



Photo courtesy of George Stearns

Only an eight-mile hike from the Appalachian Trail, the Santeetlah Lake is perfect for rustic outdoor enthusiasts. More than fifty primitive campsites are scattered around the lake and require neither permits nor fees. The lake is home to a variety of fish including smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, walleye, crappie, bream and lake trout, so catching dinner shouldn't be a problem. With seventy-six miles of shoreline and over two hundred miles of hiking trails in the Cheoah District, working up an appetite shouldn't be a problem, either.



Photo courtesy of John Light, Eastern Marketing

The Little Tennessee and its immediate watershed comprise one of the richest archaeological areas in the Southeastern U.S. The Little Tennessee drains portions of three national forests—Chattahoochee, Nantahala and Cheochee, and provides the southwestern boundary of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Known to avid fishermen for its smallmouth bass, this river is a popular spot for canoeing, fishing and floating. Travelers and locals alike enjoy the town of Franklin's Little Tennessee Gateway as it winds along the river.



Photo from Shutterstock

The Oconaluftee, considered sacred waters by the Cherokee, is a beautiful, freestone river that drops 2,000 feet over 10 miles. Also known as the "Luftee," this majestic river flows through Cherokee before joining the Little Tennessee on the way to Lake Fontana. Wading, tubing and canoeing are all popular activities found on the river. However, it's most famous for its abundant and healthy rainbow, brook and brown trout. In fact, it holds the North Carolina Record Brown Trout weighing in at 15.9 pounds.



The Kawee Brown Trout is a type of Brook Trout found in Blue Ridge Parkway Developmental District.

Check with North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission at [ncwildlife.org](http://ncwildlife.org) for fishing regulations specific to each river.



Photo courtesy of the Brown County/Sevier County NC District of Commerce

Fontana Lake forms part of the southern border of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and part of the northern border of the Nantahala National Forest. Short of a multi-day hike, Fontana Lake provides the only access into the most remote areas of the National Park, including Hazel Creek. The lake is used by boaters, floaters and flat-water kayakers looking for an out-of-the-way experience. Also frequented by avid fishermen, some say that Fontana Lake offers the best smallmouth bass fishing in the United States. On a clear day, hikers can view the lake from the observation tower on Clingmans Dome, creating breathtaking views.



Photo courtesy of [thekentucky.com](http://thekentucky.com)

Nantahala Lake sits above the Nantahala Gorge and is known for its scenic beauty, crystal clear waters and excellent fishing. Its beauty beckons to water-lovers looking to do some swimming, boating, skiing and many other activities. Meanwhile, anglers catch largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, trout, catfish and many different species of pan fish. The lake is also the only place to find freshwater Kokanee salmon in the Southeast.



Visit [SmokyMountainBlueways.com](http://SmokyMountainBlueways.com) to see public access points for each of the Great Rivers and Great Lakes of the Great Smokies.

