

Student Takeaways

Students' **favorite part** was connecting with their peers on the trip. They shared seeing each other laugh, getting to know their teammates, and meeting new people as highlights. Students had **challenges** with the physical difficulty of backpacking, as it was a new experience for all but one student. They faced trying to stay positive on the first night of the trip with low spirits, darkness, and rain. Despite the challenges, students showed incredible perseverance, commenting, *"Today was hard, but today I also started to appreciate this trip," "I felt like I got happier every day,"* and *"It's so beautiful I can't even complain anymore."*

Nearly three-quarters (71%) shared their **relationship with nature** changed for the positive from this experience. They now feel more connected, have a deeper understanding, and a new appreciation of nature, sharing *"It helped me fall more in love with nature because of the supportive people and sweet leaders trying to show us what the hike really meant."* They also found value in being "unplugged," sharing *"I didn't have my phone or anything, so I really understood that all I had was myself and the nature around me"* and *"I definitely need to get off my phone more."*

Participants shared the following **recommendations** to improve the experience in the future; more beginner-friendly hike, even spacing of miles hiked each day, and more science oriented nature activities. One student commended our Tremont Institute guide, suggesting that the same guide lead future trips. Students showed incredible resilience and teamwork throughout the trip, and while challenging at times, they walked away with a deeper understanding of nature and themselves.

Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont Field Trip Workforce Summer 2025



Program Overview

A group of eight high-school students participating in The PAST Foundation's Summer 2025 Environmental Workforce Cohort, embarked on a 6-night field trip to the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont. As part of this immersive and hands-on experience, the students backpacked for three nights in the Tennessee and North Carolina backcountry led by The Tremont Institute's professional guide.



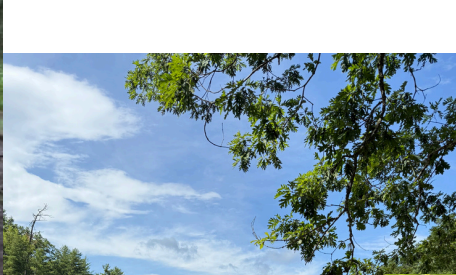
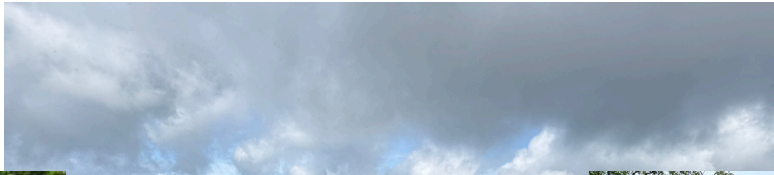
Student Takeaways

Seven students completed a feedback survey to share about their trip experiences.

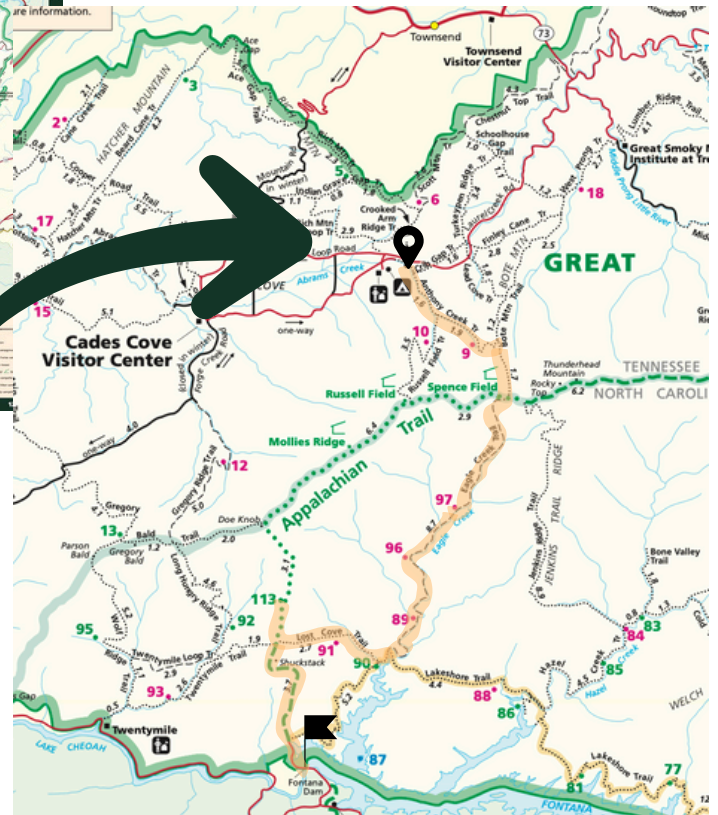
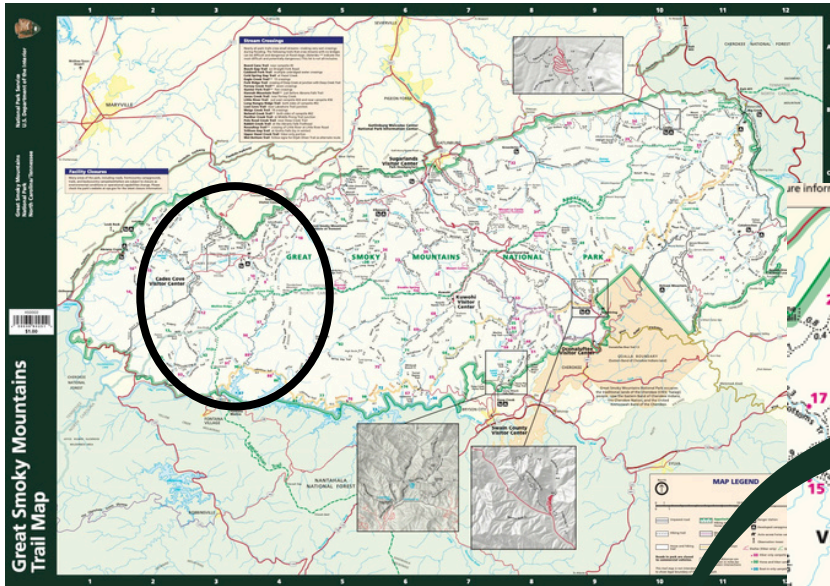
- 100% agreed
 - they learned something as a result of this trip
 - felt the trip leaders were supportive and approachable
 - they gained technical outdoor skills on this trip
 - they felt safe and included during this trip
- 86% agreed
 - they felt the trip had a positive impact on them
 - their expectations for the trip were met
- 71% agreed
 - they felt this trip will help them with their future goals
 - they would recommend this trip to their friends

Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont Field Trip Workforce Summer 2025

Photos



Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont Field Trip Workforce Summer 2025



Backpacking Path



Starting point
Anthony Creek Trail



Path walked



End point
Fontana Dam



Over 27 miles
walked

About 7,716
feet of
elevation
gained

Environmental Cohort Workforce Intern Quotes

“It helped me fall more in love with nature because of the supportive people and sweet leaders trying to show us what the hike really meant.”



“I started to appreciate the nature way more then before/ I like the part that when we all lay down in silence and listened to the sound of the nature.”

“The hike of going up and down it was challenging but it helped me be stronger.”



“[My favorite part was] being with the people because, I haven't been talking to a lot of people and it made me want to make new friends.”

“My favorite part was how close I got with the other people on the trip.”

