

Buckeye Falls

3.25 Miles One Way - 6.5 Miles Round Trip

A very strenuous, partly off trail hike to the highest waterfall in the Southeast..

WARNING: This is a very difficult hike in a very remote area and should be attempted only by experienced hikers in good condition.

There are many creek crossings and, at times, you will be wading using the creek as your guide instead of a trail.

Wading shoes are essential.

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Hiked on May 23, 2009

Directions to Trailhead: Leave Greeneville on 11-E Bypass North. Drive past the Wal-Mart Supercenter and turn right at the first traffic light on Highway 107 toward Erwin. Continue for 13.7 miles, turn right on Clark's Creek Road and drive 1.2 miles until the pavement ends. Continue on the dirt road until it deadends in a small circle. This is the trailhead to Buckeye Falls.

Buckeye Falls is reputed to be the highest waterfall east of the Mississippi River and some authorities give the total height from top to bottom as over 700 feet. Other sources state the distance as 475 feet, still making Buckeye one of the highest falls around. Actually, the drop is not all in one fell swoop but in a series of cascades which are difficult to see at the same time due to the foliage and also footing problems at the bottom of the falls. Buckeye Falls should be visited after a hard rain to get the full effect as the volume of water coming over the falls is never very strong.

After parking at the trailhead at the end of the Clark's Creek Road, immediately make the first of many creek crossings. Most of these crossings cannot be rock hopped and will require wading. I would recommend wearing wading shoes, water shoes, sandals or just an old pair of sneakers. The trail, which is actually the remnants of an old Forest Service road, is flat and easy to follow at first but you will soon find places where the trail was washed out in the flood of 2001. Follow the creek and you will soon find remnants of the trail again. There will be some places with steep banks where you will just have to wade in the creek for short distances until the trail reappears.

When you have covered about three miles, you will need to make sharp, left turn from the main creekbed. This turn is marked with an old sign which you need to look carefully to see. After this turn, the real fun starts. You will be climbing steeply and will be in the creekbed most of the time. The rocks here are very loose and footing is treacherous. One hiker broke her leg here the first time I did this hike. You will climb about a quarter mile straight up to the base of the Falls. This is a good place for lunch but the incline here is still very steep, rocky and dangerous.

Return to the trailhead by reversing your route and be sure to be very careful when descending.



