

## HISTORY OF SATULAH MOUNTAIN PRESERVE

The summit of Satulah Moutnain was the first property protected by the Land Trust more than 100 years ago. In 1909 a group of concerned citizens raised \$500 to conserve the summit of Satulah, ensuring it would remain in its natural state as a public park for all to enjoy in perpetuity. This group eventually evolved into the organization we now know as Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust (HCLT). Since then, HCLT has gone on to conserve over 3,400 acres of valuable land resources in Highlands and Cashiers, including 100 acres here at Satulah Mountain Preserve.

Satulah Mountain functions as a proverbial "island in the sky," being one of the tallest peaks at 4543 ft on the edge of the Blue Ridge Escarpment. It is home to a number of rare and unusual plant species known from few other places, including granite dome golden rod, Hartweg's locust, and ground juniper. The Satulah Moutnain trails are part of the Highlands Plateau Greenway system.

## TRAIL INFORMATION

Traverse from town up a paved road to a ridgetop trail that leads to a spectacular vista with a near 270 degree view!

**Difficulty:** Strenuous. The hike features steep inclines, uneven ground, and steps.

**Walking Length from town:** 3+ miles round trip.

**Directions:** Beginning in downtown Highlands, head south on 4th Street. Turn left onto Satulah Rd. When you get to Worley Rd., turn right to stay on Satulah Rd., this will lead you to the trailhead. Alternatively, you can continue onto Worley Rd. to stay on the paved portion. This will end in a cul-de-sac where you will see trail heads for both the Ride Trail and Old Jeep Trail, which will converge later on the trail. Unfortunately, there is no parking at any of the trail heads.

Photo Credit: Kevin FitzPatrick

# SATULAH MOUNTAIN

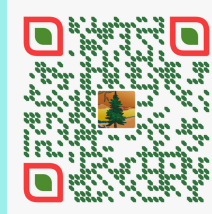
HIKING TOUR

HIGHLANDS,  
NC

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# NATURAL HISTORY HIKING TOUR

## 1) HISTORIC TRAIL

This section of trail, which meets with Satulah Rd. was rerouted in the late 1990's and rehabilitated in 2018. It is one of the two main historic routes the public has taken to reach the summit of Satulah.

## 2) OX CART TRAIL

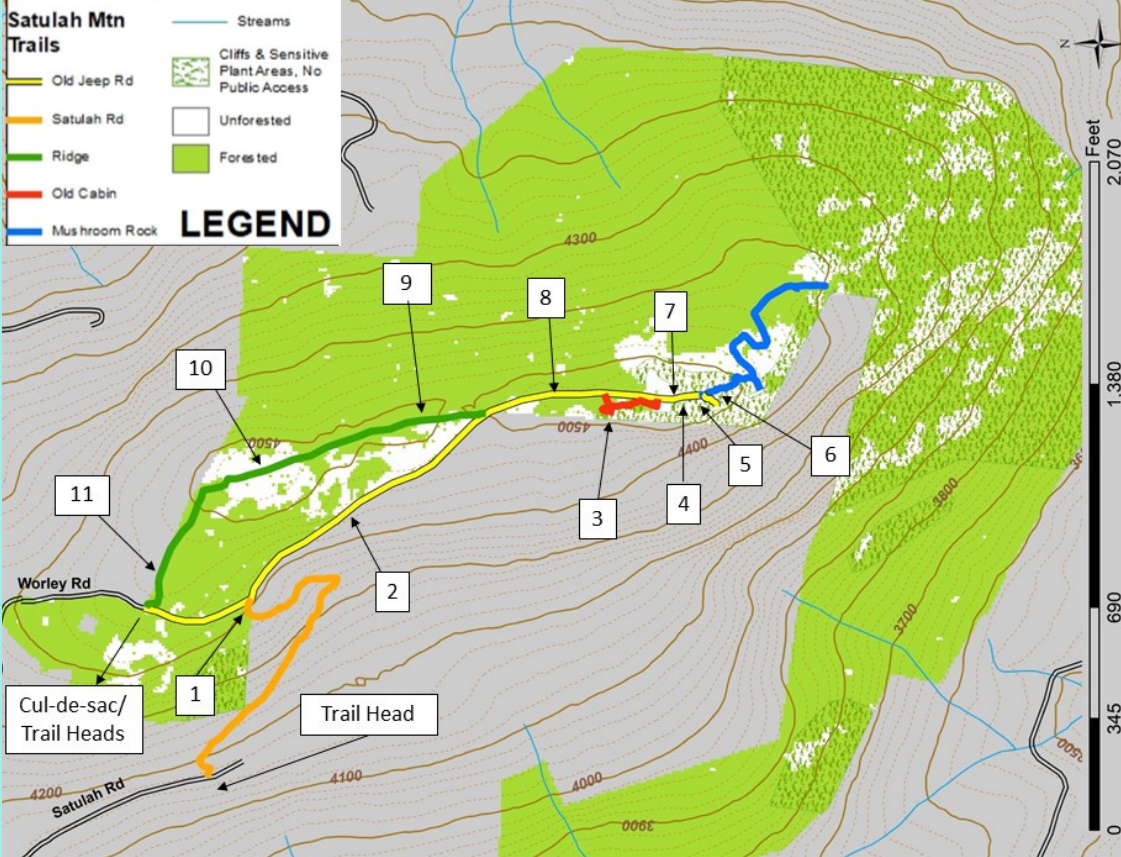
Historically, the trail used to be accessible with a horse or ox cart, and later by jeeps & trucks carrying supplies to the fire tower. Over time, water and wear has taken its toll. The trail here is over 100 years old!

## 3) STONE HOUSE

This is the old cabin site where people used to be able to spend the night. Now it provides a view of HCLT's BrushyFace Preserve below, and is home to some rare plants including the Ground Juniper and Sand Myrtle, which looks similar to boxwood.

## 4) FIRE TOWER

The rock at the summit has some holes in it where the Forest Service Fire Tower once stood. This is also the spot where Samuel Kelsey, the founder of Highlands, was inspired to found the town after seeing the view from here. The US Forest Service once had a fire tower here, taking advantage of the high peak and wide range view overlooking NC, SC, and GA.



## 5) SUMMIT

Satulah Mountain is a granitic Pluton with a cap of Ashe Metamorphic Suite rock, giving it its distinctive two cliff appearance from the south. The Pluton is the remains of a once molten lava core that hardened, with most of the softer rocks having long since eroded away. Notice the upward slanting and layering of the Ashe Metamorphic Suite at the summit.

## 6) JUNIPER RESTORATION AREA

The Summit of Satulah and similar mountains have little soil. This lack of soil prevents most trees from growing, giving rise to places dominated by shrubs known as Heath Balds. You'll note lots of blueberry (red twigs) here and more junipers. The juniper is a circum-boreal species and the same species used to make gin. This is the southern-most site in the east for this species, which is considered a glacial relict and refuge.

## 7) PITCH PINE

Can be identified by the needles growing out of the trunks in clusters of three. These are a fire adapted species and grow in gnarly forms on Satulah.

## 8) MOUNTAIN LAUREL TUNNEL

Mountain Laurels and Rhododendrons are evergreen shrubs in the heath family known for forming dense canopies and their brilliant flower displays.

## 9) CHINQUAPIN

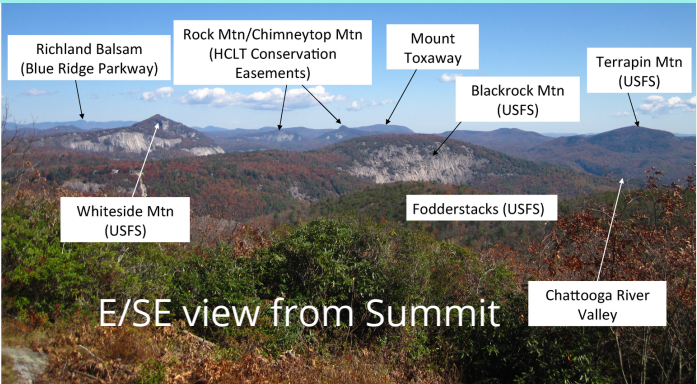
Look for chinquapin chestnut husks on the ground. Chinquapin are more resistant to the blight that killed most of its cousin, the American chestnut, but are smaller and tend to grow more along ridges and higher slopes. They are beloved by red squirrels and black bears.

## 10) RIDGE

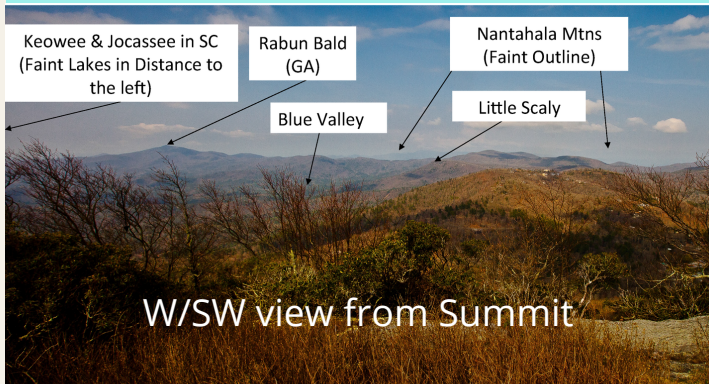
The ridge is also part of the Eastern Continental Divide, where water here can go to either the Gulf or Atlantic depending on exactly where it lands.

## 11) DWARF WHITE OAKS

This ridge top forest has trees that may be as old as 300 years. However, due to the harsh conditions on the ridge (wind, ice, drought), and shallow soils, the trees grow slower and do not reach the same height and diameter as the same species growing lower on slopes and in valleys. Count the rings on the stump nearby!



E/SE view from Summit



W/SW view from Summit