

Surround Yourself!



Surrounded by Spring Fun

1. Toccoa Swinging Bridge
2. Nature Watching
3. Springtime Rail Trips
4. Ocoee River Gorge Drive
5. Ocoee Whitewater Center
6. Helton Creek Falls
7. Toccoa River Trout Fishing
8. Brasstown Bald
9. Downtown Blue Ridge
10. Lake Blue Ridge Access

MAP KEY DIRECTIONS Surrounded by Spring Fun Map

1. Toccoa River & Swinging Bridge - a popular destination for day-hikers, Benton MacKaye Trail through hikers, and paddlers making the journey down the Toccoa River Canoe Trail is the swinging bridge over the Toccoa River. This 265 foot long bridge is the longest swinging bridge east of the Mississippi River. Plan on a weekday visit to avoid crowds. Call the Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center for directions at 1-800-899-MTNS.

2. Nature Watching with Blue Ridge Bird Seed Company - Saturday mornings from 9-10AM. Indoor Seminar Dates: March 17th, Hummingbirds; April 14th, Spring Bird Identification; May 12th, Living With Bears (with a DNR Biologist, Appalachian Community Bank Community Room). Bird walks are held on Saturday mornings from 8-10AM. Meet at Blue Ridge Bird Seed Company at 7:45AM. Bird Walk Dates: March 24th, Early Spring Migrants; April 21st & 28th, Peak of Migration; May 5th and 19th, Migration, Early Nesting. Blue Ridge Bird Seed Company, 611 East Main Street, Blue Ridge, GA, 30513 (706) 258-2473. <http://www.blueridgebirdseed.com/>

3. Springtime Rail Trips with Blue Ridge Scenic Railway - a 3 1/2 hour ride along the Toccoa River from Blue Ridge to McCaysville. Daily trips start the week of April 1. Closed on Easter Sunday, the 8th, Easter Egg-spress trip on Saturday, the 7th. 241 Depot Street, Blue Ridge, GA, 30513 (800) 934-1898; (706) 632-9833; Fax: (706) 258-2756 <http://www.brscenic.com>

4. Mountain Waters Drive through the Ocoee River Gorge - Ocoee Scenic Byway, Hwy 64, Ducktown, Tenn. to Cleveland, Tenn. Follow the nation's first Scenic Byway as it winds through the Cherokee National Forest alongside the Ocoee River, past the Ocoee dams, flume line and powerhouses Ocoee Whitewater Center and Parkville Lake. From Blue Ridge take Hwy 5 north to McCaysville, turn left on Hwy 68 and follow signs to Hwy 64. For information, call (423) 496-5197, or see www.byways.org

5. Hiking & Biking at the Ocoee Whitewater Center - Ducktown, Tenn. Built for the 1996 Olympic Whitewater Slalom Races, the center includes the Olympic race course, native gardens, paved walkways, hiking and biking trails, pools of water for wading or feeding fish and more. It's a great place to take a picnic. From Blue Ridge take Hwy 5 north to McCaysville, turn left on Hwy 68 and follow signs to Hwy 64. (423) 496-5197 <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/ocoe/>

6. Pastoral Drive to Helton Creek Falls - There are two falls on Helton Creek near Blairsville. A short trail descends to the first waterfall then climbs to the second larger waterfall. Please be careful – the rocks are slippery! From Blue Ridge, take Hwy 515 north to Blairsville. In Blairsville, take US 19/129 south about 11 miles. Turn left onto Helton Creek Road, the first road past the entrance to Vogel State Park. Go 2.2 miles; the road turns to gravel. There will be a small parking lot on the right in a curve, and the trail is marked. Also in the area is the Walasi-Yi crossing on Blood Mountain, which provides hostel services and outfitting to through hikers on the Appalachian Trail. The gift shop features local art and pottery. For more information, call 706-745-6095.

7. Delayed Harvest Trophy Trout Fishing on the Toccoa River - the section of the Toccoa River near Shallowford Bridge has been designated as one of 3 Delayed Harvest Rivers in GA and produces trophy sized trout. (0.4 mile above the Shallowford Bridge upstream 1.3 mile to a point 450 feet above the Sandy Bottoms Canoe Access). From May 15-October 31 anglers fishing delayed harvest streams can keep fish. From November 1-May 14 anglers must release all trout immediately and use and possess only artificial lures with one single hook per lure. More information on the program is available at: http://georgiawildlife.dnr.state.ga.us/Assets/Documents/fisheries/DH_infosheet.pdf And a nice map is available here: www.gofishgeorgia.com/Assets/Documents/fisheries/toccoaDH.pdf

8. Brasstown Bald - Georgia's highest mountain offers a Visitor Information Center and panoramic view of four states. Also featured are exhibits, video presentations, hiking and picnicking. From Blairsville, take U.S. 19/129 south for 8 miles. Turn left onto Georgia 180. Go 9 miles to Georgia 180 Spur and turn left. Go 3 more miles to the Brasstown Bald parking lot. For information, call 706-896-3471.

9. Shopping for Treats, Antiques & Uniques - Historic Blue Ridge and McCaysville are the places to shop for Appalachian arts and crafts, pottery, quilts, antiques, art glass, mountain home furnishings, apples, smoked trout and hand-made alpaca goods. There's something for everyone, and the kids will enjoy the toys, bears, ice cream and fudge treats. Make sure to stop by the Visitors Center to pick up shopping maps from Blue Ridge Business Assn. and Tri-Cities Business Assn.

10. Family Picnic - Morganton Point, Lake Blue Ridge - The crystal clear aquamarine waters of Lake Blue Ridge, 90 national forest campsites, several boat ramps, a full-service marina and public swimming and picnic areas. 80 percent of the shoreline on Lake Blue Ridge is in the Chattahoochee National Forest, managed by the USDA Forest Service. Morganton Point Campground, in Morganton, features a public swimming area, along with 43 campsites, picnic tables and pavilion and a boat ramp. Take U.S. 515 north from Blue Ridge for 4 miles to GA 60; turn right (southwest) and go 3 miles to Morganton. In Morganton, turn right on County Road 616 for 1 mile. <http://www.fs.fed.us/conf/mgntncmp.htm>

Please do not exceed your level of experience and fitness when undertaking any activity, especially in wilderness areas. A Word to the Wise: The law of the forest is "leave no trace". Please pack in all you will need and pack out all your trash. If you build a fire, never leave it unattended. Use good judgment when hiking, particularly around waterfalls where rocks are often wet, moss covered and slippery. If hiking during hunting season, wear a brightly colored vest. Unexpected encounters with animals can be pleasurable or problematic. A hawk or owl soaring silently above is a pleasure. Watch for woodpeckers, turkeys and mountain grouse near the forest edges. The flash of a white-tail deer is an every day occurrence. More rare is sighting a black bear or bobcat. Most animals will flee the presence of humans, but be on the lookout for copperheads, wasps, yellow jackets and other biting, stinging critters. For more info on proper behavior in the wild, please go to www.LNT.org (Leave No Trace). And as a suggestion, if you are going out for a scenic drive, try to do it in a high mileage/per person vehicle.

Fannin County Chamber & Welcome Center
3990 Appalachian Hwy Blue Ridge, GA 30513
1-800-899-MTNS www.blueridgemountains.com