

GREAT STONE DOOR



Distance	120 miles from Nashville
Directions	Take I-24 South to the Monteagle Exit 134, then follow the US 41/64 signs through Monteagle to Tracy City. In this city, take TN 56 North to Altamont, then on to Beersheba Springs. After driving through Beersheba Springs and just past a roadside park, turn right. (Stone door is located within the Savage Gulf Natural Area, which is part of the South Cumberland State Recreation Area.) Drive straight back this road, bearing right past the Beersheba Nursery. Continue on the dirt road and wind around to the 40-car parking area behind the ranger station. Register here, and then follow the one-mile white-blazed trail (partially paved) to the Great Stone door.
Description	The Great Stone Door is a popular climbing spot for Vanderbilt students and “sport rappellers.” To get to the climbing area, the climber must hike down through the door. DO NOT climb between the walls of the Door itself because of the loose nature of the rock above and for the safety of the tourist walking below. Once through the Door, most of the climbs are located to the left. Although many routes sometimes prevent summit climbs, these climbs usually end on predominant ledges where the climber can descend either by rappelling or, in some instances, by walking off the ends. There are relatively few bolts at the Stone Door, so be sure to bring your natural pro. Also, be sure to keep in mind the other natural highlights that surround Stone Door when you visit this area.
Campsites	A campsite can be found by taking the trail located to the right as you first pull into the parking area. Follow this trail back and up a small hill to the camping area. Not only is camping prohibited everywhere except in designated campsites, but all climbers must be out of the area by nightfall. Other campgrounds are also located throughout Savage Gulf if needed.
Hiking	There is a one-mile trail at Stone Door that begins at the ranger station located there. This trail has a rating of easy with wide tread and gentle slopes. Persons with physical disabilities (including those who use wheelchairs) can easily maneuver on these trails. The overlook at 1,800 feet elevation provides the hiker with an amazing view of the 500 feet-deep Big Creek Gulf. There are numerous other trails in the park worth exploring. Quality hiking maps are available at the Ranger Station.
Cautions	Besides the normal climbing hazards, beware of loose rocks in places, as well as “tourists” who not only enjoy throwing rocks, bottles, and cans off of the top, but also enjoy asking stupid questions such as “Does your mother know you’re doing this?” or “Hey, buddy, don’t you know the trail’s right over there?”
For More Information	Consult Southern Rock by Chris Hall, pages 117-123 for information concerning rock-climbing. For general information concerning Savage Gulf, consult The South Cumberland and Fall Creek Falls by Russ Manning and Sondra Jamieson, pages 42-63. Tennessee Trails: Third Edition , page 108, by Evan Means Middle Tennessee on Foot by Robert Brandt, pp. 239-248 has information about hiking.