

The Best Hiking Spots in Big South Fork

Nestled along the Tennessee-Kentucky border, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts. With rugged gorges, stunning rock formations, and lush forests, this park offers some of the best hiking trails in the Southeast. Whether you're looking for a leisurely stroll or a challenging backcountry adventure, Big South Fork has something for everyone. Here are some of the best hiking spots to explore.

1. Twin Arches Loop Trail

One of the most iconic hikes in Big South Fork, the Twin Arches Loop Trail is a must-visit. This 4.6-mile loop features two of the largest natural sandstone arches in the eastern United States. Along the way, hikers are treated to breathtaking views, fascinating rock formations, and a sense of awe as they stand beneath these massive geological wonders.

2. Angel Falls Overlook Trail

For those seeking panoramic vistas, the Angel Falls Overlook Trail is an excellent choice. This moderate 4.8-mile round-trip hike leads to a spectacular overlook above the Big South Fork River. The trail meanders through dense woodlands before revealing a jaw-dropping view of Angel Falls Rapids below—a perfect spot for photography or quiet reflection.

3. Slave Falls and Needle Arch Trail

This 3.9-mile loop offers a blend of history and natural beauty. The trail takes hikers to the stunning 60-foot Slave Falls, named after the legend that enslaved individuals once sought refuge in the nearby caves. Continuing on, the route leads to Needle Arch, a unique rock formation that adds to the trail's intrigue. This hike is ideal for those who love waterfalls and fascinating geological features.

4. Honey Creek Loop

For experienced hikers looking for a challenge, the Honey Creek Loop delivers. This 5.6-mile trail is considered one of the most rugged and rewarding hikes in Big South Fork. With steep climbs, rocky terrain, and multiple creek crossings, this trail is an adventure from start to finish. Highlights include waterfalls, hidden caves, and incredible rock formations that make the effort well worth it.

5. John Muir Trail (Big South Fork Section)

The John Muir Trail, named after the famed naturalist, runs through a portion of Big South Fork, offering a variety of scenic landscapes. This section of the trail covers around 50 miles, making it perfect for backpackers looking to immerse themselves in the park's wilderness. The trail passes through rolling hills, river valleys, and sandstone bluffs, providing endless opportunities for exploration.

Plan Your Hike

Before hitting the trails, be sure to check weather conditions, bring plenty of water, and wear appropriate footwear. Many of these trails feature uneven terrain, so being prepared is key. Whether you're in search of sweeping overlooks, towering arches, or tranquil waterfalls, Big South Fork has a trail waiting for you. So lace up your hiking boots and start exploring!