

Andrews Bald



Trail Features:	Outstanding views
Trail Location:	Clingmans Dome Area
Roundtrip Length:	3.5 Miles
Total Elevation Gain:	899 Feet
Avg. Elevation Gain / Mile:	514 Feet
Highest Elevation:	6,310 Feet
Trail Difficulty Rating:	5.30 (moderate)

Trail Description:

The hike begins with a descent down the southern flank of Clingmans Dome, also known as Forney Ridge. Just after World War II, this general area was the site of a major military plane crash. On June 12, 1946, a B-29 Flying Superfortress, enroute from Chicago to Florida, smashed into Clingmans Dome during a night navigational flight. The aircraft crashed just north of the Appalachian Trail, roughly one-eighth of a mile to the east of where the Clingmans Dome Tower now stands. Upon impact, the wings were sheared off, while the fuselage continued on towards Clingmans Dome Road. The Park Superintendent at the time said that the wreckage was strewn over an acre or more of ground. All 12 men aboard the plane were killed.



This first section of trail passes through a spruce-fir forest, which typically occupies the higher elevations of the Southern Appalachian Mountains, and is basically a relic of the last ice age. You'll immediately notice that many of the trees in this area are

dead, or in the process of dying. This is mostly the result of the balsam woolly adelgid, a small insect that infests and kills Fraser firs. Since these trees have little natural defense against the adelgids, which were first introduced from Europe in the early 1900s, more than 90% of the Fraser firs in Great Smoky Mountains National Park have already been killed.

At just over one-tenth of a mile from the trailhead, the Clingmans Dome Bypass Trail branches off to the right. This connector path leads to the Appalachian Trail. To continue on towards Andrews Bald, hikers should turn left at this junction.



Roughly one mile from the trailhead, the Forney Creek Trail will also branch off to the right. This trail eventually dead-ends into Lakeshore Trail near Backcountry Campsite 74, roughly 11.4 miles towards the south. From this junction, hikers should proceed straight ahead to continue towards Andrews Bald.

At roughly 1.7 miles, hikers will reach the outskirts of Andrews Bald. For the best views, hikers should continue on for another hundred yards or so. From here you'll have several acres of open grassy meadow from which to choose a picnic spot, or to simply take in the spectacular panoramic vistas. From this vantage point, you'll have stunning views of Fontana Lake and the southern Smokies.

High elevation grassy meadows in the Southern Appalachian Mountains are known as balds. Andrews Bald has the distinction of being the highest bald in the Great Smoky Mountains, however, without periodic maintenance from the National Park Service, both Andrews Bald and [Gregory Bald](#) would be reclaimed by natural forest growth. Both balds are also known for their spectacular displays of flame azalea and rhododendron blooms during the late spring and early summer. Peak bloom for flame azaleas atop Andrews Bald usually occurs around early July.