



## Snowball Trail - Pisgah National Forest, NC

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
2.8 mls	3	N/A	2	3	1
<b>Hiking Time:</b>	2 hours with 20 minutes of breaks				
<b>Elev. Gain:</b>	1,090 ft				
7.1 mls	1	N/A	2	1	1
<b>Hiking Time:</b>	4 hours with 45 minutes of breaks				
<b>Elev. Gain:</b>	2,030 ft				
<b>Parking:</b>	Parking at the T-intersection with FR 63/Stoney Fork Rd at Beetree Gap near the FR 63 gate. 35.69999, -82.39886				

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)



By Trail Contributor: Zach Robbins

The Snowball Trail is a quiet alternative to the crowds of the Craggy Gardens Recreation Area along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Beginning at Beetree Gap near the picnic area, you'll follow the trail north into the heart of the western Great Craggy Mountains. The trail follows a high ridge dividing the headwaters of Reems Creek and Ivy Creek in the Big Ivy region of Pisgah National Forest. The highlight of the hike is Hawkbill Rock, an exposed peak with wide-ranging views of the Black, Great Craggy, and Elk Mountains. Most visitors will turn around here, as it is a short, rewarding 2.8-mile round trip. The Snowball Trail continues north along a wide ridge which holds an impressive old-growth hardwood forest. The terminus of the trail is Little Snowball Mountain-Northeast Peak, the site of a former lookout tower. Reaching this peak is one half of the Little Snowball tower requirement for the Carolina Lookout Tower Challenge. Although the former tower site no longer has views, the last half-mile is an incredible walk through a tunnel of Catawba rhododendron and mountain laurel blooms during May and June.

**Carolina Lookout Tower Challenge** – To check off Little Snowball for the Carolina Lookout Tower Challenge, you must hike the Snowball Trail to the former tower site on Little Snowball Mountain-Northeast Peak and also visit the restored tower at the Big Ivy Historical Campus. The tower was rebuilt in 2006 and is beside the main parking lot for the Big Ivy Community Center. If the gate is open, you can follow FR 63 north to the community of Dillingham and follow Dillingham Rd west to the park.

### Mile Summary and Highlights

- 0.1 - Mountains-to-Sea Trail junction with the Snowball Trail
- 1.4 - Views from Hawkbill Rock
- 1.6 - Wide plateau with old-growth hardwood trees
- 2.5 - Trail passes through Snowball Gap
- 3.6 - End of Snowball Trail at former site of Little Snowball lookout tower

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – The paved road to the Craggy Gardens Picnic Area passes through a T-intersection with FR 63/Stoney Fork Rd at Beetree Gap. Find a parking spot at this junction near the FR 63 gate. Follow the Mountains-to-Sea Trail [440] (*white blaze*) west from the intersection.
- ▶ **Mile 0.1** – At a Y-junction the MST turns left while the Snowball Trail [170] (*white or yellow blaze*) begins straight ahead. For the next 0.6-mi you'll climb over 450 feet towards the top of Snowball Mountain.
- ▶ **Mile 0.7** – The trail skirts to the right of the summit of Snowball Mountain (5,380 feet), which is densely covered in shrubs and has no views.
- ▶ **Mile 0.9** – Pass by an unmarked trail on the left which heads towards the Woodfin Reservoir. The Snowball Trail turns right. After one switchback the trail descends along an increasingly narrow ridge. This section is lined with Catawba rhododendron and mountain laurel, making it especially beautiful during May and June when the flowers are blooming.
- ▶ **Mile 1.4** – After a final rock scramble you'll reach Hawkbill Rock (4,960 feet). To the left of the trail are a series of rock outcroppings with 180° views of the Black Mountains, Great Craggy Mountains, and Elk Mountains. You have a big view east of the Great Craggy and Black Mountains surrounding the remote headwaters of Ivy Creek. Due east is Bullhead Mountain, with Craggy Dome and Craggy Pinnacle the closest peaks directly right. Further east the dominant ridge with blackish trees leads to Blackstock Knob. Snowball Mountain rises above the Snowball Trail immediately south. To the west are the smaller Great Craggy Mountains which transition to the Elk Mountains at Bull Gap. The tall, double peaks on the left are Lane Pinnacle and its false summit. The Elk Mountains drop quickly into the Reems Creek Valley further west, with the Bald Mountains in the distance.
- ▶ **Mile 1.6** – On the northwest side of Hawkbill Rock the trail meanders through a wide plateau with an impressive collection of old-growth trees.
- ▶ **Mile 2.5** – The Snowball Trail passes through the long, shallow Snowball Gap. At the north side of the gap is a Y-junction with an unmarked trail going left following the ridgeline towards a knob. Turn right and begin following an old forest road.
- ▶ **Mile 3.0** – Y-junction with the unmarked ridgeline trail on the left.
- ▶ **Mile 3.1** – An old steel-door piped spring box is located on the left side of the trail below Little Snowball Mountain.
- ▶ **Mile 3.2** – The trail levels out on its final approach to the lookout tower site, passing through a tunnel of Catawba rhododendron and mountain laurel. This is a premier wildflower destination.
- ▶ **Mile 3.6** – Reach Little Snowball Mountain-Northeast Peak (4,740 feet), the former site of the Little Snowball lookout tower. The tower was removed in 1980, all that remains are the concrete footings. Unfortunately, without the tower you will get no views from this small, grassy summit which is surrounded by trees. Turn around and make your way back towards Beetree Gap.
- ▶ **Mile 7.1** – Hike ends at Beetree Gap.