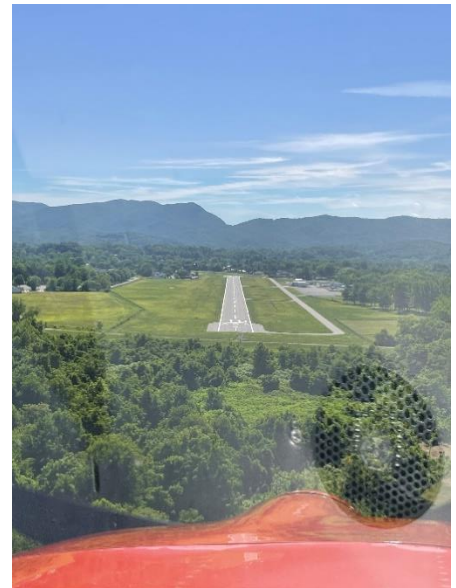


Happy Landings!!

CUMBERLAND GAP NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK MIDDLESBORO, KY (Middlesboro/Bell County Airport 1A6) *June 07, 2022*

I'm very excited to tell you about this trip! The flight was about 45 minutes and just over 100 nautical miles. It was a perfect day for flying, and I enjoyed watching the changing landscape go by. This may sound silly, but I like to collect National Park Stamps and Cancellations when we camp and then reminisce about where we have been. I outgrew the small Passport book and migrated my collection to the next larger size book. Our mission for this flight was to get the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park stamp (2005 set), and then do some easy hiking!

First, the airport was wonderful! It's nestled between hills and forests. The pilots' kitchen was well stocked with complementary drinks and snacks. Bathrooms were clean. Glynna Brown who works for the county and manages the airport greeted us upon arrival. She is a pilot too. She took our pictures, and we were provided with a courtesy car. Courtesy cars are available for two hours, but eventually we asked for a three hour extension which was granted.



We grabbed our hiking gear from the plane, hopped in the car and took off for the National Historical Park which was a short three miles from the airport. We arrived at the Visitor Center and asked the ranger for advice on which trails to hike. He marked the trailheads and parking clearly on the map.



We stayed for both movies which took about 34 minutes. The movies talk about pioneers and settlers (there's a difference-who knew?) who made their way through the Cumberland Gap. Daniel Boone entered the gap in 1769, and within 25 years, a quarter of a million people followed. When you look out at the dense forest, and the mountains, it becomes immediately apparent that this was no small feat and many sacrifices were made along the way. Can you imagine telling your spouse you are going for a long walk and won't be back for a couple years? (Daniel Boone's son was attacked, tortured and killed by Shawnees and Cherokee, too, on one of the trips!)



The 3D topo map showed how there was only one “gap” for a hundred miles in either direction which later became a trade route for many years. Bison and other wildlife also used the gap. So much history here!

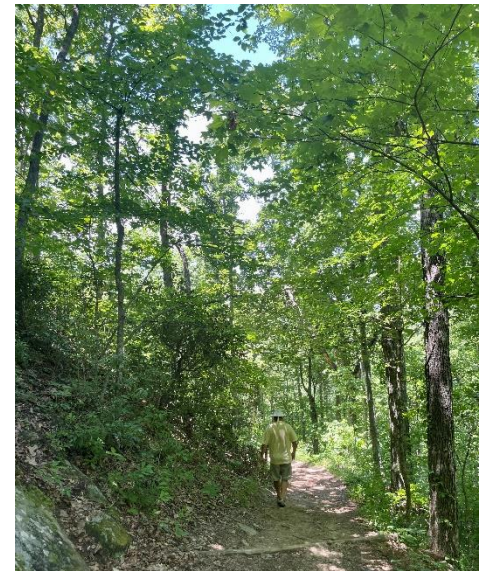
After our orientation with maps and movies, we drove up to the parking lot for Pinnacle Overlook. The roads are very winding with hairpin curves- so much fun! The trail is an easy short walk on a blacktop path from the parking lot.



The Pinnacle looks over Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. There are beautiful views of the gap. If you are short on time, this is the one spot to go. You can also see the town and airport with a zoom lens.



After enjoying the breathtaking views, we drove back down to the Iron Furnace Parking lot where the Tri-State Peak Trailhead begins. The trail is rated moderate, mostly gravel and dirt, elevation gain of 659 feet, and 2.5 miles round trip. We hiked to the top, passing a monument that the DAR erected to mark the Daniel Boone Trail.



I must be honest with you, I can walk on level ground for miles but when it comes to uphill, I am not in great shape. I play pickleball for 15-18 hours per week but ask me to

walk up a few flights of stairs, and I will grimace. My heart rate is great, but my breathing gets faster and harder. And so, when I hike uphill, I usually go at a leisurely pace. I look for animals, birds, plants, views... I stop to take photographs... And eventually I make it to the top where Mark is patiently waiting! But because we had the courtesy car, we were haulin'. But, overall, I think most of you would find this an easy hike. There were not many roots or rocks to worry about like some trails.

At Tri-State Peak, there is a spot where a person can stand in three states at the same time: Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee. Of course, we had a Kodak moment at that spot! Once again, the views toward Kentucky were spectacular!



Downhill was much easier and faster for me than uphill, and it didn't take us too long to reach the parking lot where we called for the courtesy car extension so we could grab some dinner. My snack bag of trail mix was long gone by now, and I was hungry.

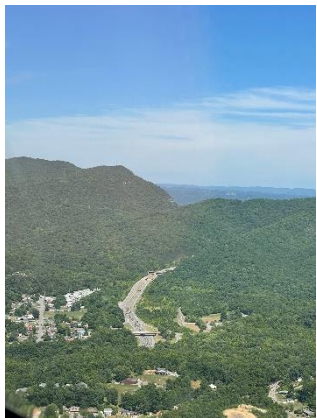
A restaurant called Shades was recommended. We were told pilots come from all over to have dinner here. The booths were reminiscent of a train dining car. We watched the dinners go by, and they were huge, so we decided to split the double smothered chicken \$21. (Note to self: maybe this is why the uphill climb is problematic, haha!) We each had a salad, and the bread was fresh from the oven. We could have made a meal on the bread.



It was delicious! We were full and skipped dessert, but it looked good, too. Mark was disappointed we didn't have time to explore the cute downtown and visit all the shops- NOT!



We finally headed back to the airport and returned the courtesy car. Taking off from this airport was quite fun because we had to climb over the trees between the hills. Mark was careful not to holler "come on, baby" as we were climbing, so I knew all was well!



My favorite part about flying is being able to travel somewhere in a day that would not be as convenient to do by car or as tiring. To be able to explore a cool place like this makes flying worthwhile for me. I'm definitely going back some time!

Happy Landings!