlinburg, the street the lodge sits beside, so distances and drive times match what your GPS will say. Items marked **walkable** are within a comfortable stroll of the Parkway between traffic lights #3 and #10. Please ask at the front desk if you would like us to call ahead for you.

The Plan at a Glance

Section	What it covers in one line
At a Glance	The 6 to 8 best bets with distance, price and a short note.
Day Trips Worth the Drive	Six outings from Newfound Gap to Dollywood, with fees, hours and map links.
Eat and Drink	Five places for breakfast, coffee, lunch and dinner tonight.
On a Rainy Day	Four genuinely indoor options with prices and hours.
With Kids	Four family favorites with age fit and prices.
Practical Things Nearby	Grocery, bakery, pharmacy, urgent care, fuel and charging.
Getting Here and Parking	Airport, driving routes, garages and the trolley.
Free Things to Do	Six trails, viewpoints and fee free park days that cost nothing.
Guided Tours and Experiences	Bookable, highly rated tours with plain public links.
Sources	Every official page we checked, with the check date.

On a rainy day

- Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies (On a Rainy Day, With Kids), a full indoor afternoon and walkable from the Parkway.
- The Escape Game Gatlinburg (On a Rainy Day), 60 minutes of dry, air conditioned puzzle solving.
- Ole Red Gatlinburg (On a Rainy Day, Eat and Drink), indoor live music from late morning until late.
- Ole Smoky Moonshine tasting barns (On a Rainy Day), free to walk in and browse under a roof.
- Anakeesta (At a Glance), which states it is open rain or shine, so a light drizzle need not cancel your day.

For summer days

- Upper Pigeon River rafting (Guided Tours and Experiences), cool Class II to III+ water on a hot afternoon.
- Cades Cove Loop Road (Day Trips Worth the Drive), best very early before the loop fills up.

- Gatlinburg SkyPark (At a Glance, With Kids), breezy ridge top air and the SkyBridge.
- Ober Mountain aerial tramway (At a Glance), a 2.1 mile ride to cooler elevations with no hiking.
- Gatlinburg Trail and Cataract Falls (Free Things to Do), shaded, level and free.

For fall and winter

- Newfound Gap and Kuwohi (Day Trips Worth the Drive), the best leaf color and long winter views.
- Anakeesta after dark (At a Glance), lights and fire pits when the evenings turn cold.
- Ober Mountain (At a Glance), the region's ski area and snow tubing once winter operations begin.
- Great Smoky Arts and Crafts Community loop (Free Things to Do), a cozy indoor and outdoor mix of studios.

At a Glance

Category	Name	Distance	Price	Note
National park	Great Smoky Mountains parking tag	Park boundary about 2 miles south, 5 minutes	\$5 daily, \$15 weekly, \$40 annual	Required for any stop over 15 minutes, physical tag only, digital images are not accepted. Source nps.gov, as of 08/2026.
Mountaintop park	Anakeesta, 576 Parkway (traffic light #5), walkable	On the Parkway	Adults 12 to 64 \$39.99, children 4 to 11 \$27.99, seniors 65+ \$32.99, ages 3 and under free	Advance tickets starting at these rates, open rain or shine. Source anakeesta.com, as of 08/2026.
Tram and views	Ober Mountain aerial tramway, 1001 Parkway Suite 2, walkable	On the Parkway	\$29 online special, ages 5 and up, ages 4 and under ride free with a paying adult	Scenic 2.1 mile ride to the Adventure Park and Ski Area. Source tickets.obermountain.com, as of 08/2026.
Views and bridge	Gatlinburg SkyPark, 765 Parkway, walkable	On the Parkway	Roughly \$40 to \$50 per adult, check before visiting	Kids 5 and under always free, family bundle gives 20% off up to four junior tickets. Source gatlinburgskypark.com, as of 08/2026.
Rainy day	Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies, 88 River Road, walkable	0.2 miles, 5 minute walk	Roughly \$40 to \$50 per adult, check before visiting	Shark tunnel and touch tanks, easily two hours indoors.

Category	Name	Distance	Price	Note
Family thrill	Moonshine Mountain Coaster	1.5 miles, 5 minutes	From \$17 per person	Riders 38 inches and up, age 3 and up with a companion. Source getyourguide.com , as of 08/2026.
Eat and drink	Ole Red Gatlinburg, 511 Parkway, walkable	On the Parkway	Entrees typically \$15 to \$30	Sunday to Wednesday 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM, Thursday to 11:00 PM, Friday and Saturday to late night, no reservations. Source olered.com , as of 08/2026.
Scenic drive	Cades Cove Loop Road	About 27 miles, 1 hour	Free, parking tag required if you stop	Sunrise to sunset, vehicle free Wednesdays in season. Source nps.gov , as of 08/2026.

Day Trips Worth the Drive

1. Newfound Gap and Kuwohi (formerly Clingmans Dome) Distance and drive: about 15 miles and 30 minutes to Newfound Gap, about 22 miles and 50 minutes to the Kuwohi parking area, all on US 441 and Clingmans Dome Road. Admission: no entrance fee. A parking tag is required for any stop longer than 15 minutes, \$5 daily, \$15 weekly, \$40 annual, and the physical tag must be displayed. Hours: the overlook and trails are open daily. Clingmans Dome Road closes seasonally in winter, and US 441 over the mountain can close in snow, so check park conditions the morning you go. Map: [Open in maps](#) Source: nps.gov fees and passes page, checked 08/22/2026.

2. Cades Cove Loop Road Distance and drive: about 27 miles and 1 hour via Little River Road, longer in summer and on fall weekends. Admission: free, parking tag as above. Hours: the 11 mile one way loop is open daily from sunrise to sunset. The park has again run vehicle free days on Wednesdays in the warm season, so cyclists and walkers have the road to themselves. Confirm the current schedule on nps.gov before you set out. Map: [Open in maps](#) Source: nps.gov, checked 08/22/2026.

3. Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail and Grotto Falls Distance and drive: about 4 miles and 12 minutes from traffic light #8 up Historic Nature Trail. Admission: free, parking tag as above. No buses, trailers or RVs on the one way loop. Hours: daylight hours, and the road closes for the winter season, typically from around December into March. Map: [Open in maps](#) Source: nps.gov, checked 08/22/2026.

4. Dollywood, Pigeon Forge Distance and drive: about 11 miles and 25 to 30 minutes via US 441 north, allow longer in evening traffic. Admission: one day tickets generally run in the \$90 to \$120 range per adult depending on the date, and multi day tickets cost less per day. Please check dollywood.com for your exact date before visiting. Hours: seasonal, commonly 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM or later in summer and during festivals, with closed days in the off season. Check the official calendar. Map: [Open in maps](#) Source: dollywood.com calendar, price and hours not verified on a fetched page, so please treat the above as a range, checked 08/22/2026.

5. Cherokee, North Carolina and the Oconaluftee elk fields Distance and drive: about 34 miles and 1 hour 5 minutes over Newfound Gap on US 441. Admission: the Oconaluftee Visitor Center, Mountain Farm Museum and the elk meadows are free, parking tag as above. The Museum of the Cherokee People charges an admission in the \$14 to \$16 range per adult, please confirm on its own site. Hours: visitor center hours vary by season, commonly around 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Elk are most active at dawn and dusk. Map: [Open in maps](#) Source: nps.gov, checked 08/22/2026.

6. Upper Pigeon River at Hartford for rafting Distance and drive: about 40 miles and 55 minutes via US 321 and I 40 east. Admission: guided rafting from \$54 per person with Nantahala Outdoor Center as listed on GetYourGuide, minimum 70 pounds or 8 years old. Hours: seasonal departures, check availability for start times, and arrive 30 minutes before your trip. Map: [Open in maps](#) Source: getyourguide.com product page, checked 08/22/2026.

Eat and Drink

Ole Red Gatlinburg, 511 Parkway, walkable. Blake Shelton's restaurant and live music room, hearty Southern plates and a rooftop. Sunday through Wednesday 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM, Thursday 11:00 AM to 11:00 PM, Friday and Saturday 11:00 AM until late night. No reservations, all seating is first come first served, so arrive before 6:00 PM on weekends. Closing days: none listed. Source olered.com, as of 08/2026.

Pancake Pantry, 628 Parkway, walkable. Gatlinburg's original pancake house and still the line you will see forming on the sidewalk. Breakfast is served all day, typical opening is early morning with an afternoon close, and the kitchen sometimes closes seasonally. Plates generally run \$12 to \$18. Please confirm today's hours at pancakepantry.com or ask us to phone ahead, checked 08/22/2026.

Crockett's 1875 Breakfast Camp, 1103 Parkway, walkable. Big lumber camp style breakfasts and cinnamon rolls, an easy walk from the Ober tram base. Breakfast and lunch only, typically opening around 7:00 AM and closing mid afternoon, entrees roughly \$13 to \$22. Confirm hours at crockettsbreakfastcamp.com before you walk over, checked 08/22/2026.

The Donut Friar, The Village Shops, 634 Parkway, walkable. Our pick for coffee and a warm cinnamon bread doughnut in a stone courtyard, cash friendly and tiny. Opens very early, typically closing by late afternoon, coffee and pastry around \$6 to \$10. Hours vary by season, please check with the shop or ask the front desk, checked 08/22/2026.

Anakeesta's Clifftop and Kephart Cafe, 576 Parkway (traffic light #5), walkable. Lunch or an early dinner with a ridge top view, included dining venues inside the park with admission. Food service follows park hours, which on 08/22/2026 were 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM, and closing hours are subject to change. Source anakeesta.com, as of 08/2026.

On a Rainy Day

Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies, 88 River Road, walkable. Shark tunnel, penguin habitat and touch tanks, comfortably two hours indoors and the single best rain plan in town. Adult admission generally falls in the \$40 to \$50 range with children less, and combo tickets with other

Ripley's attractions start around \$45 on GetYourGuide. Hours are typically 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM or later in peak season, open daily year round. Please confirm price and hours on [ripleyaquariums.com](https://www.ripleyaquariums.com) before you go, checked 08/22/2026.

The Escape Game Gatlinburg, on the Parkway, walkable. A 60 minute themed escape room, fully indoors, good for groups of four to eight. Tickets from \$46 per person as listed on GetYourGuide, with sessions through the day and into the evening. Source [getyourguide.com](https://www.getyourguide.com) listing, as of 08/2026.

Ole Red Gatlinburg, 511 Parkway, walkable. Live music indoors from late morning, so you can eat, listen and stay dry. Sunday through Wednesday 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM, Thursday to 11:00 PM, Friday and Saturday until late night. Free to enter, no cover for most daytime sets. Source [olered.com](https://www.olered.com), as of 08/2026.

Ole Smoky and Sugarlands moonshine tasting barns, on and just off the Parkway, walkable. Indoor distillery floors with live music, free to walk in and browse, tastings usually carry a small fee of roughly \$5 to \$10 and guided tours cost more, for example a 75 minute cocktail experience listed from \$27. Typical hours are late morning until 10:00 PM or later. Confirm on the distillery's own site, checked 08/22/2026.

With Kids

Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies. Age fit: all ages, especially 2 to 12. Strollers welcome. Price roughly \$40 to \$50 per adult, less for children, check [ripleyaquariums.com](https://www.ripleyaquariums.com). Walkable.

Gatlinburg SkyPark, 765 Parkway. Age fit: 4 and up for the chairlift and SkyBridge, and children 5 and under are always free. The family bundle adds 20% off up to four junior tickets. Adult entry runs roughly \$40 to \$50, and a SkyPark entry ticket with the SkyLift ride is listed from \$42 on GetYourGuide. Source [gatlinburgskypark.com](https://www.gatlinburgskypark.com) and [getyourguide.com](https://www.getyourguide.com), as of 08/2026. Walkable.

Moonshine Mountain Coaster. Age fit: children from age 3 and 38 inches tall riding with a companion who is at least 56 inches and 16 years old, adult drivers at least 56 inches. From \$17 per person, about 5 minutes per ride, night rides have a light show. Source [getyourguide.com](https://www.getyourguide.com), as of 08/2026.

Ober Mountain aerial tramway and Adventure Park, 1001 Parkway Suite 2. Age fit: all ages, and the tram is wheelchair accessible with service animals welcome. Tram ticket \$29 online for ages 5 and up, ages 4 and under ride free with a paying adult. Please review operating hours before you buy, as they change with the season. Source [tickets.obermountain.com](https://www.tickets.obermountain.com), as of 08/2026. Walkable.

Anakeesta, 576 Parkway. Age fit: toddlers to teens, with the Treehouse play area, Treetop Skywalk and BirdVenture included in admission. Children 4 to 11 \$27.99, ages 3 and under free, coaster pass add on \$16.99. Source [anakeesta.com](https://www.anakeesta.com), as of 08/2026. Walkable.

Practical Things Nearby

Need	Name and address	Distance from the Parkway	Note
Grocery	Food City, 1219 E Parkway (US 321), Gatlinburg, TN 37738	About 1.3 miles, 5 minutes by car	Full supermarket with pharmacy counter. Hours vary, please check foodcity.com or ask us to call.
Coffee and bakery	The Donut Friar, The Village Shops, 634 Parkway	Walkable, on the Parkway	Opens very early, closes mid to late afternoon, cash is easiest.
Pharmacy	Walgreens, 811 Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738	Walkable, about 0.4 miles	Store and pharmacy counters keep different hours, confirm at walgreens.com.
Urgent care and hospital	LeConte Medical Center campus, Sevierville	About 14 miles, 30 minutes	Nearest 24 hour emergency department. Walk in clinic hours vary, confirm before driving. For emergencies dial 911.
Gas station	Stations on E Parkway (US 321) near traffic light #3	About 0.8 to 1.5 miles	Fill up before park drives, there is no fuel inside the national park.
EV charging	Public chargers at the downtown city parking garages	Walkable to about 0.5 miles	Availability changes, check your charging app the same day.

Front desk: we are glad to phone any of the above for you and to confirm current hours.

Getting Here and Parking

Most guests arrive by car. From Knoxville take I 40 east to exit 407, then US 66 and US 441 south through Sevierville and Pigeon Forge into Gatlinburg, roughly 42 miles and 1 hour 10 minutes without traffic. From Asheville take I 40 west to exit 443 and US 321 through Pittman Center, roughly 2 hours. From the North Carolina side, US 441 over Newfound Gap is the scenic route and can close in winter weather.

By air, the practical airport is McGhee Tyson (TYS) near Knoxville, about 42 miles and 1 hour 10 minutes away, with the usual rental car desks on site. Asheville (AVL) is about 2 hours away.

Parking: the lodge lot is signed on arrival, one space per room. Downtown, the city parking garages near traffic light #3 and beside Ripley's Aquarium are the easiest bet, with rates typically around \$2 per hour and daily maximums in the \$10 to \$20 range. Rates change seasonally, so check the posted signs or gatlinburgtn.gov. The paid lot beside Anakeesta is privately operated and charges its own fee. Once you are parked, the Gatlinburg Trolley covers the Parkway and outlying routes for a low per ride or day pass fare, please check gatlinburgtrolley.org for the current fare and route map.

Inside Great Smoky Mountains National Park you also need a parking tag for any stop longer than 15 minutes, \$5 daily, \$15 weekly or \$40 annual. Buy it before you drive out, since most trailheads have no machines. We keep the recreation.gov print at home link at the front desk.

Free Things to Do

Gatlinburg Trail. A level 1.9 mile each way path from the edge of town to Sugarlands Visitor Center along the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River, and one of only two park trails where leashed dogs are allowed. Free, and you can start on foot from the Parkway end without needing a parking tag. Source nps.gov, as of 08/2026.

Cataract Falls. A gentle half mile round trip from behind Sugarlands Visitor Center to a mossy 25 foot waterfall, ideal with small children or after rain. Free, parking tag needed if you park at the visitor center. Source nps.gov, as of 08/2026.

Sugarlands Visitor Center exhibits. Natural history displays, a park store and rangers who will mark up your map for you, and the restrooms are the last good ones before Newfound Gap. Free to enter, hours vary by season. Source nps.gov, as of 08/2026.

Fee free days in the national parks. Parking tags are not required inside the Smokies on the National Park Service fee free dates, which in 2026 include August 25 for the 110th birthday of the National Park Service, September 17 for Constitution Day, October 27, and November 11 for Veterans Day. Source nps.gov fees and passes page, as of 08/2026.

Great Smoky Arts and Crafts Community loop. An 8 mile loop east of town along Glades Road with dozens of working studios, free to browse and pleasant in fall. Individual studio hours vary, most open mid morning. As of 08/2026.

Anakeesta's live mountain webcams and the Parkway stroll. Free from the room or the sidewalk: check the Anakeesta webcam for the summit weather, then walk the Parkway between lights #5 and #10 for the river, the shop windows and the Space Needle plaza. Source anakeesta.com, as of 08/2026.

Guided Tours and Experiences

We earn no commission on anything listed here and we use plain public product links only, never affiliate links.

Tour	Meeting point	Price	Rating	Link
Upper Pigeon River White Water Rafting Tour, 2.5 hours, small group	NOC's Pigeon River Outpost, Hartford, TN, check in 30 minutes early	From \$54 per person	4.9 out of 5 from 173 reviews	getyourguide.com/...
Gatlinburg Moonshine Mountain Coaster Ride, about 5 minutes	Moonshine Mountain Coaster, about 1.5 miles from the Parkway	From \$17 per person	4.7 out of 5 from 94 reviews	getyourguide.com/...

Tour	Meeting point	Price	Rating	Link
MegaZip Zipline Ticket, 2 hours	WildSide, Pigeon Forge	From \$84 per person	4.9 out of 5 from 68 ratings	getyourguide.com/...

A note on our quality bar: we only list offers rated at least 4.6 out of 5 from at least 50 ratings. Several popular Gatlinburg listings, including the SkyPark entry ticket and the local ghost walk, did not meet the ratings count or the rating threshold on the day we checked, so we left them out rather than pad the table. There is no free or donation based walking tour in Gatlinburg that meets the bar, so the honest free alternative is a ranger led program at Sugarlands Visitor Center, which is free of charge and listed on the park calendar at nps.gov. All GetYourGuide figures above were read from the product and listing pages on 08/22/2026.

Sources

National park, fees and timed entry

- Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Fees and Passes: [nps.gov/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Daily and weekly parking tags online: [recreation.gov/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Annual parking tag: [smokieslife.org/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Park conditions and road closures: [nps.gov/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Park maps: [nps.gov/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Cades Cove vehicle free days: [nps.gov/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Park headquarters, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738, phone (865) 436-1200, from [nps.gov/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)

Attractions

- Anakeesta pricing: [anakeesta.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Anakeesta hours, location and directions, 576 Parkway, phone 865-325-2400: [anakeesta.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Anakeesta daily hours calendar: [anakeesta.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Ober Mountain tram ticket: [tickets.obermountain.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Ober Mountain operating hours: [obermountain.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Gatlinburg SkyPark, 765 Parkway, phone 865.436.4307: [gatlinburgskypark.com](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Gatlinburg SkyPark tickets: [gatlinburgskypark.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Gatlinburg SkyPark parking: [gatlinburgskypark.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies, price and hours to confirm: [ripleyaquariums.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Dollywood, price and calendar to confirm: [dollywood.com](#) (checked 08/22/2026)

Eat and drink

- Ole Red Gatlinburg hours, 511 Parkway: [olered.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Pancake Pantry: [pancakepantry.com](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Crockett's 1875 Breakfast Camp: [crockettsbreakfastcamp.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)

Tours

- Gatlinburg activity overview: [getyourguide.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Upper Pigeon River rafting: [getyourguide.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Moonshine Mountain Coaster: [getyourguide.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- MegaZip zipline: [getyourguide.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)

Practical

- Food City store locator, Gatlinburg: [foodcity.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)

- Walgreens, 811 Parkway: [walgreens.com/...](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- City of Gatlinburg parking information: [gatlinburgtn.gov](#) (checked 08/22/2026)
- Gatlinburg Trolley fares and routes: [gatlinburgtrolley.org](#) (checked 08/22/2026)

Where we could not confirm a figure on an official page, we have given a range and asked you to check before visiting rather than quote a number we cannot stand behind. Prices, hours and road closures change, especially between seasons, so a quick look at the official link on the morning of your outing is always the safest plan. Enjoy the mountains.

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