

Cherohala Skyway

The Skyway offers the cultural heritage of the Cherokee tribe and early settlers in a grand forest environment in the Appalachian Mountains. Enjoy mile-high vistas and brilliant fall foliage, as well as great hiking opportunities and picnic spots in magnificent and seldom-seen portions of the southern Appalachian National Forests.

Length: 42.95 miles / 68.7 km

Time to Allow: Two hours to drive the byway



Local Information

North Carolina

North Carolina Travel & Tourism Division

919-733-4171

1-800-VISIT-NC (800-847-4862)

Tennessee

Monroe County Department of Tourism

1-800-245-5428

Visitor Services

Fees



Fees may be charged at attractions along the way.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities



Although separate bicycle lanes or paths are not specifically designated along the byway, the design of the paved road and the grassy shoulders provides room for bicyclists. Sightseers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and even some

commercial traffic may be found along the byway. ###Tennessee Side### There are 12 existing trailheads located adjacent to the parking overlooks on the byway. The trails range from three to eight miles in length and traverse some of the most beautiful forestland found in Southern Appalachia. Many hiking trails follow aboriginal and Overhill Cherokee trade routes that are thousands of years old. Other trails enter the unique and beautiful Citico Creek Wilderness in eastern Tennessee. Wilderness trails are not appropriate for everyone, since they are generally kept primitive, rugged, and sometimes steep. ###North Carolina Side### Several short trails invite you to leave your car and explore the forests and meadows near the road. Look for these trails along the Cherohala Skyway: **Wright Cove Nature Trail** This half-mile loop winds through a cool, shady northern hardwood forest of American beech, yellow birch, and eastern hemlock. Two benches provide peaceful spots to enjoy the abundant ferns and woodland flowers. **Huckleberry Knob** An easy 2.5-mile round-trip trail takes you out of the forest and across two high grassy knobs. From Huckleberry Knob, the highest point in the Cheoah Ranger District at 5,560 feet,, you get a magnificent panoramic view of the surrounding Unicoi Mountains. **Spirit Ridge** This paved, accessible trail leads through a leafy tunnel of beech, birch, maple, and cherry to an overlook offering a spectacular view of the Skyway and the mountains. The trail is a 0.7-mile round trip and has interpretive signs along the way. **Hooper Bald** You can walk the short, 0.5-mile round-trip trail up to Hooper Bald, a grassy opening, or you can enter the extensive Snowbird Backcountry with its network of 37 miles of trails. A turn-of-the-century hunting retreat once stood near Hooper Bald and in 1908 accidentally introduced Russian boar into the Southern Appalachians. **Whigg Meadow** An easy, 1.5-mile trail climbs nearly 500 feet to a grassy meadow where livestock once grazed. You get a great view from the top. The trail begins at Mud Gap on the Tennessee-North Carolina State line and is a tiny part of the 275-mile-long Benton MacKaye Trail.

Camping



Camping can be found near the Skyway in the following places: **Indian Boundary** Cherokee National Forest, Tennessee: Open April through September, the Indian Boundary Campground is located north of the Skyway on Forest Road 345. It offers: * 100 campsites * showers * picnicking * 3.5-mile hike/bike trail * fishing * swimming in Indian Boundary Lake There is a fee to use this facility. **Horse Cove** Nantanhala National Forest, North Carolina: Located about three miles from the east end of the Skyway on SR 1127, at the entrance to Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, Horse Cove is open all year. There is no water or fee in the winter. Offers: * 18 campsites * fishing * hiking There is a fee to use this facility from April to October.



Food

Although there's nowhere to buy food along the Skyway, groceries and restaurant are available in Robbinsville, North Carolina, and Tellico Plains, Tennessee.



Gasoline

Although there's nowhere to buy gasoline along the Skyway, service stations are available in Robbinsville, North Carolina, and Tellico Plains, Tennessee.



Information

Brochures and information can be obtained at the following locations:
Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center 225 Cherohala Skyway Tellico Plains, TN 37385 423-253-8010 Mar. 1 - Thanksgiving: Daily 9 am - 5 pm Winter: Fri., Sat., and Sun. 9 am - 5 pm _Cheoah Ranger Station, Nantahala National Forest_ 1133 Massey Branch Road Robbinsville, NC 28771 828-479-6431 Mid-April - October: Mon.- Sat., 8 am - 4:30 pm Rest of year: Mon.- Fri., 8 am - 4:30 pm _Tellico / Hiwassee Ranger District, Cherokee National Forest_ 250 Ranger Station Road Tellico Plains, TN 37385 423-253-2520 Mon.-Fri., 8 am - 4:30 pm



Lodging

Although there's no lodging along the Skyway, motels, lodges, B&Bs, and cabins are available along NC 143, in Robbinsville, North Carolina, and along TN 165 in Tellico Plains, Tennessee.



Restrooms

Restrooms are available at Hooper Bald, Stratton Ridge, and Turkey Creek, along with picnic tables.



Retail

Although there's no retail stores along the Skyway, craft shops, antiques, and other stores are available in Robbinsville, North Carolina, and Tellico Plains, Tennessee.

Special Considerations

There are several special considerations associated with this byway. For example, there are no services available on the Cherohala Skyway (for 51 miles). However, there are services available at either end of the byway in Tellico Plains and Robbinsville. The design of the two-lane facility, integrated with wide shoulders and low speeds, helps to accommodate safe travel by all, especially bicycle enthusiasts and hikers.

All byway visitors, motorized and non-motorized, should be aware that there are some grades as steep as nine percent on the byway. Always use caution on the byway, but take particular care during winter storms. Roads may close during heavy snows.

Restrictions

All byway segments are paved and either state or federally maintained. Use caution when driving the byway during winter snows. Please check local weather conditions before traveling.

Seasons

Best Time to Drive

Summer and fall - The fall foliage season is wonderful (and popular) and summer is also the best time to visit.

High Season

The fall foliage season and summer are the most popular times to visit the byway.

Off Season

Snow is common from mid-November to mid-April.

Map and Directions

Standard Map - North Carolina Section



Standard Map - Tennessee Section Map



Legend:

Point of Interest	Campground	Featured Byway	Water	State Border
Park	Picnic/Rest Area	America's Byways	Wildlife Refuge	Urban Area
Mountain	Interstate	Other Byway	Wilderness Area	Tribal Nation
City	U.S. Highway	Other Road	Other Federal Lands	Military Base
Capital	State Highway	Trail	Other State Lands	

Driving Directions


- Start on NC 143 at Robbinsville, NC, and continue on NC 143 until the Tennessee/North Carolina state line. The byway then becomes TN 165.
- Continue on this route through the Cherokee National Forest until the end of the Skyway at Tellico Plains, TN.

Getting to the Byway



Nearby cities

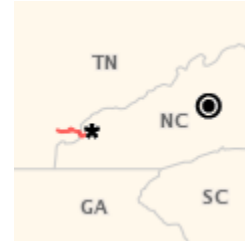
Asheville, NC (103 miles / 165.76 km, 2 hours 10 minutes)

Start:  US-74 westbound, Asheville, NC
N 35.598° W 82.556° [?]

Directions:

- Follow US 74 west for approximately 70 miles, and then turn north onto US 129.
- Take US 129 to Robbinsville, NC.
- Merge onto NC-143. Follow NC-143 for 12 miles to the beginning of the Cherohala Skyway at Santeetlah Gap.

Junction with byway:  Santeetlah Rd. from NC-143
N 35.346° W 83.894° [?]



Road Trip: Driving the Skyway in North Carolina

Departure: Robbinsville, North Carolina

Destination: Unicoi Crest, North Carolina

Time to allow: 1 day

Enjoy mile-high vistas and brilliant fall foliage, as well as great hiking opportunities and picnic spots in magnificent and seldom seen portions of the southern Appalachian National Forests.

Day 1

- **Start: Robbinsville**

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

Located near the easternmost end of the byway, Robbinsville is the gateway to areas like the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest.

- **Stop 2: Junaluska Memorial and Museum**

From previous stop: 5 minutes / 1.61 mi (2.6 km)

Directions: Drive east on Snider Hill St toward Main ST, take a left onto N Main St. then another left onto Tapoco Rd. Make a right onto Old NC-129 and drive for one mile before ending at the Junaluska Museum.

Suggested time at this stop: 45 minutes

Visit the museum that honors Junaluska, the Cherokee Warrior, and is dedicated to preserving Cherokee Heritage.

- **Stop 3: Santeetlah Gap**



From previous stop: same location
2,660 feet photo opportunity

- **Stop 4: Hooper Cove**



From previous stop: 3 minutes / 1.42 mi (2.3 km)

Directions: Drive southwest on the Skyway(NC-143) and turn right on NC-81. After 1.3 miles, end at Hooper Cove.

Suggested time at this stop: 20 minutes

Enjoy an open area near the Santeetlah Creek drainage; perfect for both a picnic lunch and photo opportunities.

- **Stop 5: Shute Cove**



From previous stop: 3 minutes / 1.62 mi (2.6 km)

Directions: Drive west on NC-81 for 1.6 miles to end at Shute Cove.

Suggested time at this stop: 5 minutes

From 3,550 feet, Shute Cove offers a stunning view of the valley below.

- **Stop 6: Wright Creek**



From previous stop: 2 minutes / 1.08 mi (1.7 km)

Directions: Drive west on NC-81 and end at Wright Creek after 1.08 miles.

Suggested time at this stop: 5 minutes

Another scenic view along the byway, Wright Cove gives an overlook of the scenery below from 4,150 feet.

- **Stop 7: Obadiah Gap**



From previous stop: 1 minute / 0.66 mi (1.1 km)

Directions: Drive west on NC-81 and after .6 miles, end at Obadiah Gap.

Suggested time at this stop: 5 minutes

A crisp view of a mountain vista and the Santeetlah Creek rushing below is visible from the 3,750 vantage point at Obadiah Gap.

- **Stop 8: Huckleberry Knob**



From previous stop: 30 minutes / 13.17 mi (21.1 km)

Directions: Drive west on NC-81 toward Wolf Laurel Rd.; after 5.8 miles, turn right to stay on NC-81, then turn left onto the Cherohala Skyway. After 7.3 miles, end at Huckleberry Knob.

Suggested time at this stop: 10 minutes

Further down the byway, you will find Huckleberry, a 5,300 feet overlook.

- **Stop 9: Hooper Bald**



From previous stop: 2 minutes / 0.87 mi (1.4 km)

Directions: Drive west on the Cherohala Skyway and after .8 miles, end at Hooper Bald.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

Pass peculiar Spanish carvings thought to be from the early 1600's and old hunting preserves where exotic species like the Russian Boar might be spotted as you take the quarter of a mile hike on the Hooper Bald trail.

- **Stop 10: Haw Knob Slopes**



From previous stop: 10 minutes / 4.21 mi (6.7 km)

Directions: Drive west on NC-143 for 4.21 miles to end at Little Haw Knob.

Suggested time at this stop: 10 minutes

Take a look at Haw Knob Slopes at 4,890 feet.

- **Stop 11: Mud Gap Trailhead**



From previous stop: 1 minute / 0.57 mi (0.9 km)

Directions: Drive west on NC-143 for .5 miles to end at Mud Gap.

Suggested time at this stop: 20 minutes

Look for Mud Gap Trailhead between Whigg Cove and Stratton Ridge.

- **End: Unicoi Crest**



From previous stop: 1 hour 8 minutes / 39.3 mi (62.9 km)

Directions: Drive northwest on NC-143; after 3.5 miles, NC-143 turns into TN-165. Drive on TN-165 for 23.1 miles and then turn left onto TN-165 before taking another left onto Unicoi Ln. Make a slight left onto TN-68, drive for 8.8 miles and then turn left onto Joe Brown Hwy. End at Unicoi Crest after 3 miles.

Suggested time at this stop: 15 minutes

At this last overlook before the Tennessee state line, get out and take a picture or two. This overlook stands at 4,470 feet.

Totals for Day 1

Total Distance Traveled: 64.51 miles / 103.2 km

Total Travel Time: 2 hours 5 minutes

Total Stopping Time: 3 hours 15 minutes