

Drive Instructions

MINIs On the Dragon 2022

Sunrise Drive - Around and Through the Smoky Mountains

Organizer: Aaron Granger

Route created for MOTD 2006 and has been run at sunrise 2008-2018. Questions?

Aaron.Granger@FocusOA.com

On Motoring Alliance and NAM: agranger



Date/Time:

THURSDAY: 6am on Thursday, April 28, 2022

The Route: It spans 140 miles and runs from the Fontana General Store, across the Dragon, up the West side of the Smoky Mountains, along the Foothills Parkway (a stop for pictures) and stops near Townsend for Breakfast. We then head into Smoky Mountain National Park for a run along Little River Road (One of Reader's Digest top 100 scenic drives in the USA - rivers, waterfalls and wildflowers) before heading over the Smoky Mountains via 'the Big Hump' (more scenic views and photo ops).

Duration: This is a 4 hour drive (no traffic, driving straight through). Given an hour for Breakfast, some scenic photo/stretch stops, I would expect the entire trip to take about 5-5.5 hours. It may run a bit longer... It may run a bit shorter. You never know! Traffic happens sometimes.

Cost: There is no cost for this event. You must be a registered participant for MOTD to participate in this drive. We are stopping for breakfast, but everyone will be responsible for their own meal.

Meeting Place: The drive will begin in front of the Fontana General Store.

Radios: FRS radios are wonderful for this type of event. We will run on Channel 8 (no sub-channel or sub=0).

The Drive: This is a SCENIC drive. Please keep all four wheels on your side of the yellow line. We will keep the pace brisk, but will happily respond to radio requests to slow down a bit. These directions have been tested several times and nobody (that I know of :P) has gotten lost, so if you feel that you are driving beyond your limits to keep up with the group, please requests that we slow down a bit or enjoy the rest of the drive at your own, safe pace. The most important thing is the safety of everyone involved.

Warnings: Unlike most sharp turn signs (especially in a MINI), the speed warnings for turns in the Smoky Mountain park are very accurate... Take them seriously. Mind your speed on anything that resembles a highway... radar WILL be present. Fines for speeding on the Foothills Parkway are very serious (Federal road), from what I've been told, so we will be taking it easy on that road.

Logistics and Breakfast: We will be stopping in Townsend, TN for breakfast, bathrooms, gas and whatever else you need. This will happen about 1-1.5 hour into the drive (50 miles). Please ensure that you start the trip with enough gas to get you here. Once we leave Fontana, we will not be near any facilities and I doubt the Fontana gas station will be open at 6am. If you forgot anything when packing, this stop is for you! It is a small IGA Grocery Store (imagine something sized between your regular home grocery store and a normal gas station convenience store. They will have any toiletries that you might need, food items, etc. They also have a great deli section that serves breakfast staples. The sausage biscuit and a cup of coffee are my regular items. It's a good place for some Smoky Mountain trinkets and local candy, if you need gifts for folks at the office when you get home. I VERY STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT YOU FILL UP WITH GAS HERE. Gas isn't always plentiful in the mountains. Sometimes the Fontana station gets low and they limit purchases to 2-3 gallons at a time. If you get the chance to fill up with quality gas while at MOTD, do it! The bathrooms are usually fairly clean here as well.

This will be our one bathroom break for the trip. It is a long way back to Fontana. Please plan your coffee size choice accordingly.

HOW TO DRIVE THE DRAGON (Reprised from an article by Ron Johnson at www.tailofthedragon.com):

Drive the Dragon at your skill level - don't try to push it or keep up with faster vehicles.

STAY IN YOUR LANE, There are videos available for sale that show vehicles cutting the corners and taking chances that might appear "fun" while sitting in your easy chair. **BEWARE !** This style of driving on the Dragon can cost you dearly. The challenge of the Dragon is to take the many curves in the best line possible and both lanes IS NOT "the line". Drive Florida if you like to straighten out the curves.

Do NOT sightsee. The Dragon is to drive, not to watch the sights. On many runs I don't even see what is on the side of the road. I'm watching the roadway way ahead.

Look far ahead at the road, curves, bushes, other vehicles, etc. If you haven't seen the hazards right in front of you, you are going to hit them anyway, so you might as well pay attention to what you have time to avoid.

We have seen deer, bear, turkeys, and wild boar on the roadway. Be ready to brake and slow. When we say brake we DO NOT mean slamming on the brakes. That will get you turned around in a hurry and it's no fun looking at where you've been at any speed.

Maintain a "safe zone". Keep a safe distance between you and the vehicle ahead of you. Watch your rear view mirrors for faster vehicles. If you see a faster rider/driver coming up behind you, pull over to the right of your lane, slow down just a little, and wave them around. It is much safer to let a faster vehicle around you than to try to outrun them. NEVER stay left trying to keep someone from passing you. NEVER pull off the road onto the shoulder unless it is at one of the pull-off parking areas. It may be illegal to pass on the Dragon, but I'll let a faster vehicle get around me to protect my safe zone.

There will always be faster drivers than you. Don't try to be the King of the Dragon.

Drive the Dragon many times before trying to challenge it. Then you still need to respect it at all times.

DO NOT STAND ON THE BRAKES if you see danger ahead. You are much better off to tap the brakes and maintain control. Some 90% of the accidents on the Dragon are due to speed and then over-braking. If you see another vehicle coming at you in your lane, hug the white line in your lane. In all likelihood you can avoid trucks and trailers if you stay alert and watch ahead.

DO NOT be spooked by other vehicles. **DO NOT** make sudden avoidance moves. You might have to adjust your line to avoid a car, truck, or bike, but **DO NOT** lay on the brakes or turn off the roadway suddenly unless that is the only out you have. Motorcycles might dent your car, but that is better than going off the bank and hitting a tree sideways. If a cycle is in your lane that is their mistake and problem ... don't let them force you into a worse situation for yourself.

Trucks are usually traveling at a very slow speed and you should have time to stop and back-up if you see one coming at you and taking the whole corner. Watch for signals from drivers/riders coming at you. Many times they will escort a big truck over the Dragon and wave a warning to you to pull over. **DO NOT** ignore these warnings.

Avoid driving hard on the Dragon in heavy traffic times. Weekends from 11 am to 5 pm are the busiest. These are the times to lay back and enjoy watching the "show" go by.

The early mornings (before 11 am) and the late afternoons (after 5 pm) have the least traffic.

ALWAYS stay 100% alert. You do not have the advantage of relaxing on the Dragon.

Make sure your vehicle is mechanically sound and that your tires are good.

Plan to make several runs, the first is always a nervous one then you can have fun on the second and third.

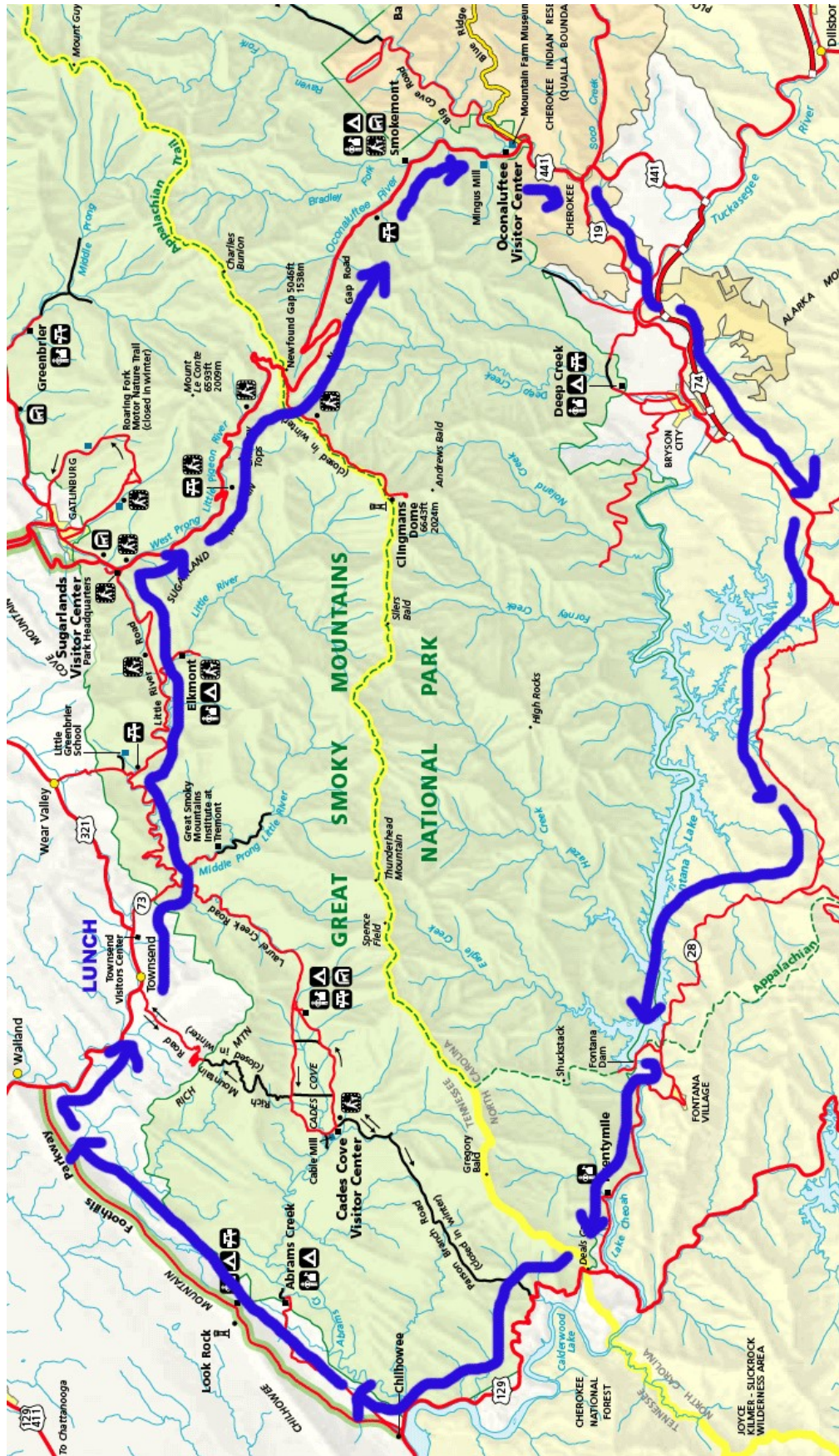
DO NOT over-use your brakes. Use your gears and **DOWNSHIFT**. A good Dragon driver **WILL NOT** use a lot of brakes.

Focus - do not daydream. Watch the road, your mirrors, and pay attention to other bikes/cars/trucks.

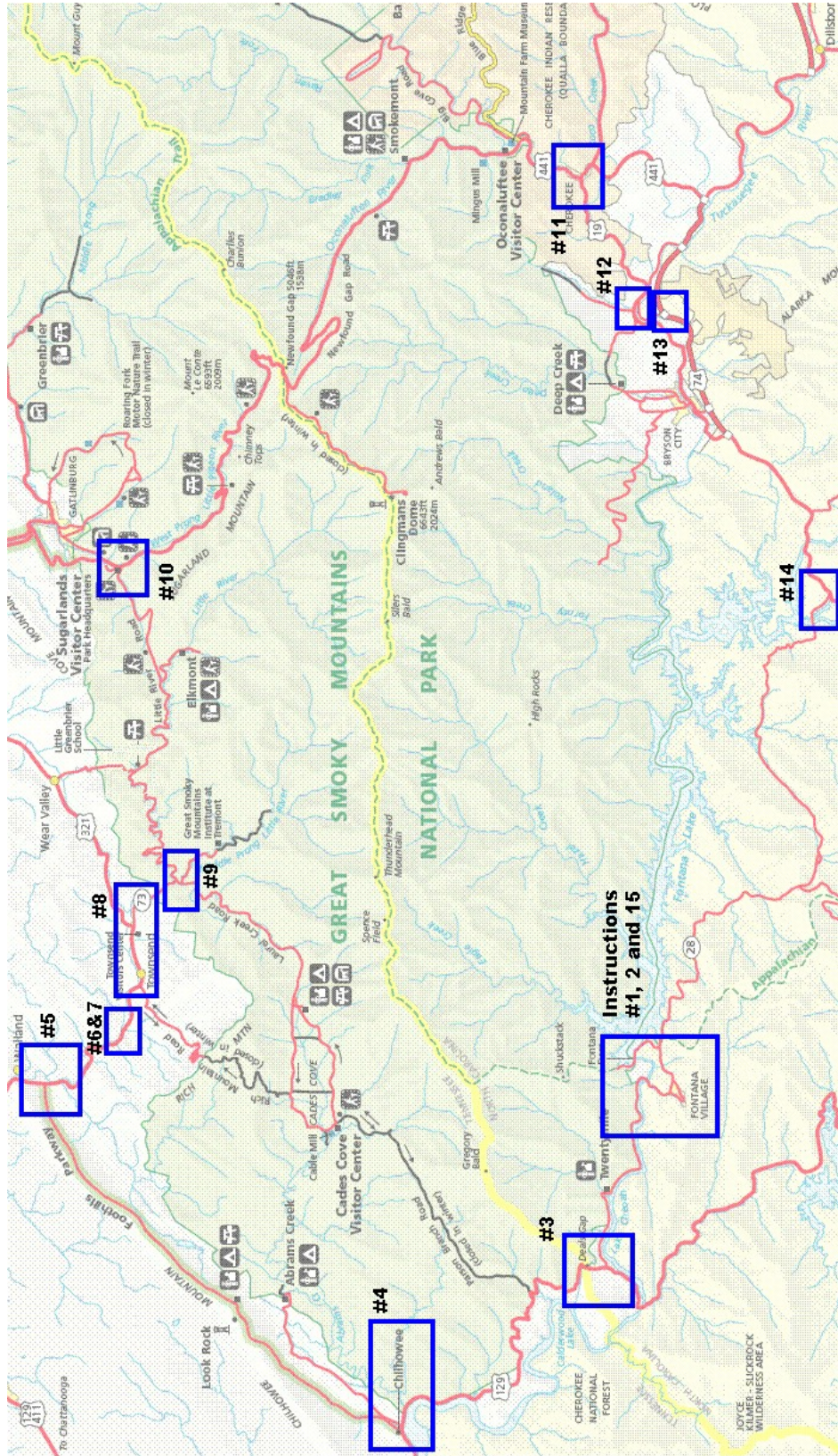
99% of the accidents on the Dragon come from the following:

- Too much speed
- Too much brakes
- Inattentiveness
- Driving above your abilities





An Overview of the Route:






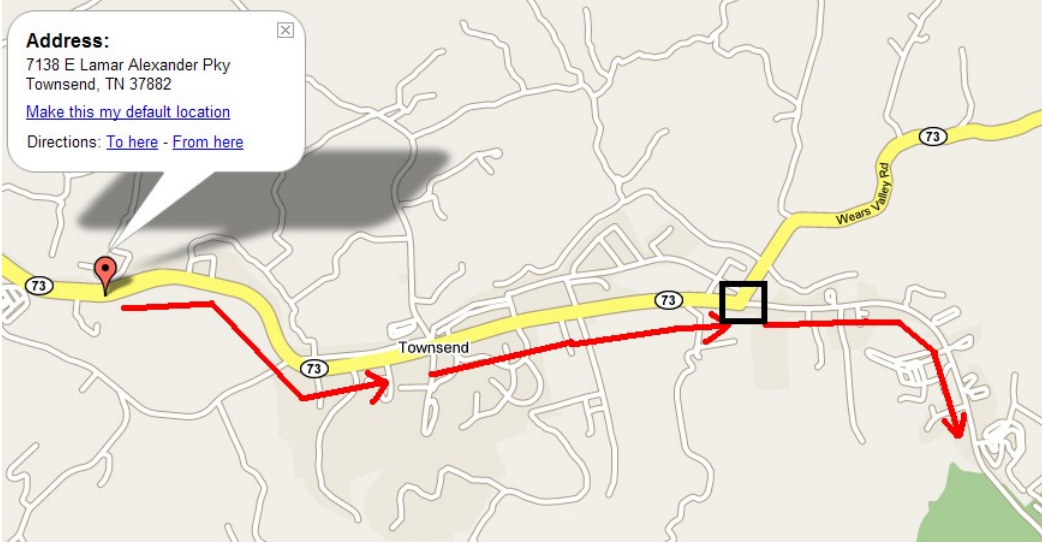
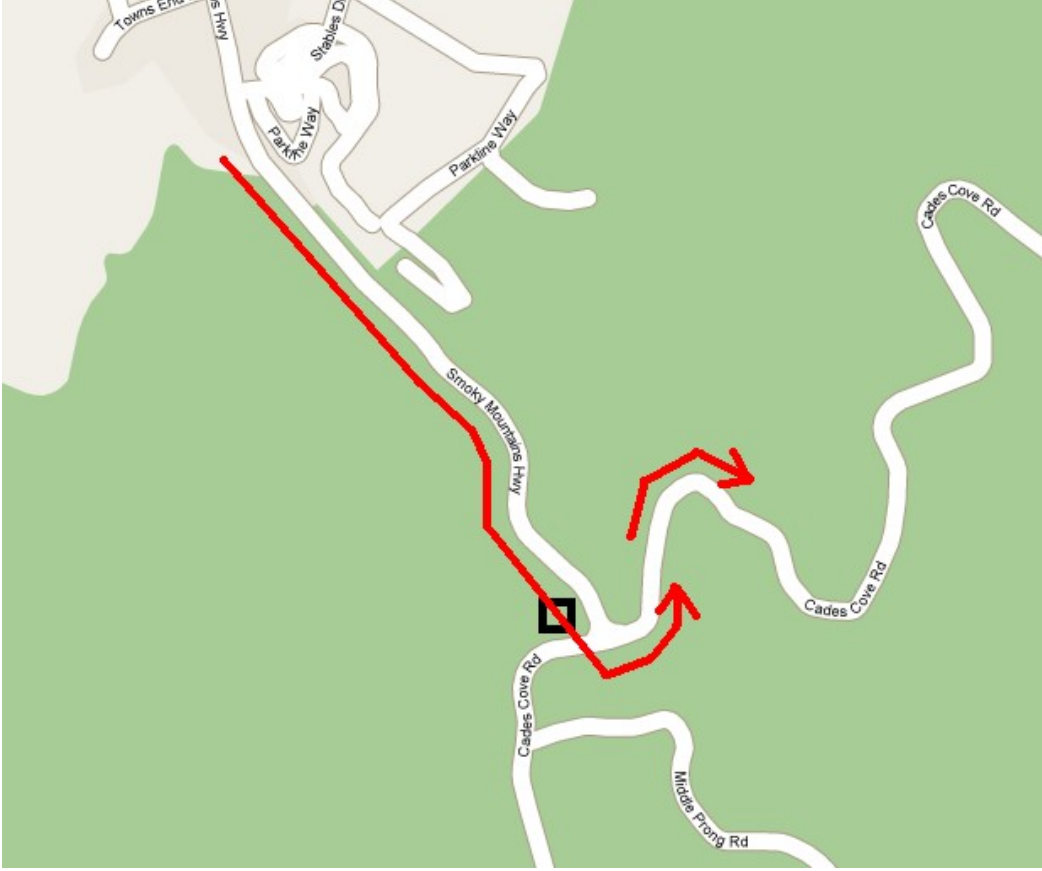
Step by step instructions:

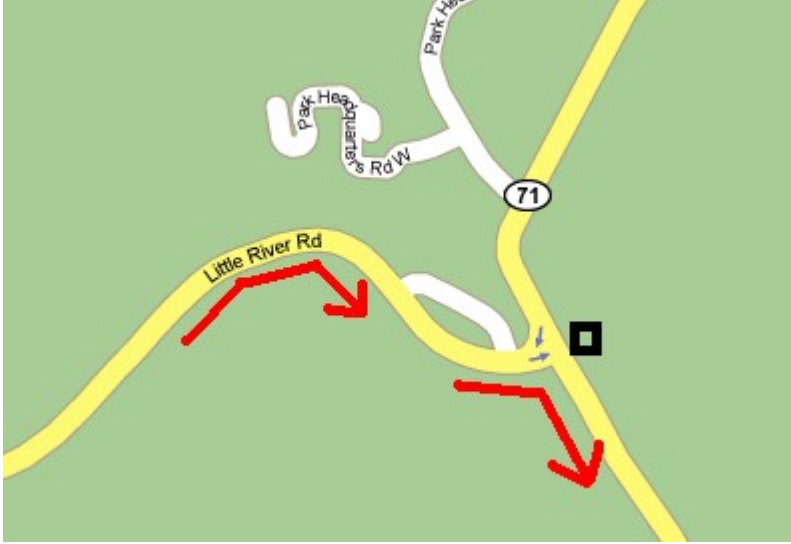
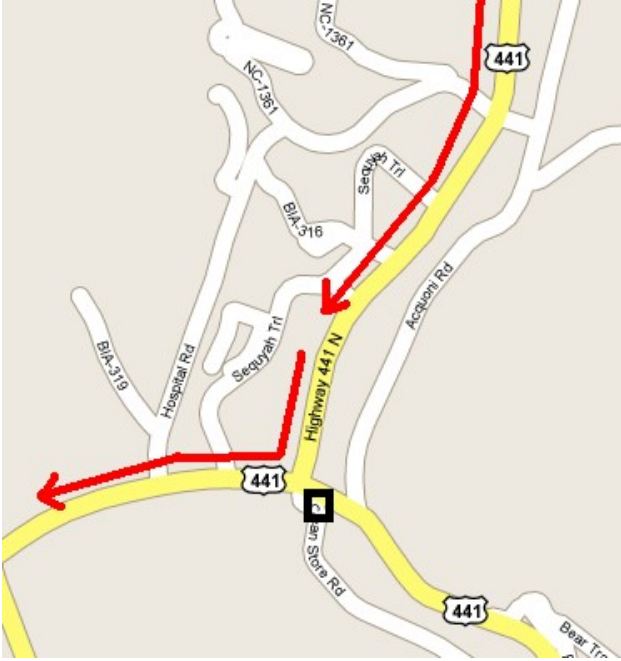
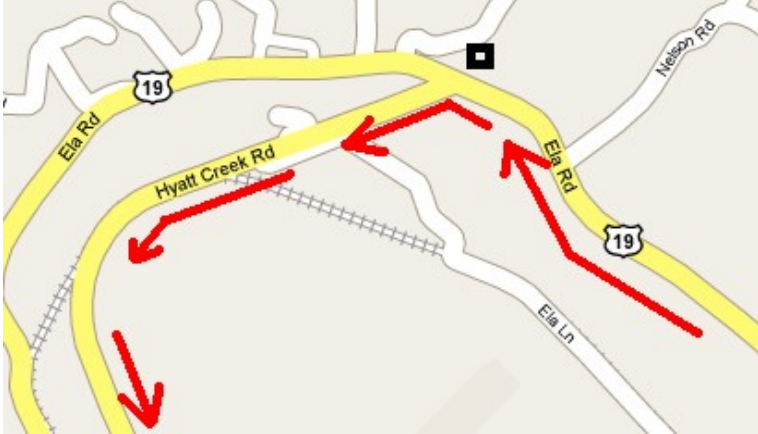





**Instructions
#1, 2 and 15**

Miles	Map	Directions
		<p>1: Depart the staging area in front of Fontana General Store.</p>
<p>0 Miles on trip 7.7 to next turn</p>		<p>2: TURN LEFT onto 28 towards the Tail of the Dragon – Reset your trip meter as you make this turn.</p>
<p>7.6 Miles on trip 14.9 to next turn</p>		<p>3: TURN RIGHT onto US 129 (State 115) at Deals Gap</p>
<p>22.4 Miles on trip 16.8 to next turn</p>		<p>4: TURN RIGHT onto Foothills Parkway</p>
<p>25.9 & 37.7 Miles</p>	<p>These two stops will easily hold 45 cars. We will stop at one of them at the leaders decision (light, traffic, weather, etc.)</p>	<p>Scenic Overlook</p>

<p>39.1 Miles on trip</p> <p>6.9 to next turn</p>		<p>5: At the end of the Parkway, TURN RIGHT onto US 321 (State 73), AKA The Smoky Mountain Highway</p>
<p>45.7 Miles on trip</p>		<p>6: If we were coming by here at lunch, we'd stop at the Apple Valley Kitchen on the Right... nice food and a good gift shop. We will stop at the IGA / Shell Gas Station on the left in another 2.2 miles, tucked behind the US Bank.</p>
<p>45.7 Miles on trip</p> <p>0.6 to next (non) turn</p>	 <p>If you are coming back by here, the Apple Valley Kitchen is a nice place to stop for lunch.</p>	<p>7: 15 minute Stop for Food, Gas, Breakfast and Bathrooms.</p> <p>TURN LEFT out of driveway and continue on US 321 (State 73)</p>

<p>46.3 Miles on trip</p> <p>2.3 to next turn</p>	 <p>Address: 7138 E Lamar Alexander Pky Townsend, TN 37882 Make this my default location Directions: To here - From here</p>	<p>8: Continue STRAIGHT through the lights in Townsend and Bethel.</p> <p>DO NOT TURN LEFT with TN 73</p>
<p>48.5 Miles on trip</p> <p>17.4 miles to next turn</p>		<p>9: TURN LEFT onto Cades Cove Road</p> <p>(AKA Old TN 73 and Little River Road)</p> <p>Follow sign toward Gatlinburg.</p>

<p>65.7 Miles on trip</p> <p>31.5 to next turn</p>		<p>10: TURN RIGHT onto US 441</p> <p>(AKA TN 71)</p> <p>Follow Sign to Cherokee / New Found Gap</p>
<p>78.4 Miles on trip</p>	<p>10-15 minute stop – 30 cars are a tight squeeze!</p>	<p>Scenic Overlook</p>
<p>97.7 Miles on trip</p> <p>5.4 To next turn</p>		<p>11: TURN RIGHT onto US 19</p> <p>(AKA Ela Road)</p>
<p>103.0 Miles</p> <p>1.7 to next turn</p>		<p>12: TURN LEFT onto Hyatt Creek Road (a 45 degree left turn)</p>

<p>104.7 Miles on trip</p> <p>11 to next turn</p>		<p>13: TAKE US 74 West</p> <p>(AKA The Great Smokey Mountains Expy)</p> <p>It merges into NC 28 and Highway 19W</p>
<p>115.4 Miles on trip</p> <p>22.4 to Fontana</p>		<p>14: BEAR RIGHT onto State 28 (AKA Fontana Road)</p>
<p>135.4</p>	<p>Turn Left at stop sign to head back to Fontana Village. Turn right if you want a quick side-trip to the top of Fontana Dam.</p>	<p>TURN LEFT at stop sign.</p>
<p>136.4 Miles on trip</p>		<p>15: Arrive back at Fontana Village</p>

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

One Page Instructions for Scenic Drive around the Smoky Mountains – MOTD 2022

1		Depart the staging area in front of the Fontana General Store .
2	Trip: 0 mi 7.7 to next turn	TURN LEFT from the Fontana Entrance Road onto 28 towards the Tail of the Dragon – Reset your trip meter as you make this turn.
3	Trip: 7.6 mi 14.9 to next turn	TURN RIGHT onto US 129 (State 115)
4	Trip: 22.4 mi 16.8 to next turn	TURN RIGHT onto Foothills Parkway - DO NOT SPEED – This is federal land and tickets can easily reach \$500!
	Trip: 25.9 mi & 37.7 mi	Scenic Overlooks – There are several great overlooks on this road. These two spots can easily accommodate up to 45 cars.
5	Trip: 39.1 mi 6.6 to next turn	At the end of the Foothills Parkway, TURN RIGHT onto US 321 (State 73), AKA The Smoky Mountain Highway
6	Trip: 45.7 mi	BP station on left for gas, bathroom break and food, if you wish. There is no gas for the next 1.5 hours and gas is cheaper here than at Fontana, so I'll be filling up.
7	Trip: 45.7 mi 0.6 to next marker	15 minute stop for gas, food, bathroom break. TURN LEFT out of driveway and continue on US 321 (TN 73)
8	Trip: 46.3 mi 2.3 to next turn	CONTINUE STRAIGHT through the lights in Townsend and Bethel. TN 73 will turn left, but you will CONTINUE STRAIGHT
9	Trip: 48.5 mi 17.4 to next turn	TURN LEFT onto Cades Cove Road (AKA Old TN 73 and/or Little River Road) – Follow the sign to Gatlinburg.
10	Trip: 65.7 mi 31.5 to next turn	TURN RIGHT onto US 441 (AKA TN 71) – Follow sign to Cherokee / New Found Gap
	Trip: 72.2 mi	Good video opportunity if someone wants to run ahead of the pack and stand on left side of road after 2 nd tunnel.
	Trip: 78.4 mi	Scenic Overlook – 30 cars are a tight squeeze
11	Trip: 97.7 mi 5.4 to next turn	TURN RIGHT onto US 19 (AKA Ela Road)
12	Trip: 103.0 mi 1.7 to next turn	TURN LEFT onto Hyatt Creek Road (a 45 degree left turn)
13	Trip: 104.7 mi 11 to next turn	TAKE US 74 West (AKA The Great Smokey Mountains Expy) It merges into NC 28 and Highway 19W
14	Trip: 115.4 mi 21.4 to Fontana	BEAR RIGHT onto NC 28 (AKA Fontana Road)
15	Trip: 135.4 1 to Fontana	TURN LEFT at the stop sign to Fontana. Turn Right for a side trip to the top of Fontana Dam
16	Trip: 136.4 mi	Arrive back at Fontana Village