



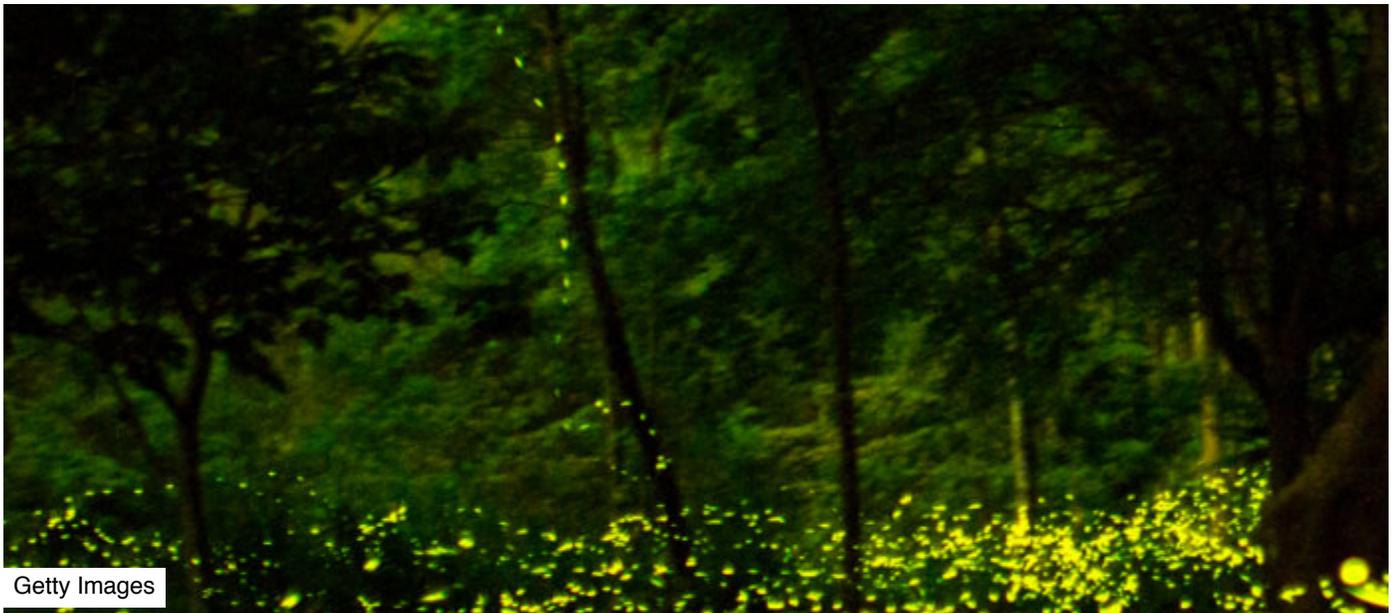
SUMMER TRAVEL QUEST #1

Watch Fireflies Flash in Sync

Head to Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee to witness one of nature's great spectacles

by ***Katy Koontz***

Katy was born and raised a Yankee but has lived in Knoxville, Tennessee, for more than 25 years. She's the author of [Family Fun in the Smokies](#) and the [Smoky Mountain Travel Guide](#) app.



Fireflies flash in unison in only two places on earth: a remote section of Malaysian jungle and the most visited national park in the U.S., the Great Smoky Mountains.

So if you want to see the famous flashers, the choice for U.S. travelers is a pretty easy one. The critters (*Photinus carolinus*, to be exact) put on their light show during their mating season each June, and the absolute best place to witness it is at the [Elkmont Campground](#) on the Tennessee side of the park (which straddles the Tennessee-North Carolina state line).



INSIDER TIP

Bring a blanket to sit on and be prepared to wait until it's totally dark, about 10 p.m., when the

They typically flash in short bursts 8 to 10 times, then everything magically goes dark for about 6 seconds before the cycle begins again. As the night deepens, the anticipation builds and the effect becomes more and more dramatic, with the fireflies blinking on in a wave effect. The tiny points of light look very much like strings of Christmas lights.

To see this illuminating phenomenon, you must either be a registered camper at Elkmont or ride one of the special event shuttle buses to the campground viewing area from the [Sugarlands Visitor Center](#) near the [Gatlinburg](#) entrance. This year, shuttle buses run from June 4 through June 11.

Bus tickets cost \$1 per person, roundtrip, and you'll need to [reserve a parking pass](#) (\$1.50 per car) in advance.

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