



Nantahala Outdoor Center Sponsors 212-Mile Smoky Mountain Relay

The Perfect New Year's Resolution: The Southeast's Hardest (and Most Beautiful) Overnight Race

Bryson City, N.C. (December 2, 2014)— Registration is open now through April 10 for the Southeast's most grueling team race: The Smoky Mountain Overnight Relay to be held April 17-18, 2015. This year marks the relay's sixth season and the fifth time NOC has co-hosted the run. For those who'd like a lofty New Year's resolution, the race is a great goal for 2015. Start training today!

Known for its magnificent scenery in one of the nation's most spectacular mountain settings, the relay begins at Pink Beds Park in Brevard, North Carolina, and ends at Nantahala Outdoor Center in Bryson City, North Carolina.

With runners traveling to the Smokies from across the U.S., even as far as Alaska, Utah and Arizona, teams are comprised of 6 or 12 individuals who together cover 212 miles of trails and country roads—that's 18 to 20 miles each for the 12-person relay. Each team member runs 3 legs (12-person team) or 6 legs (6-person team) of varying lengths and difficulty, with at least one leg being run overnight.

The course covers terrain that is both pristine and demanding, as the route includes a Forest Service road around the granite dome of Looking Glass and spectacular views from the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Mountains to Sea Trail. Along the way (in daylight or starlight) participants will enjoy picturesque valleys framed by tree-covered mountains and meandering streams, as well as views of the Appalachian and Bartram trails along the upper Nantahala River. Finish-line festivities include: live mountain music, costume contests and delicious food and drinks along the banks of the river.

Relay Director Jim Brendle says the Smoky Mountain Relay is on track to grow exponentially over the next few years: "What's amazing about this event is how different it is from other overnight relays. It's the same concept but more like a boutique run. It may sound strange to use the word *boutique* to describe the gnarliest relay on Earth, but we've gone to extreme measures to make the run fun and safe—huge finishers' medals, descriptive cards to help runners stay on track, nurses on horseback, and much more. Currently we're about half the size of other Southeastern relays, but we've got the best course East of the Mississippi, bar none."

A tiered registration schedule offers lower rates for runners who plan ahead. Military and student discounts are available for registrants, and other discounts on outdoor adventures will be offered at the Nantahala Outdoor Center finish line. Visit smr.smokymountainrelay.com to register and for more detailed relay information (including leg charts, maps, volunteering, places to stay and more). Other event sponsors include Oskar Blues Brewery, Jus' Running, Whole Foods and Straw Propeller Gourmet Foods.