

Spring in the Smokies

April 19-23, 2010

While many people go to the Smokies for the fall color, the truly spectacular season is the spring. Spring in the Smokies brings an amazing range of wildflowers, the emergence of soft green foliage, and full flows of water in the numerous creeks and streams. For wildlife, the spring announces new life as bears emerge with cubs, fawns are born, and wild turkeys are in peak seasonal color.

Note: Spring 2010 will be interrupted by extensive repaving of the park roads. Cades Cove will be closed to automobile traffic for nearly two months including all of April. Cades Cove will be accessible on foot, but is not particularly good for wildflower photography. We will spend a minimal amount of time in Cades Cove. The one way portion of the Roaring Fork Nature Trail will also be closed. In spite of that, we will be able to reach most of the normal shooting locations on foot with a short walk and it will have minimal impact. None of the road closures will limit our ability to reach the best spring locations for wildflowers and stream photography.

Tentative Itinerary

In the spring, the weather in the Smokies is highly variable. We could get beautiful sunny days and vibrant sunsets. Or we could get rain – which saturates images, fills the streams, and creates wonderful fog. We could even get snow and ice at high elevations. We will adjust the schedule based on conditions to take advantage of the best photo opportunities in the park, so this is schedule is likely to change.

Arrival – Monday, April 19

We arrive in Gatlinburg by 4:00 PM to in time to get acquainted and then head out for an early dinner. Over dinner we'll review the plan for the week and have a short workshop with tips and suggestions to help get the most from your experience.

Tuesday, April 20

This morning we'll get an early start with a sunrise shoot at the highest elevations in the park. Temperatures will be chilly, but with luck we'll see a great sunrise. Following sunrise, we'll get a hearty breakfast and then head out for the day. Our main destination will be the Greenbrier area of the park for a morning of reflections and stream photography. In the afternoon we'll shift our emphasis to wildflowers. One of the options for us today is a short hike to one of the best wildflower areas in the park. For sunset we'll head back to the high elevations for a classic Smokies view.

Wednesday, April 21

On Day 2 we'll get up early for a trip to the western side of the park. We'll plan for a sunrise shoot that includes nice fog in the valleys. After sunrise we'll pick up a quick breakfast, and then head into the Tremont area for photography in a different type of steam. The lush moss and dogwood trees provide a wide range of compositions and I'm sure you'll want to spend

more time. After lunch, we'll take a short hike on a little known trail that has some of the best wildflowers in the area. We'll make our way back toward Gatlinburg but it won't be a quick trip. Most of the trip will be along streams and we will stop frequently. For sunset we'll head to the high elevations with grand views of the fading light.

Thursday, April 22

Sunrise in the Smokies is always different. Today we'll be up early and head to the high elevations of the park for sunrise. Following sunrise, we'll work our way down the mountain ahead for the soft light and fog on the mountain streams. After a hearty breakfast, we'll head into the Roaring Fork area. We'll have a chance to create unique images of blooming dogwood trees around the old cabins of the early settlers. With a short walk, we'll visit some of the best areas of the scenic drive without any of the normal crowds. In the afternoon we'll have a bit of a change of pace while we head to the southern side of the park to visit one of the park's tallest waterfalls and a nearby historic mill. We'll make our way back to the high elevations of the park for the classic Smokies sunset. At this point it's been a long day, so we'll treat ourselves to a nice dinner.

Friday, April 23

This is the last day of the workshop and is only a half day. Of course, we'll be up for sunrise at the high elevations. During the morning we'll focus on the middle elevations for photography of trillium, dutchman's pipe vine, and other wildflowers. By noon we'll conclude the workshop and depart with lots of images, new skills and knowledge, and new friends.

Notes on activities: On several days we are planning short hikes. One of the hikes is around two miles and would be rated easy in terms of difficulty. The other two hikes are both less than one mile and would be rated moderate in terms of difficulty. We also expect to have extensive photography around streams. Waterproof boots or non-slip boots are useful but not required as long as you take your time and use good judgment.

Hotel

Gatlinburg - 4 nights

- Suggestion – Hilton Garden Inn, Gatlinburg
- Check In Monday 4/21
- Check Out Friday 4/25

Price: \$700 - \$600 if paid by February 15, 2010
Limited to 5 photographers

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