



## Cumberland Knob – Cumberland Knob Recreation Area – Lowgap, NC

| Length   | Difficulty | Streams | Views | Solitude | Camping |
|--|------------|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 2.8 mls  | ★          | ★       | ★     | ★        | N/A     |
| <b>Hiking Time:</b> 1.5 hours with 10 minute break<br><b>Elev. Gain:</b> 981 ft<br><b>Parking:</b> Park at the Cumberland Knob Recreation Area 36.55377, -80.90697 |            |         |       |          |         |

*By Trail Contributor: Zach Robbins*

Cumberland Knob Recreation Area is not noteworthy for being a hiking destination. However, it does have a great loop trail that likely attracts few hikers due to its short length and remote location. This loop is short and will take less than 2 hours maximum, so it is not something to plan a full day around. But, if you are exploring the Blue Ridge Parkway near the North Carolina/Virginia border this could be a great stop to stretch your legs or combine it with other short trails along the parkway.

The Gully Creek Trail leaves the picnic area and drops steeply to the Gully Creek drainage where you will follow the creek for a fantastic half mile. Here you will pass a small, beautiful waterfall and numerous cascades in this narrow gorge. After leaving the creek the trail climbs steadily to the tree-covered Cumberland Knob before returning to the picnic area. Be sure to check out the eastern view of Pilot Mountain from the grassy picnic area before you hop back in the car.

Where NC-18 crosses under the Blue Ridge Parkway at Low Gap a few miles south of the Virginia border, enter the parkway and drive south for 0.3-mi. The Cumberland Knob Recreation Area is well-signed on the east side of the highway with ample parking for cars and campers. Park in the main lot beside the picnic area and comfort station. The loop trail starts directly behind the comfort station on the left side of the parking lots.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – Start the Gully Creek Trail (*no blaze*) behind the comfort station. Go left towards picnic area into the forest. The trail starts downhill on a wide dirt path.
- ▶ **Mile 0.5** – The trail meets a tributary and begins a steep descent on tight switchbacks towards Gully Creek. The trail frequently touches but doesn't cross the tributary.
- ▶ **Mile 0.75** – End of descent as the trail meets Gully Creek above a waterfall.
- ▶ **Mile 0.8** – 1st crossing over Gully Creek below a picturesque 6-foot waterfall. No knowledge if this is a named waterfall. The trail crosses Gully Creek 9 times in the next 0.5 miles.
- ▶ **Mile 0.85** – 2nd crossing.
- ▶ **Mile 0.9** – 3rd crossing on a bridge.
- ▶ **Mile 1.0** – 4th crossing between a cascade amongst large boulders and above a slide waterfall.
- ▶ **Mile 1.1** – 5th crossing and 6th crossing.
- ▶ **Mile 1.15** – 7th crossing onto an island that divides Gully Creek. The trail follows this island downstream.
- ▶ **Mile 1.2** – 8th crossing. There's a nice cascade with mossy boulders in the creek below the crossing.
- ▶ **Mile 1.25** – 9th crossing. The trail leaves Gully Creek and climbs steeply up the west side of the basin. The trail climbs 855 feet in 1.1 miles to Cumberland Knob.
- ▶ **Mile 1.6** – The trail follows a shoulder rising high above Gully Creek. The vegetation here is reminiscent of much higher elevations and there are intermittent views into the creek basin and of the mountain peaks across the basin.
- ▶ **Mile 2.2** – Junction with Cumberland Knob Trail, go left to the summit. The Gully Creek Trail stays right returning to the picnic area.
- ▶ **Mile 2.4** – Reach summit of Cumberland Knob (2,885 feet). The summit is a small grass field surrounded by forest with no views. There is an old stone shelter at the summit. Two parallel trails leave the summit heading back to the parking lot. The left trail is paved and goes through the picnic area. Go right of the shelter slightly downhill to rejoin the Gully Creek Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 2.6** – Junction with Gully Creek Trail at the beginning of the large grass field at the picnic area. Go left to return to the trail head. There is one view due east through the trees with Pilot Mountain standing tall in the background.
- ▶ **Mile 2.8** – Loop ends at the comfort station behind the parking lot.

**Bonus:** A few miles south of Cumberland Knob is the excellent Fox Hunter's Paradise Overlook on High Piney Spur (2,805 feet). In addition to the view on the roadside turnout there is a side loop road to the right that leads to a short walk to a stone overlook. This stone overlook is perched at the end of High Piney Spur and provides great views south of Saddle Mountain and east and north of the ridge crest that dramatically drops to The Piedmont. Pilot Mountain can be spotted many miles away due east. A large tree provides shade so this makes an enjoyable stop to admire one of the best overlooks in this region.