

# Other National Forests



**Panthertown Valley**

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## **NANTAHALA NATIONAL FOREST**

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[ncnatural.com/NCUSFS/Nantahala/](http://ncnatural.com/NCUSFS/Nantahala/)

[www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/recreate.htm](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/recreate.htm)

Nantahala is an Indian word that means "Land of the Noonday Sun", so called because the deep gorges do not let the sun shine to the bottom until late in the morning. It was inhabited by the Cherokee Indians for hundreds of years and explored by Hernando DeSoto in 1540. Nantahala is an area filled with natural and cultural heritage. It offers picturesque waterfalls, beautiful mountain landscapes, and large mountain reservoirs. These and many other things contribute to the wide variety of recreational opportunities in North Carolina's largest national forest.

### **Popular Hiking Trails in Nantahala National Forest**

#### **Appletree Trail**

USGS Map: Topton

Follow the directions to the Appletree Camp located under the recreational campsites. Once at the Apple Tree Camp locate the yellow blazes right of the branch on an old road. Follow the yellow blazed road for .3 mile then cross the branch and pass the blue blazed Junaluska Trail to the left. Cross the stream again at .7 mile. Later the trail passes by a faint road junction up a gradual grade. Just after the first mile the Apple Tree Trail meets with the green blazed Laurel Creek Trail which is to the right. A few tenths of a mile down the road, the Apple Tree Trail junctions with Diamond Valley Trail which is on the left. Passing by the Diamond Valley Trail, the Apple Tree Trail climbs over two knobs and reaches the summit on the third peak. The total mileage is 1.7 miles of strenuous climbing. Here the trail junctions with the London Bald Trail which has a blue blaze. To return back to Apple Tree Camp backtrack, or turn left onto the London Bald Trail for 6.5 miles to Junaluska Gap. Stay right and keep following London Bald Trail another 2.2 miles to the junction with the Nantahala Trail. Follow the Nantahala Trail back to Apple Tree Camp. This loop trail from the third summit adds an additional 11.5 miles for a total of 13 miles.

#### **Bartram Trail**

The Bartram Trail is a national recreation trail that travels across the mountains of South Carolina, Georgia, and the Nantahala National Forest in North Carolina. In North Carolina, it stretches 71 miles from near Highlands to the Snowbird Mountains, south of Robbinsville. The trail is named after William Bartram, a naturalist who roamed the southern woods in 1775. He studied plants and animals and recorded his findings in a journal published as *The Travels of William Bartram*. The trail is blazed in yellow in the Nantahala National Forest, with many side trails, blazed in blue, leading to views of the Blue Ridge and the Smokies.

The Trail enters North Carolina just south of Highlands, near Rabun Bald, taking up where the Georgia Bartram Trail leaves off. The trail curves in a north-to-west direction through Western North Carolina; Thru-hikers must follow a series of country roads into Franklin. In Franklin, the Bartram Trail turns west and ascends the Nantahala Mountains to Wayah Bald, which, at 5385 feet, is the highest point on the trail. The trail joins the Appalachian Trail briefly, then descends to Nantahala Lake. Continuing mainly on private lands from the Lake, the trail reaches Appletree Campground in the upper Nantahala Gorge, then climbs up and over Rattlesnake Knob before reaching the "put in" on the Nantahala River. From the river, the Trail climbs to the summit of Cheoah Bald, and ends there.

## **Fires Creek Rim Trail**

The 25-mile Rim Trail follows the ridge around Fires Creek Wildlife Management Area—a mecca for backpackers and those who like primitive camping. The trail, marked with blue blazes, has several access roads and trails. Camping is offered at Huskins Branch Hunter and Bristol Horse Camps. Dispersed camping sites are along Forest Service Road 340.

This 26-mile trail system follows the rim of the mountains that surround the Jack Rabbit recreation area. To access the trail from Jack Rabbit, take NC 175 north for 3.25 miles to U.S. 64. Turn west on NC 64 and go about 4 miles to Hayesville. Turn right on NC Business 64 and go 1.05 miles into Hayesville. Turn left on SR 1307. Go 1 mile and turn left on SR 1300. Travel 5 miles and turn right on FR 340. Trailhead is 1.8 miles.

*Fires Creek Rim Trail (723 kb pdf)* - [www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/fires\\_creek\\_trail.pdf](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/fires_creek_trail.pdf)

## **Horse Pasture River**

USGS Map: Reid

Note: Waterfall deaths occur yearly in western NC - Do not approach the top of a waterfall!!

The Horsepasture River has a nice series of falls all in a short 1.5 mile stretch. The entire river is filled with rocks and cascades and is quite interesting. This is a great place to go waterfall hunting. The Horsepasture river can be accessed from Gorges State Park. The park is located on NC-281 between US-64 and the South Carolina border (From US 64 turn south at Sapphire on Route 181.).

The Horsepasture River is actually outside of the park. You can park at the park's parking area, and then walk back to NC-281, take a left, and you will find a trailhead a short distance down the road on the left (apparently the State Park does not mind if you leave your car in their parking lot, just do not leave it overnight). Follow the trail until you reach the river. The trail is rough, rocky and steep at points. It's about a 15-20 minute hike from the parking lot, and you'll come out above Turtleback Falls. Drift Falls is actually the first main falls on the river. To get to it, take the trail to the right and follow it upstream for about 10-15 minutes. People used to slide down the 60-70ft incline and the falls was referred to as Bust Yer Butt Falls. If you head left (downstream), you will reach Turtleback Falls, Rainbow Falls and Stairway Falls. Further downstream there are even more falls, but the trails become extremely difficult or vanish altogether. It makes sense to see Drift Falls first, and then work your way downstream until you have had enough. You definitely will want to see Rainbow Falls.

About 10 minutes below Rainbow, there is a large campsite. The trail crosses a brook on the other side of the site and leaves the river for a while. It then returns to the river further down near Windy Falls. Use Caution when in the area.

Warning! The main trail along the Horsepasture River and the short spur trails to the waterfalls can be dangerous. Rain and ice make the trail surface treacherous, especially where bare rock or precipitous ledges occur. Drift Falls and Turtleback Falls may offer good swimming opportunities, but deaths have occurred when swimmers were knocked unconscious against the rocks and then drowned in the deep pools. Some swimmers, unable to stop after sliding down Turtleback, have been swept to their deaths over Rainbow Falls just downstream (twice in 2003 alone!), and hikers stepping too close to the top of Rainbow Falls have plummeted to their deaths, as well.

## **Panthertown Valley**

To gain access from the east side, take 281 north from Hwy 64 a mile or so then turn left onto Cold Mountain Road, which winds past Lake Toxaway, then turns into gravel and heads up the mountain. (If you look at the telephone poles on the way up you will see small numbers on yellow and black tags. Just past pole #61 on the left - 4.5 miles from 281 - you can park and follow a trail down to Raven Rock Falls. The trailhead is past the pole and its well worth the 1/2 mile or so hike). Keep going up Cold Mountain and at 5.7 miles total you'll see that the road straight ahead is now gated (the old entrance), but you can take a left and head up the road a few hundred yards to a single lane drive on the right leading to a parking area.

Access from the west side is reached by driving 8 miles on Hwy 64 west from the 281 south intersection to Cedar Creek Road. Take a right, go 2.3 miles and take a right on Breedlove Road, then almost 4 miles to the parking area. Near the end, the road changes to dirt and has some pretty major bumps and dips.

Panthertown is home to granite domes, waterfalls, valley floors and rare high altitude bogs. The area is a maze of unmarked trails going off in every direction, and holds the headwaters for Greenland and Panthertown Creeks and the East Fork of the Tuckaseegee River. The valley was heavily logged in the 30's and suffered major fires and erosion in the 60's, so there are almost no old growth trees left. Despite this and Duke Power running a major power line through the area in the late 80's, Panthertown Valley has made a comeback and is now home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, including the carnivorous sundew plant. Some of the plants are rare, so please stick to the trails, don't trample vegetation, and try to avoid the moss and lichens growing on the rock faces in the higher altitudes.

[www.ncwaterfalls.com/panther1.htm](http://www.ncwaterfalls.com/panther1.htm)

[www.slickrockexpeditions.com/map\\_request.htm](http://www.slickrockexpeditions.com/map_request.htm) - form to order map (also available at Highland Books in Brevard & various outfitting stores)

## **Pickens Nose Trail**

USGS Map: Prentiss

The Pickens Nose Trail is an easy 1.4 mile trip with great views and a rock climbing area. From Standing Indian Recreational Area drive an additional 6.7 miles on forest service road 67 up the mountain to a parking lot on the left side of the road (the parking lot is .7 mile beyond the Appalachian Trail crossing at Mooney Gap). Cross the road and ascend then level onto a rocky ridge. Hike for .7 mile to the vista at Pickens Nose, which is around 5000 ft. The area is beautifully colored in the month of June when the rhododendron's colorful bloom is at its peak. Backtrack to return.

## **Joyce Kilmer Memorial Trail**

USGS Map: Santeetlah Creek

The Joyce Kilmer Memorial Trail is quite possibly the best short hike in North Carolina. It is considered by many as a jewel in the crown of the Nantahala National Forest. It is an easy 2 mile figure 8 loop that travels through one of the few remaining tracts of virgin hardwood forests in the Appalachians. 3800 acres of this primeval forest were dedicated as a living memorial to Joyce Kilmer the poet. He died in World War One and was best known for his poem "Trees".

From the parking area of the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest and picnic area at the end of FR416, follow the trail signs and ascend alongside cascading Little Santeetly Creek to cross a footbridge. Log seats for rest and contemplation are along the trail in this primeval forest of mosses, rhododendron, hemlock, yellow poplar, fetterbush, trillium, cohosh, wood sorrel and crested dwarf iris. At the junction with Poplar Cove Trail is a sign that indicates Alfred Joyce Kilmer was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey, December 6, 1886 and killed in action in France, July 30, 1918. The grove of yellow poplar is the most spectacular feature on the trails, many are 16 to 21 ft. in circumference and over 100 ft. tall. Cross another footbridge over Little Santeetlah Creek on the return loop to the parking lot. Total distance is 1.9 easy miles. From Robbinsville, NC take Rt. 143 North towards the Cherohala Skyway. Approx 5 - 6 miles past Robbinsville turn right at the sign for state road 1127 just before the Skyway. There is a large green sign pointing the way. The parking lot at the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Trail is closed after dark.

# Nantahala National Forest Recreational and Camping Areas

*Nantahala NF Recreation Overview (1.62 mb pdf)* <http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/nantahala.pdf>  
*Nantahala NF Day Use Areas (137 kb pdf)*  
[http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/connections/2005\\_connections/nantahala\\_day\\_use.pdf](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/connections/2005_connections/nantahala_day_use.pdf)

## **Apple Tree Group Camp**

Wayah: Take US 19-1 29 east from Andrews for 1 mile to Junaluska Rd. (NC 1505), turn right (South) on Junaluska Road for about 10 miles. Camping, drinking water, fishing, hiking, and a sanitation facility are all provided.

*Appletree Campground (263 kb pdf)* - [www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/appletree.pdf](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/appletree.pdf)

## **Arrowood Glade**

Wayah: Take US 19 east from Franklin for 5 miles, turn right (west) on NC 1310 (Wayah Bald Rd.) for 3 miles. Drinking water, fishing, hiking, picnicking, and a sanitation facility are all provided.

## **Bob Allison**

Tusquitee: Take US 19 east from Andrews for 1 mile, turn southeast on NC 1505 (Junaluska Road) for 5 miles, then turn south on Forest Service Road. 440 and go 6 miles to area. Drinking water, fishing, hiking, picnicking, and a sanitation facility are all provided.

## **Cable Grove**

Cheoah: Take NC 28 east from Fontana Village for 4.7 miles, turn left (north) on Forest Service Road 520 for 1.4 miles. Boating, camping, drinking water, fishing, hiking, a sanitation station, and trailer space are all provided.

## **Cheoah Point**

Cheoah: Take US 129 North from Robbinsville for 7 miles; turn left on NC 129, then go 0.8 miles on NC 129. Boating, camping, drinking water, fishing, hiking, a sanitation station, and trailer space are all provided.

## **Cliffside Lake**

Cliffside Lake Recreation Area offers two covered picnic shelters that must be reserved, a bathhouse with cold showers, a lake for fishing and swimming, a gazebo, and six short hiking trails. Some trails lead to waterfalls.

*Cliffside Lake Recreation Area (862 kb pdf)* - [www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/cliffside.pdf](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/cliffside.pdf)

## **Ferebee Memorial**

Cheoah: From Bryson City go west on US 19 for 16 miles. Boating, fishing, picnicking, and a sanitation facility are all provided at the campsite.

## **Hanging Dog**

Tusquitee: Take NC 1326 (Joe Brown Highway) Northeast from Murphy for 5 miles. Boating, camping, drinking water, fishing, hiking, sanitation center, and trailer space are all provided.

## **Horse Cove**

Cheoah: From Robbinsville go northwest on US 129 for 8 miles, turn left on NC 1134 and go 2.5 miles, turn left on Forest Road 416 and go 3.7 miles to area. Camping, drinking water, fishing, hiking, sanitation facility, and trailer space are all provided.

## **Jackrabbit Mountain**

Bordering the 13-mile long Chatuge Lake, Jackrabbit Mountain Recreation Area is a great mountain getaway and offers a bounty of outdoor recreation, from waterskiing to fishing to camping.

Located on the Nantahala National Forest of Clay County, Jackrabbit Mountain Recreation Area lies on a peninsula of Lake Chatuge—a man-made reservoir that boasts over 130 miles of shoreline. Touted as the crown jewel of Tennessee Valley Authority’s system of lakes, Lake Chatuge is an impoundment of the Hiwassee River. Similar to a Swiss alpine lake setting, the lake has a gradual shoreline with a backdrop of mountains.

*Jackrabbit Campground (578 kb pdf)* - [www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/jackrabbit.pdf](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/jackrabbit.pdf)

## **Joyce Kilmer**

Cheoah: From Robbinsville go northwest on US 129 for 8 miles, turn left on NC 1134 and go 2.5 miles, turn left on Forest Road 416 and go 3.7 miles, turn right on Forest Road 305 and go to the end of the road. Drinking water, hiking, picnicking, and a sanitation facility are provided.

*Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest (1.4 mb pdf)* - [www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/joycekilmer.pdf](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/joycekilmer.pdf)

## **Kimsey Creek Group Camp**

Wayah: From Franklin go west on US 64 for 12 miles, exit on old US 64 and go east 2 miles, turn right (south) on Forest Service Road 67 and go 2 miles to area. Camping, drinking water, fishing, hiking, and a sanitation facility are provided at the site.

## **Lake Cherokee**

Tusquitee: Take US 64 southwest from Murphy for 8 miles, and then turn right (northwest) on NC 294 for 3 miles. Drinking water, fishing, hiking, picnicking, and a sanitation facility are all provided.

## **The Mountain Waters Scenic Byway**

The Mountain Waters Scenic Byway is a 61.3-mile drive that winds through hardwood forest, two river gorges, and countryside. Traveling from Highlands to Almond, the byway follows U.S. 64, old U.S. 64, SR 1310 (Wayah Road), and U.S. 19/74.

*Mountain Waters Scenic Byway (258 kb pdf)* - [www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/mtn\\_waters\\_byway.pdf](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/mtn_waters_byway.pdf)

## **Nantahala River Gorge**

The Nantahala River is located in the Nantahala National Forest and flows from Macon County into Swain County, North Carolina. The Nantahala River Gorge occupies approximately 9 miles of the Nantahala River from the Beechertown power plant to the upper reaches of Fontana Lake. The Nantahala River Gorge is managed by the Wayah Ranger District of the USDA Forest Service. The river allows for a variety of recreational activities to occur within the rivers corridor including rafting, canoeing, kayaking, picnicking, fishing, hiking, viewing, camping, and photography.

Wayah: From Bryson City go west on US 19 for 16 miles. Boating, fishing, and a sanitation facility are all provided.

*Nantahala River Gorge* - [www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/nantahala.htm](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/nantahala.htm)

## **Rattler Ford**

Cheoah: From Robbinsville go northwest on US 128 for 8 miles, turn left on NC 1134 and go 2.5 miles; turn left on Forest Road 416 and go 4 miles to area. Camping, drinking water, fishing, hiking, and a sanitation facility are provided.

## **Snowbird**

Cheoah: From Robbinsville take US 129 north 1.1 miles, turn left on, NC 1116 and go 3.5 miles to NC 1127, turn right and go 1.3 miles. Fishing, hiking, picnicking, and a sanitation facility are provided.

### **Standing Indian Recreation Area**

From the town of Franklin (located between the junction of US 64, US 441, US 28) take US 64 go two miles and make a right turn on forest road #67 and go two additional miles to the recreational area. This site is open year round, however, a small fee may be required. This campsite offers water, facilities, fishing, camping and hiking. Available on a first-come-first-served basis.

### **Tsali Recreation Area**

Challenging—that's the best word to describe the 42 miles of Tsali Trails, rated as "more difficult." Suited for hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders, the 4-loop system offers a variety of landscapes. You can climb 1-foot wide rugged paths or travel flat, well-beaten roads. The four trails—Right, Left, Mouse Branch, and Thompson Loops—meander through mixed pine and hardwoods on a peninsula stretching into Fontana Lake. Hikers may travel the trails on any day, but mountain bikers and equestrians, the primary users, are kept separated by alternating use of the trails. A schedule is posted at all trailheads.

*Tsali Recreation Area Brochure (210 kb pdf)* - [www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/tsali\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/tsali_brochure.pdf)

### **Van Hook Glade**

Van Hook Glade Campground's 20 camping sites have parking spurs, fireplaces, tables, and tent pads. Five sites are for tents only, and the other 16 sites accommodate RV's up to 34 feet.

### **Wayah Bald**

Wayah: Take US 64 southwest from Franklin for 5 miles; turn right (west) on Wayah Bald Road. (NC 1310) for 10 miles, turn right (north) on Forest Service Road 69 for 6 miles. Hiking, picnicking, and a sanitation facility are provided.

### **Wayah Crest**

Wayah: Take US 64 southwest from Franklin for 5 miles, turn right (west) on NC 1310 and go 10 miles to area. Hiking, picnicking, and a sanitation facility are provided.

### **Whiteside mountain**

A landmark along the eastern continental divide, Whiteside mountain rises to an elevation of 4,930 feet. The mountain's cliffs, look like sheets of rock is about 390 to 460 million years old. **Attractions:** A 2-mile loop trail climbs above sheer 750-foot high cliffs and offers outstanding views to the east, south, and west. Whiteside Mountain Trail is rated "more difficult" because of its steepness. Along your journey to the top, you can spot a variety of wildflowers- including false Solomons-seal, white snakeroot, and dwarf dandelion. **Location:** Whiteside Mountain is located south of U.S. 64 between Highlands and Cashiers.

*Whiteside Mountain (129 kb pdf)* - [www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/whiteside.pdf](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/whiteside.pdf)

### **Whitewater Falls**

With a 411-foot plunge, Whitewater Falls in North Carolina is the highest waterfall east of the Rocky Mountains. South Carolina's Lower Whitewater Falls drops another 400 feet. Reflecting the escarpment's steep, rugged terrain, much of the Whitewater Falls area receives few visitors and has remained wild and undeveloped over the years. From Asheville take I-26E and exit 40 (Asheville Airport). Turn right on NC 280W. After 16 miles, NC 280W becomes U.S. 64W in Brevard. Stay on U.S. 64W. Turn left on NC 281S at Sapphire, and go 9 miles. Turn left into Whitewater Falls entrance.

*Whitewater Falls Brochure ( 445 kb pdf)* - [www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/Whitewaterfalls.pdf](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/Whitewaterfalls.pdf)