Self-Guided Tours
Georgia's Blue Ridge Experience

Water Spots: Area Whitewater & Waterfalls

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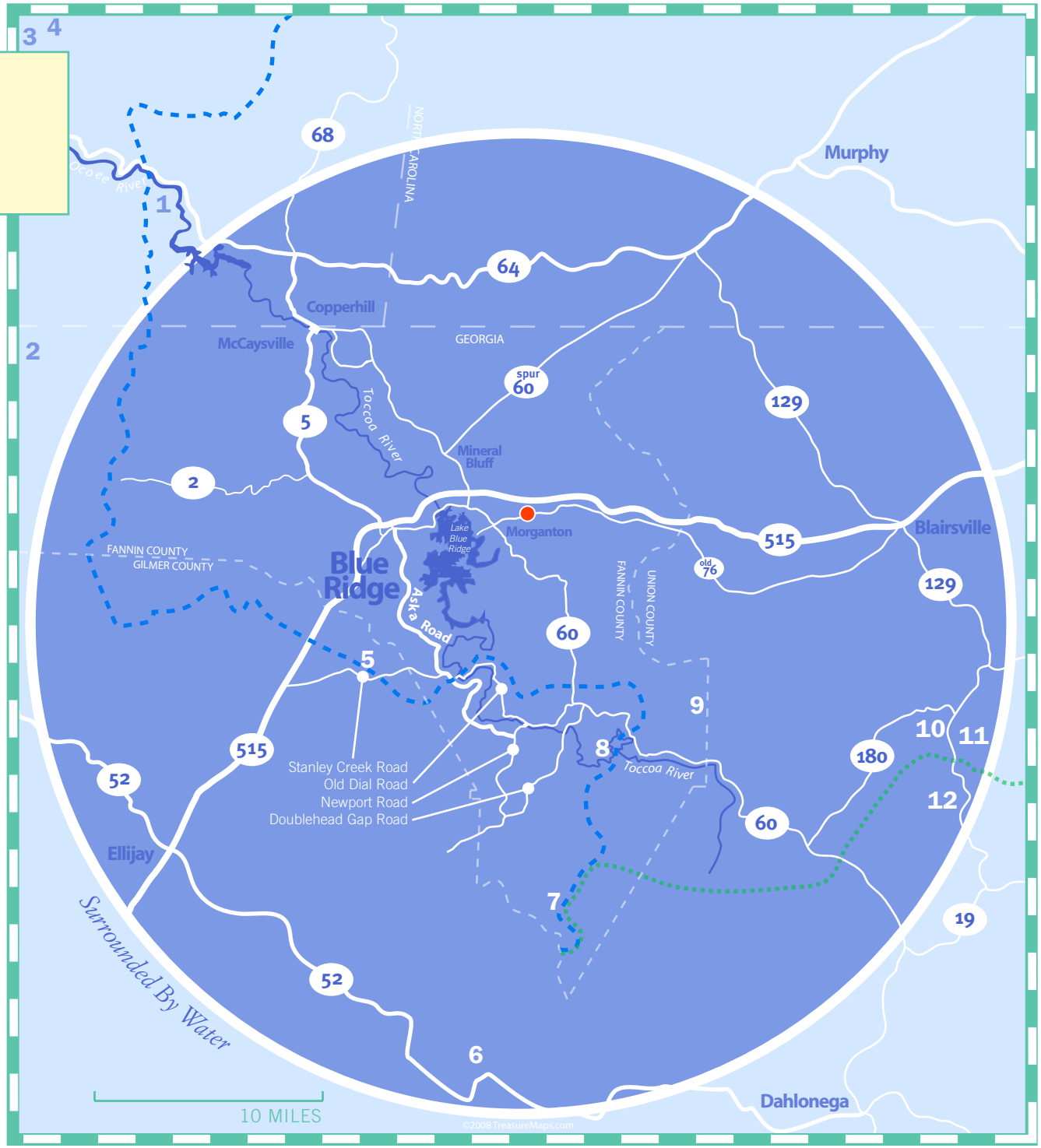
Welcome Center

Benton MacKaye Trail
Appalachian Trail



Georgia's Blue Ridge
EXPERIENCE

Water Spots: Area Whitewater & Waterfalls

Easiest **More Difficult** **Most Difficult**

The waters surrounding Georgia's Blue Ridge include some of the most legendary in the USA. The Toccoa and Ocoee Rivers flow through the are, and hidden waterfalls are jewels in gorgeous wilderness.The famous Appalachian Trail begins here and the Benton MacKaye (pron. mack-eye) winds throughout the area. For detailed info consult the US Forest Service web site at www.fs.fed.us/conf/. Detailed maps are available there online. Trailhead numbers on the map match numbers below:

1 Ocoee River Rapids. Home to the 1996 Olympic whitewater events, this is world class water. This is a great place to bring a picnic, do advanced paddling, hike and bike. In addition to whitewater sports, the Ocoee Whitewater Center has a one-mile hiking trail which crosses a 330 foot suspension bridge and circles the center. The trail is entirely accessible for those who are physically challenged. There are an additional 20 miles of trails for hikers and mountain bikers. From Blue RIdge take GA 5 north to McCaysville, then turn left on Tennessee Highway 68. In Ducktown, take U.S. 64 west to the Ocoee Whitewater Center on the left.

2 Jacks River Falls. Located in the Cohutta Wilderness Area on the Jacks River, this beautiful waterfall is the most visited site in the Cohutta and is reached by a 3.5 mile trail through rugged wilderness. It is highly recommended to get the USFS map of the Cohutta Wilderness and carry the 10 essentials. For the shortest hike in, approach from the northwest access point. Start in Ellijay and drive Hwy 52 west to Chatsworth. From Chatsworth, go north on US 411 for 13 miles to Cisco. Turn right on Old Hwy 2. Continue on this road 10 miles to FS 62 on the right. Turn right on FS 62 and go 4.4 miles to the Beech Bottom Trailhead. Hiking experience recommended.

3 Benton Falls. Located on the Benton Falls Trail in the Overhill country of southeastern Tennessee. From Blue RIdge take GA 5 north to McCaysville, then turn left on Tennessee Highway 68. In Ducktown, take U.S. 64 west past the Ocoee Whitewater Center. From the Ocoee Ranger Station on Hwy 64 take Forest Service Road 77 up Chilhowee Mountain approximately 7.3 miles and turn right at Chilhowee Campground. Go 0.4 miles to the Chilhowee Recreation Area. The trail is 1.5 miles to the falls.

4 Turtletown Falls. Turtletown Creek Trail follows Turtletown creek and loops back to Shinbone Ridge. Beautiful views emerge of of the Hiwassee River below along with overlooks of two major waterfalls, Turtletown Falls and Lower Turtletown Falls. From Blue RIdge take GA 5 north to McCaysville, then turn left on Tennessee Highway 68. Go north onto Tennessee Highway 68 for approximately 15 miles. Cross the railroad tracks and bear to the left on all paved roads for about 0.9 miles to the junction of FS Road 1166 (the sign here says Turtletown Scenic Area). Turn right and follow FS Road 1166 for 0.9 mile to the junction of FS Road 11651 and turn left. Travel approximately 0.5 mile to the parking lot. The trail head is on the left.

5 Fall Branch Falls. A double waterfall with mountain laurel and rhododendron growing along the trail and creek bank. The hike to the falls is about 30 minutes round trip. In Blue Ridge, follow Aska Road south for eight miles. Turn right on Stanley Creek Rd. (Toccoa Riverside Restaurant is on the left). The trailhead is three miles on the right, just past Forest Warden Garfield Stanley's home. TIPS: never climb on a waterfall. It is very slippery and dangerous. There is a nice platform in front of the falls. Always stay on marked trails. Vegetation in the wilderness is fragile and stepping off the trail crushes small plants & causes impact that lasts for years.

6 Amicalola Falls & Trails. About 21 miles from Ellijay on Hwy 52 is a spectacular 729-foot falls, the tallest cascading waterfall east of the Mississippi River. Also, a strenous 8.5 mile approach trail leads from the park to Springer Mountain, the start of the famous Appalachian Trail.

7 Long Creek Falls. Go 13.5 miles south on Aska Road to its end. Turn right onto Newport Road, go 4.5 miles to end. Turn left onto Doublehead Gap Road, cross a concrete bridge and come to a dirt gravel road. Continue on this road .3 miles to the intersection with dirt-gravel FS Road 58, intersecting sharply from the right. Continue east into the forest and uphill 5.3 miles to Three Forks. Noontootla Creek is on the right as you ascend. The trail begins on the north side of the road and starts as a gradual hike alongside Long Creek. There are three short ascents before reaching the blue blazed side trail to the falls at 1.1 miles.

8 Toccoa River, Swinging Bridge. This is a beautiful area with huge old growth hemlocks, whitewater and shoals on the Toccoa River. A popular destination for day-hikers, Benton MacKaye Trail through hikers & paddlers making the journey down the Toccoa River Canoe Trail. Plan on a weekday visit to avoid crowds. The swinging bridge over the Toccoa River is a 260 foot long bridge and the longest swinging bridge east of the Mississippi River. From the Welcome Center, take Hwy 515 4.3 miles to Hwy 60 and turn right toward Morganton. There, turn right toward Dahlonega for 11.3 miles on Hwy 60 south passing Skeenah Mill. Another .7 miles on the right is FS 816, turn right and follow this gravel road 4 miles to the parking area. A short hike down to the Toccoa River on the Benton MacKaye/ Duncan Ridge National Recreation Trail brings you to the Swinging Bridge.

9 Sea Creek Falls. A 30-foot waterfall with a shallow pool at the bottom, about one hour from Blue Ridge. From Morganton, follow GA Hwy 60 South 17.7 miles to the Cooper Creek Recreation Area turnoff on the left. Continue on FS Road 4, 2.9 miles to a fork. Turn left and follow road .3 miles. Park and walk .1 mile to the falls.

10 Vogel State Park. One of Georgia's prettiest state parks, including scenic Lake Trahlyta. Directly below Lake Trahlyta is a stepping stone waterfall. Go south from Blairsville on US 19/129 for eleven miles. Just before the entrance to Vogel State Park on the right is a one lane pullover where you can view the falls from above.

11 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.

12 Desoto Falls. A 2.5 mile trail begins at the bridge in the lower loop of DeSoto Falls Recreation Area. From Blairsville, take US 19/129 south toward Dahlonega. The entrance will be on the right at the bottom of the mountain. It is about 18 miles before Dahlonega.

A Word to the Wise … Be prepared for wilderness. See the USFS web site at www.fs.fed.us/conf/. The law of the forest is "leave no trace." See www.LNT.org for info. 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 information, gear and planned hikes, visit Blue Ridge Mountain Outfitters, 500 Main Street, Blue Ridge. Fannin County Chamber & Welcome Center is at 3990 Appalachian Highway – Blue Ridge, GA 30513 1-800-899-MTNS