Montreat Trail Descriptions

The Montreat trails are located on the Private Property of the Montreat Conference Center. Please follow all safety and conservation rules. These are posted at the Nature Center and at most trailheads. ***Montreat Conference Center is a "Hike at your own risk" facility.***

When hiking in the woods, you may come across trails that are not drawn on the map. Also, from time to time, there will be relocations of trails. This means that a trail map cannot show everything exactly as it is "in real life." Therefore, it is important to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings.

The blazed trails in Montreat are marked with colored, plastic diamonds that are nailed onto trees. The following descriptions include the approximate one-way distance of each trail. The difficulty level mentioned and the time an "average Montreat hiker" takes to hike a trail one-way are both highly subjective but may be helpful to you as you plan your hike. Also, be aware that some trails may only be accessed by first hiking a long distance to the trailhead. The (Letter-Number) sections below reference the grid locations on the color map sold in the bookstore.

Bicycles are allowed ONLY on Rainbow Road, Appalachian Way and Old Mitchell Toll Road.

1. **The Gate Trail—BLUE** (C-11) ***Easy*** *0.96 mile / 30 minutes:* Trailhead is located in the gravel parking area just northeast of the Montreat Gate. The trail follows Flat Creek, has many informative signs and nice benches on which to rest. This trail is an extension of the old Nature Trail and includes "Elizabeth's Path" which was named for Elizabeth Peterson who loved to walk along this creek. The trail ends at the Nature Center.

2. **Rainbow Mountain Trail—GRAY** (C-11) ***Strenuous*** *0.64 mile / 50 minutes:* Access trailhead cross Flat Creek by using the Gate Trail bridge. Go right until you find the gray blazes heading into the woods. This trail is very steep in places. The trail goes over one of the two peaks of Rainbow Mountain before dropping down to join Rainbow Road (or you can access Rainbow Road by taking a side trail to the left before the summit).

3. **Rainbow Road—ORANGE** (F-10) ***Easy*** *1.84 miles / 50 minutes:* Trailhead is at the gated road at the end of the Lookout parking area. The trail follows an old roadbed most of its length. The trail ends at the gap where the Old Trestle Road and the Old Mitchell Toll Road split near Lookout Trail. If walking toward Lookout, always bear *left* at intersections (except where the new driveway crosses it above Chapman Road).

4. **Lookout Trail—YELLOW** (F-10) ***Moderate*** *0.57mile / 45 minutes:* Trailhead is in parking area off Lookout Road. The trail crosses the Old Trestle Road and climbs steeply to end at the exposed rocks below the summit of Lookout Mountain with outstanding views of Montreat and the Seven Sisters. Please stay on the marked trail; this mountain has many visitors and several old trails have been closed due to severe erosion problems.

5. **East Ridge Trail—GRAY** (F-11) ***Easy / Moderate*** *2.48 miles / 2½ hours:* Trailhead is located at the end of Lookout trail. The trail follows the ridge up and over Lookout Mountain, Boggs Bunion, Brushy Mountain and Rocky Head and ends at Long Gap. There are a few steep sections and several good views to the east and the west. The East Ridge is part of the Blue Ridge from Boggs Bunion north.

6. **Hickory Ridge Trail—BLUE** (F-11) ***Easy*** *0.16 mile / 5 minutes:* Trailhead is at the summit of Lookout Mountain. The trail ends at the Old Mitchell Toll Road. Follow the Old Mitchell Toll Road south for 60 yards to find Rattlesnake Mountain Trail (property of Ridgecrest Conference Center).

7. **Buck Gap Trail—BLUE** (F-10) ***Moderate*** *0.14 mile / 10 minutes:* Trailhead is behind the Shelter on the Old Trestle Road. The trail ends at Buck Gap where it intersects the East Ridge Trail.

8. **Sanctuary Trail—ORANGE** (E-8) ***Easy*** *0.3 miles/ 15 minutes.* The trail follows the steep gorge carved out by Little Slaty Branch. The trailhead is near the parking area for the Walk Jones Wildlife Sanctuary, just across the road from the trailhead for the Graybeard Trail. After crossing Upward Way, the trail continues upstream past the site of old waterworks, crosses the stream on a bridge, then proceeds to climb to its terminus on the Julia Woodward Trail, 150 feet (S) of the Harry Bryan Trail.

9. **Rocky Head Trail—ORANGE** (E-8) ***Strenuous*** *0.87 mile / 1.5 hours:* Trailhead is behind the bathhouse on the right in the Montreat Campground. The trail climbs steeply and passes old water holding ponds that were used for an electrical generation plant in the early 1900s. The trail ends at the summit of Rocky Head Mountain and the intersection with the East Ridge Trail. There is a nice view of the valley at the top of Rocky Head. *NOTE: On the road just beyond campsite #21 is a sign pointing to a steep but short 5 minute hike to the site of an old mica mine.*

10. **Stomping Knob Trail—YELLOW** (D-10) ***Strenuous*** *1.14 miles / 2 hours:* Trailhead is located on Harmony Road and ends with the junction of the West Ridge Trail at the summit of Little Piney Mountain (also called Stomping Knob). The trail is very steep in some places and passes two old still sites, one of which is under a large rock overhang.

11. **Big Piney Ridge Trail—ORANGE** (E-9) ***Strenuous*** *1.54 miles / 2 hours:* The trailhead is at the end of Suwannee Drive. The trail ends at the junction with the West Ridge Trail. There is an excellent view of Black Mountain from Rattlesnake Rock near the end of the trail.

12. **West Ridge Trail—GRAY** (C-9) **Strenuous** *3 miles / 4 hours:* This trail is recommended for experienced hikers only and is very rugged. Trailhead is located at the end of Stomping Knob Trail and the trail ends at the intersection of Graybeard Trail on the summit of Big Slaty Mountain (False Graybeard). Do not leave the trail on the west side of the ridge—the Asheville Watershed is closed to hiking.

13. **Graybeard Trail—BLUE** (E-8) ***Moderate, but long*** *3.25 miles / 3½ hours:* The trailhead is in the parking area across the road from the Walk Jones Wildlife Sanctuary. Take the bridge across Flat Creek and follow the creek upstream, bear right at the intersection with the Harry Bryan Trail where the trail enters the Boggs Wilderness. The trail intersects the Old Trestle Road. Turn left and follow the trestle switchbacks. Bear right at the Shelter site, and again turn right sharply at the intersection with the West Ridge Trail. Graybeard Mountain is the highest point in Montreat, and the peak has views to the North and East and of the Craggies to the west. (On the way down, watch carefully for the sharp turn to the left at the intersection with the West Ridge Trail)

14. **Walker's Knob Trail—ORANGE** (F-6) ***Easy*** *0.16 mile / 15 minutes:* Trailhead is at the intersection with Graybeard Trail by the hiking shelter. End is at Walker's Knob with a superlative view of the entire Montreat Valley.

15. **Julia Woodward Trail—WHITE** (E-8) ***Easy*** *0.66 mile / 30 minutes:* Trailhead is located at the Graybeard Trailhead; however, instead of crossing the bridge, continue on up the road a short way. The trail turns left on a driveway. Follow the road until the blazes lead into the woods of the Bell Forest. The trail ends at a scenic spot on the creek with a plaque and large boulders.

16. **Harry Bryan Trail—YELLOW** (E-7) ***Easy*** *0.39 mile / 20 minutes:* Trailhead is located at the intersection with the Julia Woodward Trail. The path travels gently up and down through the woods of the Bell Forest to cross Flat Creek at the upper bridge, ending at Graybeard Trail. (This trail allows for a nice 1.74 mile connecting loop using the lower parts of Julia Woodward and Graybeard Trails and/or Sanctuary Trail.)

17. **Rocky Knob Trail—WHITE** (G-3) ***Strenuous*** *0.40 mile / 30 minutes:* NOTE: This trail is not in Montreat, but the Montreat Cottagers raised money to purchase and protect this mountain in a permanent Wilderness Conservation Easement. It requires a long hike to the trailhead and begins on the Old Mitchell Toll Road between the upper part of the Old Trestle Road and Pinnacle Mountain. If coming from Montreat and looking for this trail, please be aware that it is NOT the obvious wide path going straight up the mountain that was caused by 4-wheelers. Go farther up the Toll Road. Trailhead is to the Left just after an "outside" curve; an old gated road drops down to the right just beyond. The path is faint at times, but ends on a rocky summit with spectacular views of the Asheville Watershed.

18. **Appalachian Way—UNBLAZED** (F-9) ***Moderate*** *0.66 mile /30 minutes:* Trailhead is at the end of the paved road Appalachian Way. The gravel road then climbs to end at Sourwood Gap where it intersects both the East Ridge Trail and the Old Mitchell Toll Road.

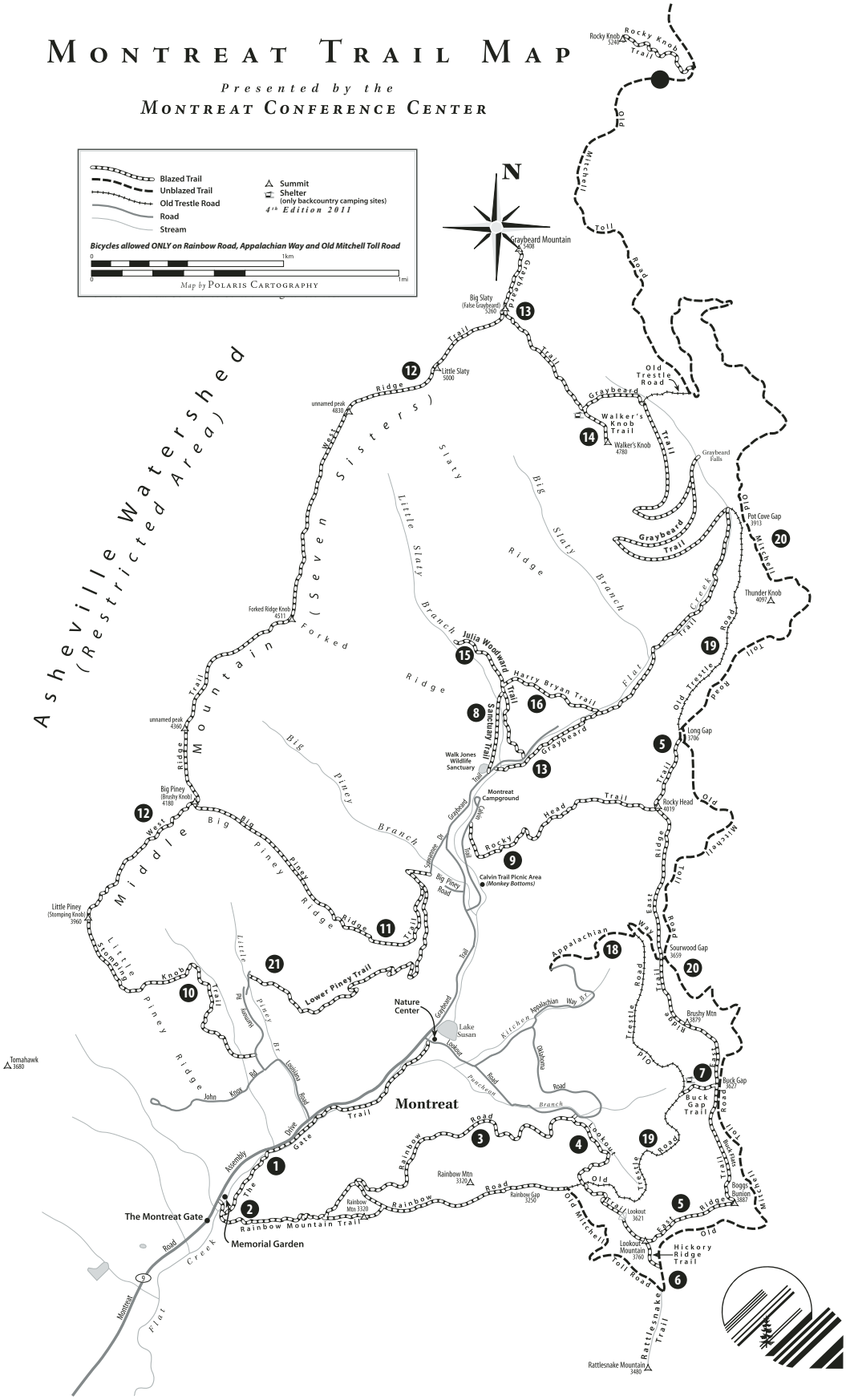
19. **Old Trestle Road—WHITE…*Easy*** This is part of the historic route of the logging railroad that went from Black Mountain to Mount Mitchell in the early part of the 1900s. It is called the "Trestle Road" because it had three trestles to span the creeks along the route. Between Sourwood Gap and Long Gap the railroad followed the route that we now refer to as the Old Mitchell Toll Road. The sections of the Old Trestle that are maintained are shown with a railroad symbol on the map.

20. **Old Mitchell Toll Road—UNBLAZED…*Easy*** After logging operations on Mount Mitchell were shut down, a venture wanted to build a tourist road for automobiles along the route of the old railroad bed. Montreat wanted the road to be moved to the other side of the ridge to minimize noise and traffic in the valley. Montreat won a court decision, and the road was re-routed in several places. The Toll Road follows the route of the logging railroad (the "trestle road") EXCEPT between Rainbow Gap and Sourwood Gap and between Long Gap and where the upper part of the Old Trestle Road intersects with the Old Mitchell Toll Road north of Graybeard Falls. This road is not recommended for foot travel during bear hunting season, and bikes are prohibited entirely during hunting season as per the signs posted at Sourwood Gap.

21. **Lower Piney Trail—BLUE** (D-9; E-9) ***Easy*** *1.3 miles /45 minutes:* North trailhead is end of Suwannee Drive and starts along with the Big Piney Trail. South trailhead is a gravel road at the top of Harmony Road. Trail is easy, <10% grade, flat tread. The high point, with a view, is in middle of the trail, with less than 250 ft. elevation gain. Trail can be walked as out/back or as a road/trail loop via Graybeard Trail and return via Harmony Rd. and Louisiana. Park at Harmony Road.

Montreat Trail Map

Presented by the
Montreat Conference Center



A large, full color map can be purchased from the Montreat Store.

In case of emergency or to report lost or injured hikers, contact the Black Mountain Fire Department at 828-669-9117.