SCACONAGE TRAIL
HIKER’S GUIDE

CAMP BUCK TOMS
GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN COUNCIL
Boy Scouts of America
SHACONAGE TRAIL GUIDE

Shaconage (Sha-co'-na-gee') is a Cherokee word that literally means “blue like smoke.” It is one of their names for the Smoky Mountains.

The Shaconage Trail is a five-mile hiking and nature trail at Camp Buck Toms. Walking the trail and answering the questions in this guide will help you learn more about nature and about people’s use of the area. The trail name reflects this heritage as well as the council’s name.

Take your time and enjoy the hike. Observation, not speed, is your objective. A trail patch is available at the Camp Buck Toms Trading Post upon completion of the trek. Requirements for the patch are:

1. Hike the trail and answer the questions in the guide.
2. Complete a conservation or work project approved by the Nature Lodge Director or the Camp Ranger.
3. Conduct yourself according to the Outdoor Code.
4. Complete the form in the guide and present it when you buy the patches.

The patch was designed by Andrew Howe of Pack 85 in 1992. IT Corporation made a major donation for the trail’s development.

Before you start, check this list:

- _____ Have you read the Outdoor Code in your Boy Scout Handbook and pledged to follow it?
- _____ Are you dressed for current and expected weather conditions?
- _____ Do you have water and a snack or lunch?
- _____ Does your group have at least one Boy Scout Handbook, a first aid kit, and a compass?
- _____ Do you know the rules for safe hiking and what to do if you are separated from your group?
- _____ Do you know what advancement requirements you can complete on the hike? Are you prepared to complete them?
- Are you ready to enjoy a good hike and learn something too?

If so, then let’s go!
Shaconage Trail Guide and Questions

The trail is marked with white paint blazes.

Look for trees and plants you recognize as you hike. Learn new ones from the other hikers in your group and the information in your Boy Scout Handbook. List the trees and plants you identify on the appropriate page.

Look for animals also. You may have more luck finding animal signs. Tracks, feathers, rabbit droppings, owl pellets, woodpecker holes, squirrels chattering, nests, deer antlers, mollusk shells, snake skins, and bird calls are some of the signs you may see or hear. List the animals and animal signs you see or hear on the next page. Leave them undisturbed for the next group of hikers to see. Remember – take nothing by memories and leave nothing but footprints.

The trail head is the parking lot in front of the Camp Office. Use the Napolean Method or another technique you’ve learned in Orienteering merit badge to estimate the width of the parking lot: _______ feet. Now pace it: _______ feet. What is the difference: _______.

The trail follows the road across the parking lot to the northwest. Look for the first white blaze on the tree to the right of the road. What is the compass bearing to the nearest corner of the dining hall porch from the trail head?

As you walk down the road, you can see several hairy vines with three shiny leaves. What is it? _______. How would you treat exposure to it? _______.

The area on the north side of the road past Campsite 2 once had developed campsites. What signs of this past development can you see?

The trail goes north at the turn-around area before the outpost Adirondack cabin. Stop for a moment and listen – listen hard. What do you hear?

The lake is Watts Bar Lake. It was created by a Tennessee Valley Authority dam on the Tennessee River in 1941. The river channel is roughly in the middle of the lake under many feet of water. People have used this part of the Tennessee River for transportation and a source of food for 15,000 years or more. Our use of this land and water is the latest chapter in its history. What traces of our use do you think future archaeologists might find?

The trail turns west to go around the inlet of Watts Bar Lake. What kind of forest is this – deciduous, conifer, or mixed? (Circle one)

The trail turn north again, across a bottom and up the hill on the other side of the inlet.

Small Tennessee state trees grow along here. What kind of tree is it? _______.

The trail follows the lake running almost true north. Red cedars grow along here. Can you identify them?

Look to the west as the trail goes downhill. An old road parallels the trail for several feet. The trail then joins the old road. Look back up the hill. This land was in small farms until TVA bought it in the late 1930’s. This old
farm road is a sign of that time. Some of the roads used in camp today were first made by farmers over the past 100 years or more. In their turn, the farmers may have followed game paths or old Native American trails.

You have walked over a mile at this point.

The trail leaves the old road at a large pine tree, turning west. Can you find a cone from this tree? What kind of pine is it?

Several small pines are just a few feet down the trail. Are they the same kind of pine as the big one? Where do you think the seed came from? How did it get here?

The trail runs along the south edge of a small clearing that is a homestead site. What signs can you find that people once lived here?

The trail crosses a road now used by the camp that was the road past the homestead. Do you notice a difference in the forest after the road crossing? What is it?

After a gentle climb the trail turns north-east and then north to climb the hill. After reaching the top, the trail goes past a Native American burial mound. There are nine mounds on Camp Buck Toms property. Four were investigated by archeologists in 1941 as part of the Watts Bar project. According to records, this mound was not disturbed; you can, however, see that someone has dug into the east slope of the mound. Amateurs looking for artifacts to collect or sell destroy a part of our history we can never replace. How would you feel about this digging if your ancestors were buried here?

The road here is another camp road.

The trail goes north past the mound then east along the edge of a flat hilltop. This hilltop is a cemetery site, the only one known on camp property. There are no headstones. Many family cemeteries had no formal markers.

The trail turns south-west and follows the lake. You can see old chestnut stumps along this part of the trail. Chestnuts were a valuable part of the forest until a blight brought from overseas in the early part of the century killed them. Note the stumps are flat. The wood was so valuable that dead standing trees were cut and sold. The wood is very resistant to rot so the stumps are still here.

Notice the marina across the lake. Recreation is another use we make of the land and water today.

A lot of rock along the trail is limestone. What is it? What could it be in the future?

About one-half mile from the mound the trail runs past a rock pile. Farmers would take the rocks from their fields and pile them on one place to make it easier to cultivate. This pile may be a sign of this work. Can you think of other explanations?

The trail turns east and follows a contour along a steep hillside and then meets another old road. The trail turns south-east and follows this road for a short distance then
runs generally south and southwest. People historically have followed game trails. Game also use our trails.
Many deer tracks have been along this part of the trail. Can you find any?________ How many?________.

The trail now climbs the ridge. Watch for two switchbacks a short way apart. The trail follows the ridge parallel to the paved camp road. What kind of forest is this?____________________________________

Notice the understory plants. You will need this to answer a future question.

The trail turns and crosses the paved road. The highest point at Buck Toms is just north-west of this point. The elevation at the trail head is 850 feet. We are about 275 feet higher here. What is the elevation at the highest point at Buck Toms?_____________ feet.

You've hiked a little more than 3 miles - just 2 more to go!

After crossing the road the trail runs downhill and turns south-west to cross the valley at the higher and dryer upper end. Notice how the understory changes as you walk downhill to the bottom, compared with the understory plants on the ridge. What environmental factor makes the difference?______________________________

Christmas fern and tapered fern are the most common ones here. Christmas fern is the darker green one. Look closely at a plant - notice the lobe in each leaflet where it joins the stem. Early settlers named it because they thought the leaflets looked like stocking hanging by the fireplace at Christmas. Tapered fern is lighter green; notice how fronds taper at the tip and the base.

After crossing the bottom the trail turns north-east and follows the contour along the ridge. Which fern is more common in the very bottom of the valley?______________
Why do you think more of it grows in the lowest place?________

The trail gradually gains elevation along the ridge. Many small sassafras trees grow along here. Can you find one? How many leaf shapes does it have?________________________

After two switchbacks the trail tops the ridge then gradually drops again. Do you see many ferns in this valley?________ Why or why not?__________________

The trail runs east across a flat area then turn north toward the athletic field above the Scoutcraft area. This was the E.C. Montgomery farm when TVA bought the land in the 1930's. Corn was grown in these flat areas.

A tracking pit may be in place at the edge of the field, east of where the trail leaves the woods. If it is there, what tracks do you see?____________________________________

The next blaze is on a tall tree 80 degrees from where the trail leaves the woods. What would the compass bearing be from the tree to this point?______________________________

Walk the 80 degree reading. You should be able to see the blaze when you reach the small pine trees on the ridge
top. What is the distance from the pine trees to the blazed tree?

When you reached the blazed tree, take a 10 degree bearing. What do you see?

The trail joins the road and follows it past the swimming area. Normal Watts Bar pool elevation is 741 feet. How many feet have you descended hiking from the high point at the paved road to the swimming area?

Follow the road up the hill using the trail on the east side. Four burial mounds are located across from the program shelter. Two were excavated by University of Tennessee archaeologists in 1941 during the Watts Bar development. The mounds are from the Woodland Culture period dated 700-1100 A.D.

A village site was also found east of campsites 11 and 12 on the peninsula. Much of it is now under water. Extensive investigation was done. The village was from the Mississippian period, about 1300-1550 A.D. It was probably not related to the mounds.

The trail crosses the road at the mounds and follows the trail on the south side of the road back to the parking lot and trail head.

CONGRATULATIONS, YOU MADE IT!!!
Animals and Animal Signs (list the ones you and your group saw or heard).

Shacouage Trail Patch Application

Unit or Group __________________________

Date hike completed ________________

Conservation project

______________________________

______________________________

Ranger approval (Signature) ________________

Date completed ________________

Group Roster

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

I certify that all hikers walked the entire trail, answered the questions in the guide, worked on the conservation project, and conducted themselves according to the Outdoor Code.

______________________________
Leader Signature

Patches may be purchased at the Camp Buck Toms Trading Post
Great Smoky Mountain Council Camps

Camp Buck Toms is the latest in a long, proud tradition of Boy Scout camps in east Tennessee. This is a brief description of these camps.

Mr. William P. "Buck" Toms established the first Scout troop in the Knoxville area in 1909, one year before Scouting officially came to the United States. Mr. Toms helped raise the funds to purchase the camp property. The current camp is named in his honor.

Chilhowee Park was the first Scout camping area we know about. It was used from 1912-1915. It is uncertain if it was used as a summer camp as we think about today, due to the infancy of the Scouting program. Note this was before the U.S. Congress chartered the Boy Scouts of America.

Camp Helpful-Elkmont (1915-1938) was the council’s first summer camp location.

The Scout Ranch (1919-1937) was the first camp the council owned. It is uncertain if it was used for a summer camp or only as a place for unit camping.

Camp Wilderness (1938-1946) was located at the Camp Helpful site. It was the council’s first camp for African-American Scouts.

Camp Pellissippi (1938-1977) was called Norris Lake Camp in 1938-1939). Pellissippi was chosen because the camp is located on the bend of the Clinch River, called Pellissippi (winding waters) by the Native Americans in the area. The camp’s dining hall burned down in 1977, ending Camp Pellissippi as a summer camp.

Camp Swahili was the council’s second African American camp. The name was derived from the words swim, hike, and live.

Camp Buck Toms (1955-present) was developed because there was not enough room at Camp Pellissippi for all the Scouts who wanted to attend camp. The land cost $13,400 paid over two years from funds raised by Scouts and Cubs selling Boy Scout Expedition (now Scout Show) tickets. One hundred fifty-five boys and leaders attended camp during the first year (1955). No road access existed; Scouts arrived by boat and brought their own tents, food and equipment. By the start of the 1957 season, roads had been built, electric power was available, a well was drilled, and a walk-in refrigerator installed. The rest of the development soon followed.

The camp underwent a $1.2 million renovation program in 1994. The Sansom Dining Hall was built, the old dining hall became today’s training lodge, new docks were installed at the waterfront, and many other building and program renovations were completed. In recent years, other structures like the traverse wall and the leader’s memorial shelter have been constructed as well.

Thank you for completing this guide and the accompanying hike. If you have suggestions for revisions, please share them with the camp staff and council camping committee.

This guide was written by George F. Smith in 1993, with minor revisions by Phil Breedlove in 1998.