

## TRAIL DESCRIPTION *(map inside)*

# BLUE HOLE TRAIL

**A. The remainder of an original road** that went from Beersheba to Altamont can be seen here, off to the right, as you descend towards Blue Hole (see map, inside).

**B. Firescald Creek** forms the Blue Hole basin that is at the end of this trail. The "Fire Scald" name may commemorate the "scalded" remains of plants after a forest fire.

**C. The long outcrop of rock at Blue Hole**, geologists tell us, is Sewanee conglomerate, a sandstone filled with many small pebbles. It covered much of the Plateau and is named for the place it was first identified. Some call it pudding stone. Can you see it?

**D. Swimming here** can start as early as mid-March, in a warm year. No floats allowed.



This mill, at Stop 8 on the Greeter Day Loop, was first a grain mill but was later converted to a sawmill by the Greeter family. The mill was washed away long ago in a flood, but you can still see the outline of its foundation, where the trail approaches the creek.

## TRAIL OVERVIEWS

# SAVAGE GULF WEST TRAILHEAD

There are two trail sections within the western part of the Savage Gulf area of South Cumberland State Park: The Greeter Day Loop, and the Blue Hole Trail.

## GREETER DAY LOOP

From the parking lot, this moderate to strenuous 1.4 mile trail (including the spur to the Greeter Home Place and the Greeter Loop) descends 240 feet into the coves made by Firescald Creek and Boardtree Branch. The 0.8 mile loop offers three waterfalls, swimming, magnificent rock formations, and a rock scramble along a high narrow ledge under the bluff.

## BLUE HOLE TRAIL

This trail descends about 150 feet to Firescald Creek and the Blue Hole. It's easy for most of the way, with some steeply rocky going at the end. Starting at the junction, the trail is a total of 0.8 mile out and back. The forest here is made up of Virginia pine (twisty needles in pairs), American holly in the understory, Canadian hemlock, and fewer hardwoods than in some other areas nearby. You can find ground pine (Lycopodia) beside the trail. Its spores were dried and then ground to powder that was used in old-time flash photography. Both the ground pine and the hemlocks are here because around 12,000 years ago, the climate was much cooler due to glaciers north of us. Those plants that like cooler weather have retreated to the coves of the Plateau for refuge.



Ground Pine (Lycopodia)

PRODUCED BY

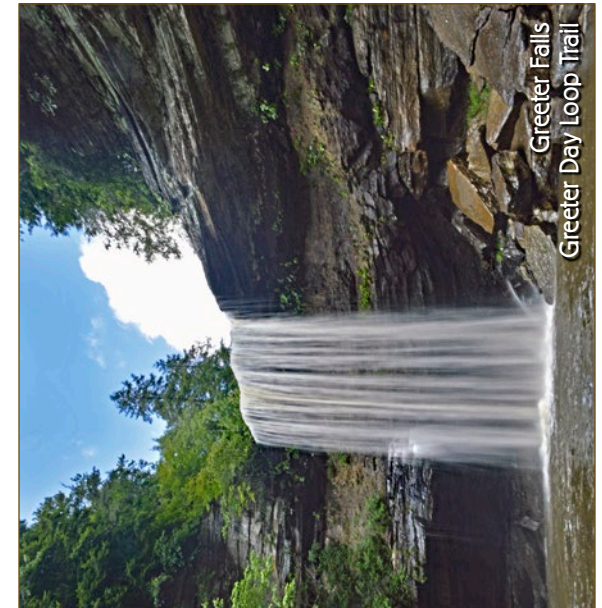
**Friends of South Cumberland State Park**

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# South Cumberland State Park NATURAL SCIENCE TRAIL GUIDE SAVAGE GULF WEST

INCLUDING TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS FOR:

the **GREETER DAY LOOP**  
and the **BLUE HOLE TRAIL**





## TRAIL DESCRIPTION

# GREETER DAY LOOP

**1. Trailhead** (no overnight parking). Looking at the entrance trail, it seems “paved” with river rock. You can see the rounded edges that mean it was polished in water, unlike other rock in the landscape. This may indicate it was part of a 19th century road that ran from Beersheba to Altamont.

**2. A blue blaze** shows that the Greeter Home Place spur trail begins here. The trail is wide enough so that it may be the original road out to the homestead.

**3. Is this a marker tree?** Native Americans who were here for thousands of years before Europeans came, used “marker trees” to indicate a direction towards something significant—water, a hunting shelter, stream crossings. We do not know whether this tree is a Marker Tree.

**4. The Greeter family** came to this site from Switzerland by way of Brooklyn, NY, Gruetli, and Beersheba. In 1890 Grandfather Greeter moved here. In 1895, he learned the blacksmith trade to build wagons and caskets and converted the grist mill that was there to a lumber mill. The grist mill was first called Hunter’s Mill and then Long’s Mill, as ownership changed. Old road names reflect this as well.

**5. The 0.8 mile Greeter loop** starts here. From this point counterclockwise it is 0.2 mile to the spur down to Upper and Lower Greeter Falls.

**6. Ancient rocks** tell the story of millions of years of sand deposited by large rivers flowing over this area. The sloped beds are deposited on the leading edge of an advancing sand bar. The slope is in the direction the river was flowing.

**7. Spur on the right** leads to easy access to Upper Greeter and a more challenging spiral stair access to Greeter Falls and the swimming hole.

**8. Upper Greeter Falls** was the location for a grist mill, and then a lumber mill (see photo on reverse). The area was rich in huge old growth poplars, oak, and hickory when Europeans arrived.

**9. Most dogs have to be carried down these stairs.** It’s a two story drop to reach Greeter Falls and the swimming hole.

**10. The trail by Boardtree Falls** is narrow and rocky. It is high up from the cove, and under the bluff. It is about 0.6 mile from here to the end of the loop.

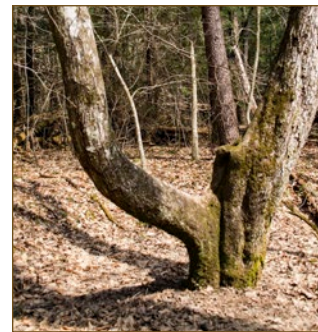
**11. Follow the white blazes** through this rocky stretch of trail.

**12. The Boardtree Branch** is below you in the cove, flowing to meet Firescald Creek below Greeter Falls. It feeds into Big Creek.

**13. Boardtree Falls** is impressive after recent rains.

**14. This bridge** leaves the Greeter loop and heads to Alum Gap.

**15. The original European settlers’ road** from Beersheba to Altamont may have run right here. That road was probably based on an ancient Native American road, called the “Chicamauga Trace”. Can you find signs of the river rock “paving”?



LEFT: Foundation of the Greeter Home Place, the location of which is indicated with a red dot on the map at right. ABOVE: A “marker tree...?” RIGHT: This 1897 map also shows the route of the original Beersheba-to-Altamont road, which ran through this area.

Don't forget to download the companion **GPS Trail Guide** (.kml file) for this hike at [FriendsOfSouthCumberland.org/downloadable-maps](http://FriendsOfSouthCumberland.org/downloadable-maps)