



Cherokee National Forest

Forest Service News Release

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Cherokee National Forest announces schedule for recreation sites

CLEVELAND, TENN., March 9, 2023— USDA Forest Service officials announced the 2023 operating dates for recreation sites in the Cherokee National Forest.

The Cherokee National Forest, covering 650,000 acres, offers a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities and seasonal experiences for the over 2 million yearly visitors it welcomes to the Southern Appalachian Mountains of East Tennessee.

Most developed day-use recreation sites providing visitor access to trails, rivers, lakes, remote backcountry and target shooting areas, as well as several campgrounds without developed water systems or entrance gates, remain open throughout the year. Highly developed campgrounds and swim areas are routinely closed and winterized from late-fall through mid-spring in response to low visitation, reduced seasonal workforce, and freezing temperatures that damage water and wastewater systems.

Many campsites in developed campgrounds are available on a first come-first served basis, but some can be reserved in advance. National Forest visitors can go online to the recreation.gov website and select the name of the facility they wish to reserve or call the reservation service at 1-877-444-6777.

As the Forest Service shifts to a more sustainable recreation program, it must meet the reality of increasing deferred maintenance (maintenance backlog) and operational costs. Visitors will see projects across the National Forest to reduce deferred maintenance, as well as investments to improve well-loved sites. Site operating schedules may change as projects move forward.

Following is the scheduled 2023 opening dates for Cherokee National Forest recreation sites. Shooting ranges and most boat launches are open year-round.

Due to unforeseen circumstances and conditions the scheduled site openings and closings may be change. To verify openings please contact the ranger district offices listed below.

WATAUGA RANGER DISTRICT: 423-735-1500

HOLSTON MOUNTAIN AREA

[Little Oak Campground*](#)

Hemlock & Poplar Loops - April 24 - October 10

Big Oak & Lone Pine Loops & Boat Ramp - April 24 - October 10

Primitive Camping Only (no flush toilets) - April 4 - April 23; October 10 - November 6

Jacobs Creek Campground & Day Use Area - April 24 - October 10

IRON MOUNTAINS

Backbone Rock Recreation Area:

Day Use Area ([Pavilions*](#)) - March 20 - November 20

[Campground*](#) - April 24 - October 10

WATAUGA LAKE AREA

[Cardens Bluff Campground*](#) - April 24 - October 10
[Dennis Cove Campground*](#) - April 24 - October 10
Shook Branch Swim Area - May 8 - September 11
[Watauga Point Recreation Area*](#) - April 3 - October 10

ROAN HIGHLANDS

Carvers Gap Trailhead (Vault Toilet) - March 20 - November 20

UNAKA MOUNTAINS

Laurels Picnic Area ([Pavilions*](#)) - March 20 - October 10

**Indicates some sites can be reserved: www.recreation.gov*

UNAKA RANGER DISTRICT: 423-638-4109

UNAKA MOUNTAINS

Buffalo Mtn. ATV Trail - March 15 - December 15
Limestone Cove Day Use Area - Open Year Round
[Rock Creek Campground*](#) - May 10 - October 20
Lower Day Use Area - Open Year Round
Chestoa Day Use Area - Open Year Round

BALD MOUNTAINS

Horse Creek Campground & [Pavilion*](#) - May 10 - October 20
Sampson Trailhead Day Use Area - Open Year Round
[Katy Branch Group Site*](#) - May 10 - October 20
Old Forge Campground - March 15 - December 15
Round Knob Pavilion - Open Year Round

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TELLICO RANGER DISTRICT: 423-397-8455

CITICO CREEK AREA

Jake Best Campground - March 2 - November 27
Young Branch Campground - Open Year Round

TELLICO RIVER AREA

Big Oak Cove Campground - May 4 - September 28
[Donley Cabin*](#) - Closed until bridge is replaced
Holly Flats Campground - May 4 - November 27
[Indian Boundary Campground*](#) - April 19 - November 1
Indian Boundary Swimming & Picnic Area - April 19 - November 1
Indian Boundary Overflow Campground - Open Year Round
North River Campground - Open Year Round
Spivey Cove Campground - May 4 - September 28
Davis Branch - Open Year Round
Dam Creek Campground - Open Year Round
Holder Cove - Open Year Round
Rough Ridge - Open Year Round
Stateline Campground - Open Year Round
Young Branch Horse Camp - Open Year Round
Birch Branch & [McNabb Group*](#) Campgrounds - Open Year Round

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OCOEE RANGER DISTRICT: 423-338-3300

STARR MOUNTAIN AREA

Lost Corral Campground - Open Year Round

HIWASSEE RIVER AREA

Lost Creek Campground - Open Year Round

OCOEE RIVER AREA

Chilhowee Recreation Area:

[Campground*](#) - April 14 - November 6

[Group Camp*](#) - April 14 - November 6

Mac Point Beach Day Use - April 21 - November 6

Parksville Beach Day Use - Open Year Round

[Parksville RV Campground*](#) - February 24 - January 16, 2024

Parksville Group Campground - April 21 - November 6

[Thunder Rock Campground*](#) - February 24 - January 16, 2024

Tumbling Creek Campground - Open Year Round

BIG FROG AREA

Sylco Campground (No vehicle access) - Open Year Round

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