

Tims Ford's Lost Creek Overlook Trail

By J.R. Tinch

There are many ways to discover the beauty of Tims Ford State Park, located near Winchester, and no better time of year to experience the ambient colors of nature than the fall and early winter season.

One of the newest and most impressive additions to the park is the completion of the Lost Creek Overlook Trail. The Lost Creek Overlook Trail is a moderate 1.3 miles long, beginning at the visitor center. This trail leads the hiker through a hardwood forest, over two of the state's largest suspension bridges, along the ridgeline overlooking beautiful Lost Creek, to the observation deck at the end of the trail. This new addition to Tims Ford was made possible by a grant received from the Recreation Trails Program, along with the assistance of Tennessee Department of Transportation.

At the trailhead, hikers pass the foundation of the Marble Plains Cash Grocery Store, a remnant of the Marble Plains community that occupied this land prior to development of the reservoir. The trail soon comes to the first of two suspension bridges located along the trail. Spanning 164 feet, this bridge takes the hiker on a bird's eye view over one of the many coves leading into Tims Ford Lake. As the trail continues, stunning views of the lake begin to appear to the left.

Continuing further leads the hiker into a hardwood forest. The fall season makes this one of the best times to enjoy the trail as the leaves display their colors, and the wildlife become increasingly active. As the trail weaves through the forest, the hiker is soon brought to the second suspension bridge. Traversing 180 feet through the canopy of the trees, this bridge gives the hiker an extraordinary perspective of the surrounding trees and views of the forest floor below.

Following the trail brings the hiker back to additional views of the lake. Looking left across the expanding



The second suspension bridge on Tims Ford State Park's newly completed Lost Creek Overlook Trail is 180 feet long. It traverses through the canopy of trees providing a view of surrounding trees and the forest floor below.

waters, hikers can see the Tims Ford Dam. The Tennessee Valley Authority finished construction on the dam in 1970, forever altering the Elk River and its communities into the lake that exists today. A steady incline leads the hiker to an observation deck located at the end of the Lost Creek Overlook Trail. Hikers can rest on one of the benches and take in the views as they span out over Lost Creek, Big and Little Islands and see Keith Springs and Sewanee Mountains stand out in the distance beyond the lake.

To see more of the park, hikers can choose to make the trail a loop by taking the Marble Plains Trail back to the visitor center. This trail is an easy 1.1-mile paved ADA accessible trail, making the round trip a 2.4-mile hike.

The park sits nestled along the shoreline of the 10,700-acre Tims Ford Reservoir. Visitors have the opportunity to enjoy a bike ride into the forest along the seven miles of paved trail, paddle around the shoreline and nearby islands, or get an up-close view of birds of prey at the park aviary.

Directions

From Nashville: Take I-24 to Manchester Exit 111. Turn left on Highway 55 W. to Tullahoma. Turn left on Highway 130 S. Follow Highway 130 S. to Awalt Road. And turn right. Follow Awalt Road until it dead ends at Mansford Road and turn left. The park entrance is 1.6 miles on the right.

From Chattanooga: Take I-24 W to Exit 127 and turn left on Highway 64, Veterans Memorial By-Pass. Turn right on Mingo Road to a four-way stop. Turn right on Owl Hollow Road. Turn left at Highway 50 and then right onto Mansford Road. Go five miles to the park entrance on the left.



(J.R. Tinch is a park ranger at Tims Ford State Park.)