

NANTAHALA NATIONAL FOREST

land of the noon day sun

Welcome to the Nantahala National Forest. This forest lies in the mountains and valleys of southwestern North Carolina. Elevations in the Nantahala National Forest range from 5,800 feet at Lone Bald in Jackson County to 1,200 feet in Cherokee County along Hiwassee River below Appalachian Lake Dam.

The Nantahala National Forest is divided into four districts: Cheoah, Tusquitee, Wayah, and Highlands. A district ranger manages each district.

All district names come from the Cherokee language, except the Highlands District. “Nantahala” is a Cherokee word meaning “land of the noon day sun,” a fitting name for the Nantahala Gorge, where the sun only reaches to the valley floor at midday. With over a half million acres, the Nantahala is the largest of the four national forests in North Carolina.

Nantahala National Forest was established in 1920 under authority of the 1911 Weeks Act. This act provided authority to acquire lands for national forests to protect watersheds, to provide timber, and to regulate the flow of navigable streams.

In the Nantahala National Forest, visitors enjoy a wide variety of recreational activities, from off-highway vehicle riding to camping.

The Nantahala is famous for whitewater rafting, mountain biking, and hiking on over 600 miles of trail. Three long-distance trails—the Appalachian, Bartram, and Mountain-to-Sea Trails—cross the forest.



Photo by Bill Lea

Hikers admire poplars at Nantahala's Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest.

While permits are required for trail use in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, none are required for trail use in national forests.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park adjoins the north edge of the Cheoah Ranger District along the Tennessee River and Fontana Lake. The Blue Ridge Parkway borders the east edge of the Highlands Ranger District in Jackson County.

WAYAH DISTRICT:

enjoy whitewater, wilderness



Kayakers take a ride on the Nantahala River rapids.

Photo by Bill Lea

The 134,900-acre Wayah Ranger District is centrally located in the Nantahala National Forest. This district is a diverse, rugged, mountainous land. Visitors enjoy a range of experiences from the remoteness of the Southern Nantahala Wilderness to the whitewater rapids in the Nantahala River Gorge.

Two famous national trails, the Appalachian and Bartram Trails intersect at Wayah Bald. Wayah is a Cherokee word meaning “wolf.” The district headquarters is west of Franklin off U.S. 64 bypass. Office hours: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

WAYAH BALD—Enjoy panoramic views from 5,342 feet. On a clear day, you can see north to the Great Smoky Mountains in Tennessee and south to the rolling hills of Georgia. At Wayah Bald, visitors can climb a fire tower

built in the days of the Civilian Conservation Corps. A bald is a mountaintop generally devoid of trees. The dominant plants at Wayah Bald’s summit are azaleas and mountain laurel. A picnic area is nearby.

Enroute to Wayah Bald you’ll see the 1916 Wilson Lick Ranger Station by Forest Road (FR) 69. An exhibit with historic photographs tells the story of this first ranger station in Nantahala National Forest. Wayah Bald is west of Franklin. Take U.S. 64 west to old U.S. 64 to SR 1310 (Wayah Road), then turn right on FR 69, a gravel road, a gravel road for 4.5 miles.

STANDING INDIAN BASIN — This horseshoe-shaped valley is about 9 miles west of Franklin and south of U.S. 64. The Standing Indian Campground, with 84 sites, showers, and flush toilets, is beside the Nantahala River, a favorite spot for

WAYAH. . . continued next page

WAYAH continued...

trout anglers. With 78 miles of hiking trails, the basin offers a variety of experiences—from short, easy walks to challenging hikes. The Appalachian Trail follows the basin's rim for 32 miles.

Walk the 0.6-mile trail to see the Wasilik Poplar, an 8-foot diameter yellow-poplar, the second largest yellow-poplar known in the United States. Stroll 0.5- or 0.1-mile trails to view Big Laurel or Mooney Falls. Take a 2-mile hike along the Appalachian Trail to Standing Indian Mountain to view "Standing Indian." Native American legend says the warrior turned to stone while standing watch on the mountaintop to warn his tribe of danger.

APPLETREE GROUP

CAMP—Located 24 miles west of Franklin and 12 miles east of Andrews off Junaluska Road, this tent camp features accessible showers and flush toilets, and 32 miles of hiking trails, including the well-known Bartram Trail. Sites A and D accommodate 10 to 25 people. Sites B and C accommodate 26 to 50 people. Extensive archeological excavations have shown that Native Americans lived at Appletree Group Camp for more than 10,000 years. Campsites are available by reservation only. To make reservations, call the Wayah District Office at 828-524-6441.

COWEETA HYDROLOGIC LABORATORY)—Established in 1933, Coweeta is located in a 5,700-acre basin, where watershed and forest ecology are



Photo by Bill Lea

Hikers marvel at the mammoth trunk of the Wasilik Poplar, a yellow-poplar that measures 8-feet in diameter.

studied. Connected to the Forest Service's Southern Research Station, this unit's mission is to explain and predict how water, soil, and forest resources respond to management practices, natural disturbances, and the atmospheric environment. Hundreds of scientists and students conduct research at Coweeta. The office is located about 10 miles south of Franklin off U.S. 441, then 3.2 miles west on Coweeta Lab Road.

NANTAHALA RIVER GORGE—The 8.5-mile stretch of Nantahala River that runs from Beechertown to Wesser is nationally known as a world-class whitewater river.

Continuous rapids provide wet, rolling rides for rafters and kayakers—from the novice to the expert. Among the national forest's biggest draws, the river attracts about 200,000 people annually. Since the Nantahala River is controlled by a hydroelectric dam, water levels remain constant through the season. Developed put-in and take-out spots, picnic tables, and viewpoints are along U.S. 19. Private businesses offer river outfitting and guiding, boat rentals, instruction and clinics, restaurants, and overnight accommodations.



Sunbathers and swimmers enjoy Jackrabbit Mountain Recreation Area.

Photo by Bill Lea

TUSQUITEE DISTRICT

This 158,900-acre district lies in the far southwestern toe of North Carolina in Cherokee and Clay Counties. The Tusquitee District has three large lakes that offer a variety of recreation. Two major rivers, the Hiwassee and Valley, provide canoeing. For camping and picnicking, four areas are available. District headquarters are in Murphy off U.S. 64. Office hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

CHAIN OF LAKES—In the Nantahala National Forest, three reservoirs in beautiful mountain settings provide a playground for recreation enthusiasts. Hiwassee Lake, Chatuge Lake, and Appalachia Lake offer boating, water skiing, fishing, and swimming, as well as a quiet place to relax and enjoy nature's wonders. Chatuge Lake is excellent for sailing. The Hiwassee and Appalachia Lakes are located west of Murphy, along the Hiwassee River. Chatuge Lake spans the Georgia-North Carolina State line, south of Hayesville.

HANGING DOG RECREATION AREA—

Located on Hiwassee Lake, this recreation area features a campground with 68 campsites, picnic area, hiking trails, an 8-mile mountain-bike trail system, and a boat launching ramp. Hiwassee Lake has 180 miles of shoreline and is a popular place for fishing, boating, and water skiing. The 1-mile Shore Trail overlooks the lake. To reach Hanging Dog, travel about 5 miles on SR 1326 from Murphy.

JACKRABBIT MOUNTAIN RECREATION

AREA—This picturesque area is located on a pine-wooded peninsula on Chatuge Lake. The area offers 100 camping sites, a swimming beach with accessible showers, flush toilets, hiking trails, picnic areas with shelters, and a launching ramp for boating, water skiing, and fishing. The recreation area is south of U.S. 64 between Hayesville and Shooting Creek.

TUSQUITEE. . . continued next page

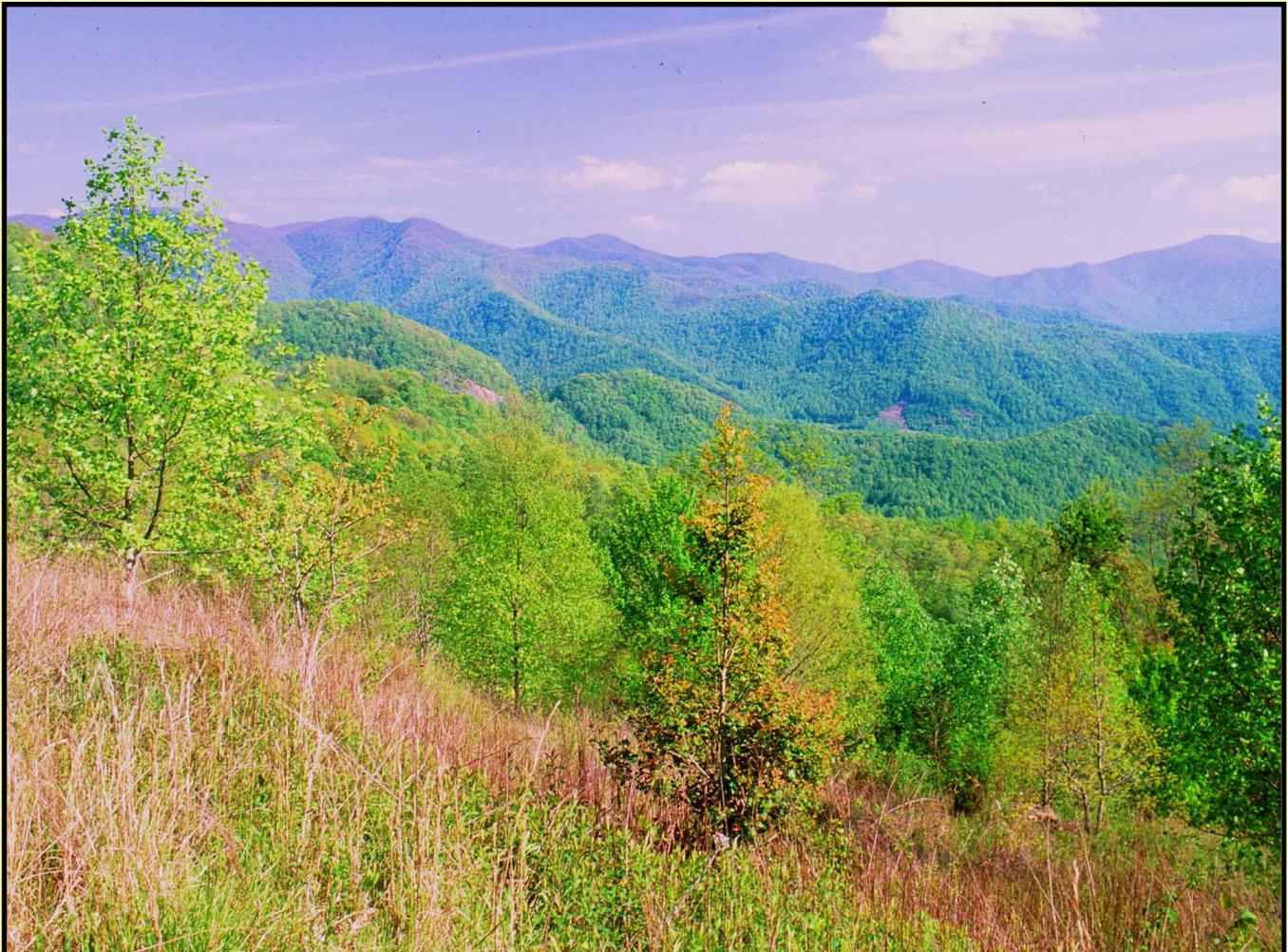
TUSQUITEE continued. . .

BEECH CREEK SEED ORCHARD—The Beech Creek Seed Orchard supplies the Southern Appalachian forests with improved tree seed for reforestation. Genetically improved seeds of white, shortleaf, and Virginia pine provide foresters with pines that produce better wood. The orchard also has many hardwood clonebanks of black cherry, oak, and yellow-poplar. The orchard is west of Murphy off Forest Road (FR) 307.

FIRES CREEK—This remote area offers excellent trout fishing, picnicking, hiking, horseback riding, and camping. The 25-mile Rim Trail in the Fires Creek Backcountry Area, is a hiking trail, however, some trail sections are open to horses. As the name implies, the Rim Trail climbs the ridge around Fires Creek and makes a large loop. The trail offers vistas as it crosses several high-elevation balds. Located on Fires Creek, Bristol

Campground has nine sites, a vault toilet, and accomodates horse campers. Huskins Branch Hunt Camp offers primitive camping. From the Leatherwood Falls Picnic Area, a 0.7-mile loop goes to Leatherwood Falls. The area is north of Hayesville on Fires Creek Road (SR 1344).

UPPER TELLICO OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE AREA—Offering 40 miles of trails, Upper Tellico's 8,000 acres are known for great four-wheeling. The Tellico River crosses this high-elevation basin's rugged, steep terrain. Most trails are open to all types of off-highway vehicles; one trail is restricted to all-terrain vehicles only. Many trails are rough and challenging, requiring front and rear tow hooks, special tires, and other features on 4-wheel drive vehicles. Only the access road is rated as "easy." Upper Tellico is on the Tennessee State line about 13 miles north of Murphy.



From U.S. 64, drivers can capture a panoramic view of land on the Tusquitee Ranger District.

Photo by Bill Lea



From the top of Hangover Rock, a hiker surveys the majestic Blue Ridge landscape.

Photographer Unknown

CHEOAH DISTRICT

The Cheoah Ranger District has 120,500 acres in Graham and Swain Counties.

These lands surround four large mountain reservoirs and contain numerous streams. Fishing, boating, whitewater rafting, hunting, hiking, and viewing fall colors are some popular activities. From the Cherohala Skyway, you can enjoy mountain vistas. The Appalachian Trail and other trails make up a network of some 320 miles that cross the district.

The district offers trails for horseback riders, mountain bikers, short-distance hikers, and backpackers. Several lakeside, streamside, and scenic developed campgrounds, and picnic areas provide a variety of outdoor experiences.

CHEOAH RANGER STATION—The ranger station offers visitor information, a short trail, and an overlook. Picnicking, boating, and fitness and

jogging trails are nearby. The station is close to Lake Santeetlah on NC 143, 2.7 miles north of Robbinsville. From April through October, the office is open every day from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For the rest of the year, the office is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. A Civilian Conservation Corps campsite—Camp Santeetlah—previously occupied the site.

JOYCE KILMER MEMORIAL FOREST—

This forest is one of the Nation's most impressive remnants of old-growth forest. The forest contains magnificent examples of more than 100 tree species, many over 400-years-old, and some more than 20 feet in circumference and 100 feet tall. This 3,800-acre forest was set aside in 1936 as a memorial to the author of the poem "Trees," Joyce Kilmer, who was killed in action in France

CHEOAH. . . continued next page

CHEOAH continued. . .

during World War I. This forest, part of the Joyce Kilmer-Slick Rock Wilderness, is maintained in its primitive state. The only way to see this forest is on foot. A 2-mile trail leads to the Joyce Kilmer Memorial and loops through giant trees. A restroom and picnic tables are located at the trailhead.

TSALI RECREATION AREA—Located near Fontana Lake, Tsali Recreation Area is nationally known for its 42-mile trail system. The 4-loop network is open to hikers and horses, but the system is best known as a challenging mountain bike course. The area has a 42-site campground with accessible showers and restrooms. The nearby boat ramp, providing lake access, is especially popular with anglers. Tsali is the closest national forest campground to the popular Nantahala Gorge.

HORSE COVE CAMPGROUND—This campground, near the entrance to Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, has 18 campsites located beside a rushing mountain stream, Little Santeetlah Creek. A few sites remain open year-round, although no water is available in the winter. No fee is charged.

RATTLER FORD GROUP CAMPGROUND—

Rattler Ford has four units that accommodate 25 people per unit. Showers, horseshoe pits, and a volleyball court are available. A trout stream and hiking trails are nearby. Reservations should be made 3 weeks in advance at the Cheoah District Office at 828-479-6431.

CHEOAH POINT RECREATION AREA—

Located adjacent to Santeetlah Lake, this area has developed camping, picnicking, swimming, fishing, and boating. Nearby, the Wauchecha Bald Trail provides access to the Appalachian Trail.

MAPLE SPRINGS OBSERVATION POINT —

This short, accessible, 900-foot loop trail provides a spectacular panorama of much of the district and the Great Smoky Mountains at a distance.

LEWELLYN COVE NATURE TRAIL—This lovely, 0.75-mile loop trail is off NC 28, just east of Fontana Village. Part of the trail follows a narrow railroad grade used in the early 1900's. Signs on the trail identify trees and shrubs.

CHEOAH. . . continued next page



Santeetlah Lake offers a variety of recreation, from boating to camping to swimming.

Photo by Bill Lea

SNOWBIRD BACKCOUNTRY AREA —This area's 8,000 acres encompass the headwaters of Big Snowbird Creek and a network of 37 miles of hiking trails. Snowbird's highlights are waterfalls and ridgetop and streamside trails. Trout fishing, hunting, hiking, and camping are favorite activities.

CABLE COVE RECREATION AREA —This area offers camping and hiking, with boating access on Fontana Lake. Cable Cove is 4 miles from Fontana Dam and the Appalachian Trail. The 26 campsites are set in a wooded area near a stream.

CHEROHALA SKYWAY—Climbing to 5,350 feet along the Unicoi Mountains' crest, this national scenic byway offers 43 miles of great vistas. Overlooks, picnic spots, interpretive exhibits, and trails add to the driver's enjoyment. A rival to the Blue Ridge Parkway, The skyway connects Robbinsville, NC, to Tellico Plains, TN.

BIG SANTEETLAH CREEK —A favorite with anglers, hunters, and primitive camping enthusiasts, this area is home to black bear, wild boar, grouse, wild turkey, and other small game. Forest Road 81, a gravel road, parallels the creek.



HIGHLANDS DISTRICT:

The Highlands Ranger District covers an area of about 116,000 acres in Macon, Jackson, and Transylvania Counties. This district contains the 39,000-acre Roy Taylor Forest in Jackson County, next to the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Highlands Ranger District is known as the land of granite walls and waterfalls.

NATIONAL WILD & SCENIC RIVERS—The Chattooga and Horsepasture Rivers are both scenic and rugged. Canoeing is not permitted on the Chattooga River within the district, but the river is very popular for rafting and canoeing where it flows along the South Carolina/Georgia State line. Hiking trails access both rivers, and the Horsepasture River features five waterfalls.

WATERFALLS—At 411 feet, **Whitewater Falls** is the highest falls east of the Rocky Mountains. Whitewater Falls is south of Cashiers and accessible by NC 107. Also off

HIGHLANDS. . . continued next page



Photo by Bill Lea

Whiteside Mountain's southface contains magnificent sheer cliffs, ranging from 400 feet to 750 feet in height.

HIGHLANDS continued. . .

NC 107 is **Silver Run Falls**, a 30-foot waterfall about 4.1 miles south of Cashiers. **Glen Falls**, south of Highlands, is a series of waterfalls and cascades that drop about 60 feet each. Access is via NC 106. Within the Cullasaja Gorge beside U.S. 64 are **Bridal Veil Falls** and **Dry Falls**, so named because you can walk under the falls without getting wet. You can drive your car under the veil of Bridal Veil Falls. **Lower Cullasaja Falls** can be seen from your car at the west end of the gorge.

MOUNTAIN WATERS SCENIC BYWAY—This 61.3-mile drive winds through two river gorges, and the countryside of Highlands and Wayah Ranger Districts. The byway's first 7.5 miles start at Highlands and travel through Cullasaja Gorge. Then it goes from Franklin to Almond via U.S. 64, SR 1310 (Wayah Road), and U.S. 19. The byway ends at the north end of the Nantahala Gorge. Along the byway are several waterfalls, five picnic areas, a campground, and many trails.

CLIFFSIDE LAKE AND VAN HOOK GLADE RECREATION AREAS—Along U.S. 64 in Cullasaja Gorge, these adjoining areas offer picnicking, swimming, fishing, camping, and hiking. Van Hook Glade has 20 sites, and campers may swim and shower at Cliffside Lake.

WHITESIDE MOUNTAIN—This landmark on the eastern continental divide is between Highlands and Cashiers off U.S. 64. Whiteside Mountain rises over 2,100 feet from the valley floor to the summit at 4,930 feet. A 2-mile loop trail climbs above the 750-foot cliffs along the ridge.

BACKCOUNTRY AREAS—Blue Valley and Panther town offer excellent hiking, backpacking, and fishing. About 30 miles of trails in Panther town Valley are open to hikers, horseback riders, and mountain bikers. Blue Valley has about 8 miles of trail, including the Bartram Trail, and some primitive campsites.

WAYEHUTTA ATV AREA—This area in Roy Taylor Forest offers 21 miles for trail bikes and all-terrain vehicles. Most trails are steep, rough, and rated as moderate or difficult.

BALSAM LAKE—This lovely mountain lake is the setting of a lodge, picnic area, trails, and lake or stream fishing. The Balsam Lake Lodge has 5 bedrooms, 16 beds, 3 bathrooms, and a kitchen. All facilities are accessible to people with disabilities. An accessible trail leads to a covered boat dock and fishing area. For lodge reservations, call the District Office at 828-524-6441.