

# SHINING ROCK & MIDDLEPRONG



This rock outcrop, known as “the shining rock,” is filled with shinely quartz, hence the name, Shining Rock Wilderness.

## Land of ridges • steep terrain • streams

**S**hining Rock Wilderness in Pisgah National Forest is made up of a series of high-elevation ridges on the north slopes of Pisgah ridge. The terrain is extremely steep and rugged, with elevations ranging from 3,200 feet on the West Fork Pigeon River to 6,030 feet on Cold Mountain. Shining Rock Ledge, which forms the area’s backbone, is over 5,000 feet high, with five peaks at 6,000 feet. Streams and drainages abound to form the east and west forks of Pigeon River, a major tributary of the Tennessee River.

Middle Prong Wilderness lies west of Shining

Rock and is also in the Pisgah National Forest. The wilderness is also made up of steep and rugged high-elevation ridges. Elevations range from 3,200 feet at the west fork of the Pigeon River to 6,400 feet near Richland Balsam. The west fork and middle prong of the Pigeon River are born amid the high valleys of this wilderness and are fed by numerous streams.

Shining Rock was designated a wild area on May 7, 1964. With the signing of the Wilderness Act in 1964 by Congress, Shining Rock became one of the original areas of the National Wilderness System. The 1984 North Carolina Wilderness Act increased the original 13,600 acres to the present 18,483 acres. The 1984 North Carolina Wilderness Act created the 7,460-acre Middle Prong Wilderness.



Backpackers take a break to enjoy spectacular vistas of wildernesses.

## Wilderness is ...?

Wilderness means different things to different people. To some people, wilderness is a state of mind: an opportunity for solitude, contemplation, or challenge. To others, wilderness is a place of scenic beauty touched only by nature.

Congress considered the wild lands of America to be so precious—culturally and ecologically—that it legislated their protection with the 1964 Wilderness Act. This act and follow-up

bills identified specific areas, such as Shining Rock, as worthy of special management requirements that are different from most other Federal lands. Wilderness is defined as "...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

If a choice must be made between wilderness values and human use, preserving the wilderness resource is the overriding

value. The guiding principle is to allow the natural processes to shape the environment.

The act also required wilderness to retain "its primeval character and influence" and that it be protected and managed so it "appears to have been affected primarily by the force of nature."

## Experience wilderness

As a visitor to the wilderness, you will be faced with the challenge of being completely on your own away from the comforts and conveniences of civilization. No trail signs, shelters, campgrounds, water spigots, vehicles, or restrooms are available.

You probably can follow the more popular trails in the area, even though they are not marked, but you should know how to read a topographic map and use a compass. Most wilderness trails in the mountains are primitive, rugged, and often steep. Stream crossings can be tricky, because bridges are not provided.

Before you enter the wilderness, ask yourself if you truly want a wilderness experience. You can explore the backcountry of the national forests on hundreds of other trails. Outside of wilderness, trails are maintained, and usually signed and blazed. Many trails offer wonderful opportunities for solitude, challenge, and magnificent mountain scenery.





Spring arrives in Shining Rock Wilderness with a blanket of wildflowers.

## Seeking solitude

Since Shining Rock is one of the most heavily used wildernesses, some Shining Rock trails offer little opportunity for solitude. For greater solitude, avoid visiting in the summer, early fall, and especially on the weekends. You should also be willing to hike a distance away from the trailhead and avoid Shining Rock Gap and trails that are heavily used. The Mountains-to-the-Sea Trail is the most used in Middle Prong.

## What is allowed in wilderness?

- Primitive recreation activities, such as backpacking and camping.
- Hunting and fishing under State and Federal laws.
- Trail construction and maintenance to primitive standards.
- Outfitting and guiding services under special-use permits.

- Collections of berries and nuts if only for personal use.
- Scientific research compatible with wilderness values.
- Administrative use of motorized equipment in extreme emergencies.

## What is prohibited in wilderness?

- Permanent structures.
- New road construction.
- Timber harvesting.
- Mechanical transport (No bicycles, wagons, or carts. Nonmotorized wheelchairs are allowed, but no special accommodations are made: all trails are narrow, rocky, and steep).
- Motorized vehicles and equipment.
- Removal of plants, stone, or moss.
- Removal of historical or archeological artifacts.

## SHINING ROCK WILDERNESS TRAILS

TRAIL NAME	NO.	MILEAGE	DIFFICULTY	USER
Art Loeb (3) .....	4 .....	6.8 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker
Art Loeb (4) .....	5 .....	3.8 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker
Big East Fork .....	14 .....	3.4 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker
Cold Mountain .....	39 .....	1.4 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker
Fork Mountain .....	59 .....	6.0 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker
Greasy Cove .....	66 .....	3.2 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker
Ivestor Gap .....	72 .....	3.7 .....	Easy .....	Hiker, Horse
Little East Fork .....	81 .....	5.4 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker, Horse
Old Butt .....	100 .....	3.6 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker
Shining Creek .....	114 .....	3.4 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker

## MIDDLE PRONG WILDERNESS TRAILS

TRAIL NAME	NO.	MILEAGE	DIFFICULTY	USER
Buckeye Gap .....	22 .....	3.1 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker
Green Mountain .....	67 .....	5.0 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker
Haywood Gap .....	68 .....	6.0 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker
Mountains-to-the-Sea .....	91 .....	7.8 .....	Difficult .....	Hiker

## Carry the 12 essentials

- Tell a responsible person your complete travel plans; include a description of your vehicle, where you are going, and when you will return.
- Carry the 12 essentials, even on a day hike, and know how to use them:
  - map and compass,
  - whistle (to signal for help),
  - flashlight,
  - waterproof matches,
  - candle (to help start a fire in emergencies),
  - sharp knife,
  - first aid kit,
  - extra food,
  - water,
  - space blanket or poncho,
  - nylon cord (to create an emergency shelter),
  - extra clothing.
- Be aware that ticks, stinging insects, poisonous snakes, and poison ivy are present.
- Pack proper clothing and equipment.



- Be aware of hunting season. Wear hunter orange clothing during hunting seasons.
- Refer to your map often and know where you are at all times.
- Don't expect a cell phone to help you—service is often unavailable in the mountains

## To maintain wilderness values:

- No campfires are permitted.
- Group size is limited to 10 people.
- Trails are NOT signed or blazed.
- No motorized equipment is permitted (no chainsaws).
- No wheeled vehicles are permitted (no carts, no bicycles).

## Trail difficulty

All Shining Rock and Middle Prong trails are rated “difficult,” except Ivestor Gap. Only those who have the equipment, knowledge, and experience to meet any condition of terrain, climate, or exertion should attempt leaving the trails.



**EASY:** Obvious routes requiring little skill or challenge to follow. They have easy grades and a relatively smooth tread, with some short pitches up to 20 percent maximum,



**MODERATE:** Routes that are usually recognizable, but require some skill and challenge to travel. They have moderate grades and a smooth to rough tread, with some steep pitches up to 30 percent maximum.



**DIFFICULT:** Route may not be recognizable and will require a high degree of skill and challenge to follow. Difficult routes have a steep, strenuous grade, a rough tread,

## Be wise in planning

- The most common cause for search and rescues is underestimating the time required to hike and overestimating your ability.
- You can only travel at the speed of the slowest hiker in your group. For safety, don't hike alone.
- Allow an average pace of 2 miles per hour in mountain terrain, plus 1 hour for every 1,000 feet of elevation gain.
- Avoid physical exhaustion. Exhaustion leads to exposure or accidents.

## If you get lost, . . . .

- Keep calm and stay put. Panic is your greatest enemy.
- If you spend an unexpected night out, use clothing and shelter to stay warm and dry. Pile brush around you to get protection from wind and cold.
- Rescuers will be able to find you if you don't move around. Use your whistle to signal for help; a whistle will outlast your voice.
- In an emergency, start a fire for warmth, comfort, and to help rescuers locate you.

## Beware of bad water

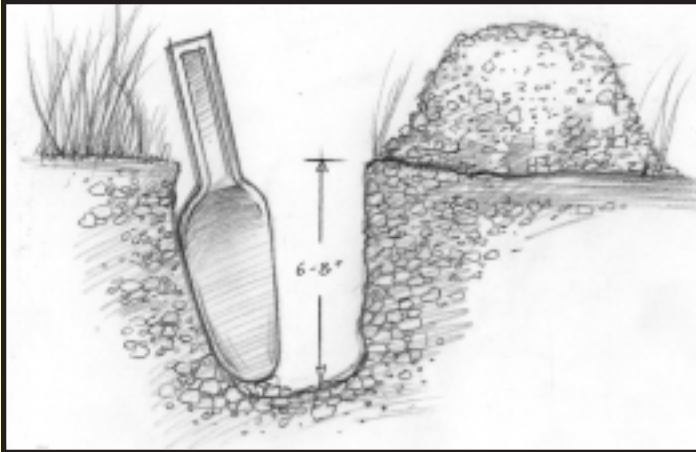
- A mountain stream may look clear and pure, but it may harbor microscopic parasites that can make you sick. Boil or treat all drinking water.
- Avoid dehydration. Drink as often as you feel thirsty. An adult needs 3 to 4 quarts of water per day when hiking.

## Be considerate

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- Camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud noises.



# Properly dispose of waste



Dig catholes at least 200 feet from water, camp and trails.

## Watch body temp

- Treat hypothermia quickly by drying and warming the victim. The victim may deny any problem
- Believe the symptoms, not the victim.
- To prevent hypothermia, layer clothing. Put on your hat and gloves before you get chilled, keep dry, eat high calorie snacks, and avoid fatigue.

## Be weather wise

- Watch for changing weather conditions. Leave high ridges and stay away from exposed rocks and trees if a thunderstorm approaches.
- Be prepared for sudden temperature drops at high elevations, even in the summer.
- Don't camp under snags or trees with large, dead limbs, especially during high winds.

## Plan ahead, prepare

- Know the regulations and special concerns for areas you will visit. At Shining Rock and Middle Prong, no campfires are permitted and group size is limited to a maximum of 10 people.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies. (Read "Be Prepared" section).
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use. Weekdays in the spring and late fall are best.
- Visit in small groups. Split larger parties into groups of 4 to 6.
- Repackage food to reduce waste carried into the backcountry.

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.
- Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6-8 inches deep at least 200 feet (70 adult paces) from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products in zip lock bags or at least bury all toilet paper in the cathole. Do not burn your toilet paper.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use little biodegradable soap. Scatter dishwater.
- To avoid damage to the soils, bring a backpack stove.
- Carry adequate water. Adults need 3-4 quarts of water per day when hiking. Surface water should be boiled for at least a minute or purified.
- Be aware of *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*. These parasites cause diarrhea and stomach cramps and might be found in any untreated water.

## Camp, travel on durable surfaces

- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses, or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet (70 adult paces) from lakes and streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.

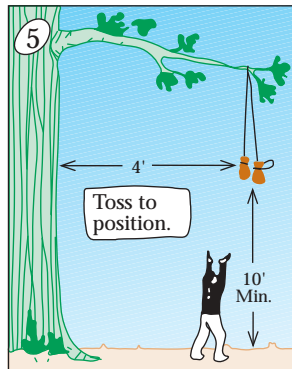
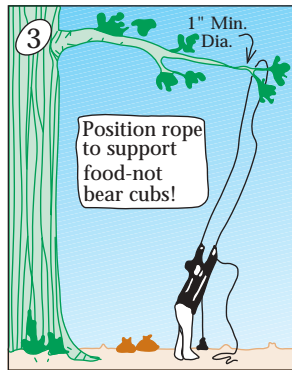
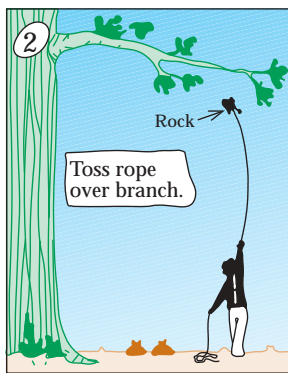
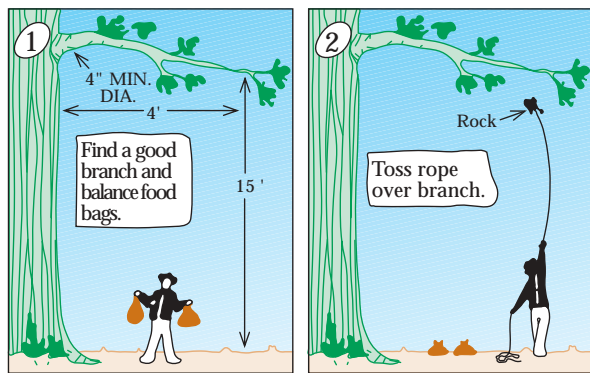
### In popular areas,

- Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
- Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
- Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.

### In pristine areas,

- Disperse use to prevent creating campsites.
- Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

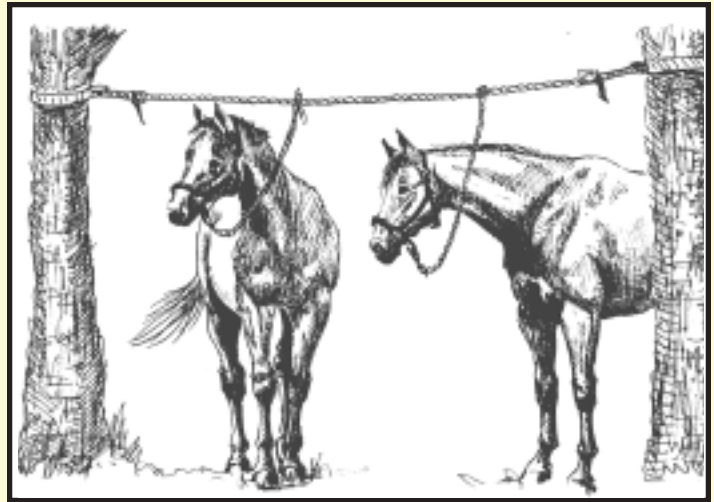




**Bearproof your food. Place food items in two bags and hang from a tree.**

## Bears in backcountry

- If you see a bear, keep your distance.
- If a bear approaches, **DON'T RUN**. Slowly back away watching the bear. Try to frighten the bear by yelling, throwing rocks, and make noise.
- Maintain a clean camp. Pack out all food and trash.
- Keep your cooking and eating area separate from sleeping area. Keep tents free of food and food odors.
- At night, secure your food and other attractants (such as toothpaste, soap, and trash) at least 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet from the tree trunk.



## Horse no-trace hints

The only trails open to horses are in Shining Rock Wilderness. These trails, Ivestor Gap and Little East Fork, are designated on the map with a horse symbol. The trails are also open to pack animals, such as llamas and mules.

While riding or packing offers another dimension to your wilderness experience, horses and pack animals require special considerations and care.

Horses and mules concentrate all their weight on the small spot where their hooves rest—as much as 1500 pounds per square inch at each foot. This weight, along with the amount of manure that comes from a large animal, can damage the land.

Perhaps the most impact to the land occurs when the party stops to rest or camp. To minimize the impact of you and your horse's visit, please follow these no-trace techniques:

- Take only fit, calm, experienced animals.
- Ride single file and make sure your animals stay on trails.
- Water horses at natural fords or from a bucket.
- Keep stock tethered at least 200 feet away from streams and away from trails and campsites.
- Avoid temporarily tying stock to trees. Use a highline with tree-saver straps to tether your animal. This prevents stock from trampling roots and chewing bark.
- Break up and scatter manure and fill in pawed holes when breaking camp.
- Pack some grain, since grazing is limited. Be certain that feed is weed-free to prevent noxious plants from spreading.



ABOVE & BELOW: Backpackers must be self-sufficient and carry all the necessities: shelter, food, and water.

## LEAVE NO TRACE



Following Leave No Trace principles helps protect the precious land, water, and experience of the backcountry. Please learn, practice, and pass on the following ethics.

## Leave what you find

- Preserve the past. Observe, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants, and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing non-native species.
- Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

## Respect wildlife

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
- Be aware: **this is bear country**. Cook and store food away from your camp. Hang food at least 10 feet from the ground and 4 feet from the tree trunk. (Look at diagram to the left.)
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or in the winter.





*A locomotive pulls logs from Shining Rock Wilderness. The area was cut heavily in the early 1900's.*

## Wilderness past includes settlers, indians, settlers, continuous logging

American Indians were the first to make their homes in the land known as Shining Rock and Middle Prong Wildernesses. The Indians hunted game and gathered berries, nuts, and plants on these wild lands.

In 1796, the State granted the land of Shining Rock Wilderness to David Allison, who sold it to three families. They farmed some land and grazed cattle on the open, grassy ridge tops.

Logging of the area began in the early 1900's when Champion Fibre Company purchased 1,000 acres on the Pigeon River to supply wood to their new pulp mill and tannin extract plant at Canton. Champion

Fibre worked with the Whitmer Company of Philadelphia (locally called Champion Lumber Company) to build a railroad and keep the mill supplied with pulpwood.

In addition to pulpwood, the Champion land had acres of huge timber. To process the large trees into lumber, the Champion Lumber Company built two sawmills. One was located at Sunburst (where Lake Logan is today) and the other at Cecil (now the site of Camp Daniel Boone) on the East Fork of the Pigeon River.

Sunburst became a model sawmill town with over 500 residents, including about 100 African Americans. The town focus was the

*Wilderness continued next page*

### *Wilderness continued previous page*

large, double-band sawmill that processed big spruce logs from the high ridges around Shining Rock. *Southern Lumberman* reported in 1913 that Sunburst's mill turned out 135,000 to 175,000 board feet of lumber daily. During World War I, spruce was in great demand for aircraft. The Cecil mill processed hardwood trees—mostly American chestnut, but some oak trees and other species from the lower slopes.

The Whitmer Company went into bankruptcy and reorganized into the Suncrest Lumber Company in 1918. Between 1918 and 1925, Suncrest continued to harvest timber and transport the logs on an extensive railroad system. Today the tracks are gone, but many railroad routes are trails.

Continuous logging from 1906 to 1925 removed vast stands of red spruce, Fraser fir, hemlock, and hardwoods. After prolonged drought, a wildfire started on October 19, 1925 and burned over 25,000 acres in 3 days. Heaps

of slash left by the logging fueled the fire. The fire was so hot in the upper elevations, where the spruce trees grew, that the organic matter was destroyed below the rooting zone—10 to 12 inches underground. In spots, up to 7 feet of soil eroded.

The U.S. Forest Service bought most of the Shining Rock and Middle Prong land in 1934, and it became part of Pisgah National Forest. Trees slowly began to grow, and during another drought in 1942, the area burned again. The fire killed the small number of spruce and fir trees that had grown back. Once blanketing the land's ridge tops, spruce and fir are now only found in small, isolated stands.

Evidence of the early American Indians and settlers may be found in the wilderness. These archeological and historic artifacts and sites hold clues to America's past. If they are disturbed, a part of our heritage is lost forever. Federal law protects such sites and artifacts on public lands. If you discover such remains, please leave these artifacts undisturbed.

