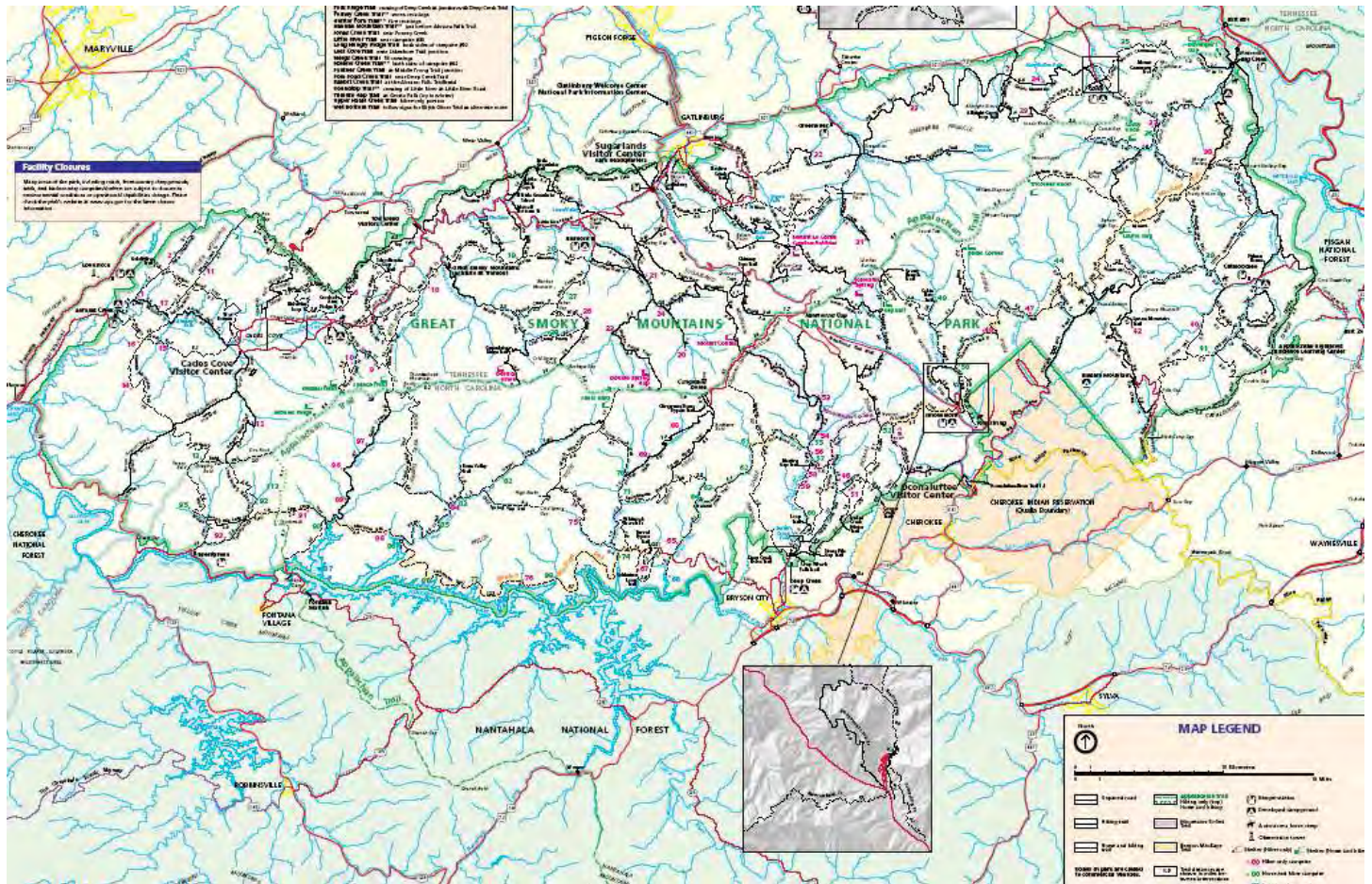


After doing a little research, settled on Smokemont campground in the Smoky Mountains national park. It's the area blown up at the bottom of the map. For a sense of scale, the black line loop is the hike we took that was just shy of 6 miles. Huge park, over 800 square miles, most inaccessible by car.



Having decided to stay two nights, went ahead and did the full camp setup with canopy and tent. The campsite was quite nice, but no hookups and no showers, no generators even. The park seems to have gone to great pains to keep it as much of a wilderness experience as possible. Commendable I suppose. Turns out my fancy battery would only run the cooler for about 14 hours, but then just threw a bag of ice in and went off the grid, so to speak.



This is who we parked next to. Nice guy, Steve, built his trailer as well. He went over mine with a fine toothed comb. He especially liked how the kitchen was organized.



Rig as seen from across the stream running along the campground.



Next morning took the Smokemont loop trail out of the south end of the campsite. My first attempt at a panorama on the lower section of the trail.



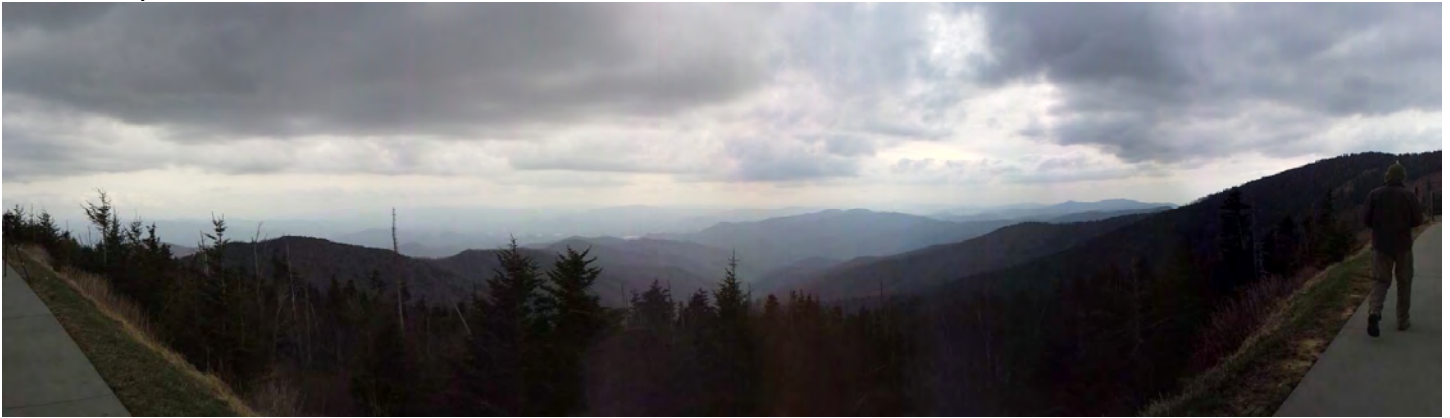
As you rose in elevation it went from green to bare, looked more like fall.



Footbridge towards the end of the loop heading back into the north end of camp.



Still had plenty of daylight after getting back to camp, so with the trailer unhooked, raced up the mountain to the appropriately named Clingman's Dome. Panorama on the paved trail from the parking area up to the observation tower.



The observation tower looked like a soviet era gun turret.



Incredible views up there, even on a cloudy day, but rather unsettling. Howling blasts of wind. Did get a little cell phone reception though.



View from the trail heading back down.



Broke camp the next morning to head back to Asheville. The weather forecast called for rain and you could feel it coming. We decided to take the Blue Ridge parkway back. The clouds were blowing in. Here you can see the bottom of the clouds hovering just above us.



And we would soon drive up into and through the clouds for most of the drive back. Quite surreal, but slow going.





Back in Asheville as the cold front moved in.



That might be the end of my posts for this adventure. Just a straight shot on the interstates back to FL from here. Guess I need to get back to making a living, for a while at least.