

Quick Insider's Guide to Planning Your Visit to the 2018 National Forest Service Reunion

With the 2018 Reunion at the Cradle less than a year away, Forest Service retirees are beginning to plan their travel. There are many good websites on line and the Asheville Convention and Visitor Bureau will be available on site, at the Reunion to provide information on places and activities.

This webpage is meant to supplement your early planning, particularly if you are driving to Asheville or plan to explore the South beyond the Reunion week.

The following ideas are offered by Forests. We understand that employees are fully engaged with their work responsibilities and that their time is precious. So I sent 18 questions and asked them for a few moments, to provide brief rapid-fire answers, to any or all questions.

While reading the Forest responses, I could feel their sense of genuine pride for their place of work, but also the joy that they share with communities, partner organizations and local businesses.

The Forest responses are formatted in the chronological order in which they were received.

Thanks so much to the Executive Assistant's network - they both replied and/or ensured that responses were received!

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest

Supervisor's Office is in Gainesville, Georgia. (From Atlanta, take Interstate 85 north to 985).

The Chatt-O, as it is familiarly called, is located north and east of Atlanta. If you decide to fly into Atlanta and rent a car, you will likely travel through a portion of the Forest. From Atlanta, the Gainesville Supervisor's Office is located about one hour north of Atlanta on Highway 985. Once in Gainesville, you will have a three hour drive to Asheville through the mountains of north Georgia... a popular scenic drive. When traveling on the weekend during Fall Color viewing, you may experience some traffic, but there are inviting places to stop and enjoy the views and many small towns.

Forest Supervisor Betty Jewett offers her ideas on visiting the Chattahoochee-Oconee NF and communities.

Lunch or Dinner	
Coffee Shop	Danny's Donuts, Gainesville GA
Weekend Drive	441 North then across Hwy 76, then back to 441 South
Hidden Gem Place or Food	
Short Hike	Hemlock Falls
Expansive View	Brasstown Bald
Best Sunset/Sunrise View	Always on any of the area lakes
Places to Take Family and Friends	Anywhere on the forest!
Most Unique Forest Experience	Fox Fire Walks at Anna Ruby Falls
Best Place to Learn About Local History and Culture	Many places in our small towns

Most Unique or Favorite Aspect of the Local Culture	Best biscuits and fried chicken
Museum or Visitor Center	Brasstown Bald or Anna Ruby Falls
Safe Place to Walk Your Dog	
Waterfall Hike	We have several. Check our website!
Favorite Article or Book About the Local Area	We have a great Facebook page. Follow up on @ChattOconeeNF
Interesting Geological Feature	Yonah Mountain
Favorite Forest Feature While Driving	
Don't Miss This!	

Daniel Boone National Forest

Supervisor's Office is located in Winchester, in eastern Kentucky on Interstate 75. From Asheville, the Forest Supervisor office is five + hours via Knoxville, Tennessee. However, London, Kentucky is more central to many of the Districts and is only 185 miles from Asheville.

Geologically, the Daniel Boone National Forest is a gem, literally. The Cumberland Gap landscape recalls our nation's early pioneer history, including of course, Daniel Boone, frontiersman and Revolutionary War figure.

You may notice that this National Forest is unusually named for an historical figure. Although the Forest was established in 1937 as the Cumberland National Forest, considerable debate continued through the 1950s on the name derived from the British Duke of Cumberland. In 1746, A few decades prior to the American Revolutionary War, in Scotland, the Duke defeated the Scottish Highlanders in the Battle of Culloden, an especially brutal conflict. In the aftermath, many Scottish families emigrated to the American Colonies, the Southern Appalachians and the Appalachians in Kentucky.

During the 1950's Naming controversy, the Forest Service noted that although small Kentucky settlements existed prior to the Revolutionary War, they grew considerably when these veterans received Revolutionary War Bounty Land Grants for military service. Scottish and Revolutionary War descendants still living in the mountains of Kentucky did not support the name of Cumberland. President Johnson renamed the Forest in 1966, after the Kentucky Senate passed a resolution to rename the Forest.

The Daniel Boone response was a collaborative effort, thank you Kimberly Bonascorso, Marie Walker and Charlotte Leake!

Lunch or Dinner	Miguel's Pizza, Red River Gorge (a favorite of rock climbers)
Coffee Shop	Any food place along the way
Weekend Drive	Red River Gorge Geological Area through Nada Tunnel
Hidden Gem Place or Food	Rock Bridge, Red River Gorge
Short Hike	Shallow Flats Wildlife Viewing Area, Cumberland RD
Expansive View	Natural Arch Scenic Area, Stearns RD
Best Sunset/Sunrise View	Cave Run or Laurel River Lake
Places to Take Family and Friends	Cave Run or Laurel River
Most Unique Forest Experience	Canoeing scenic rivers

Best Place to Learn About Local History and Culture	Gladie Visitor Center in Red River Gorge
Most Unique or Favorite Aspect of the Local Culture	Bluegrass music
Museum or Visitor Center	Gladie Visitor Center, Red River Gorge
Safe Place to Walk Your Dog	Beaver Creek Wilderness , Stearns RD
Waterfall Hike	Dog Slaughter Falls, London RD
Favorite Article or Book About the Local Area	“A History of the Daniel Boone National Forest” by Robert Collins
Interesting Geological Feature	Chimney Top Rock, Red River Gorge
Favorite Forest Feature While Driving	Nada Tunnel, Red River Gorge
Don't Miss This!	Cave Run Lake, Laurel River Lake (U.S. Army Corp) and Red River Gorge

National Forests in North Carolina

Supervisor's Office is located in Asheville, but you knew that! Asheville is located in Western North Carolina, tucked into the Southern Appalachian mountains where Interstate 40 and 26 intersect.

Asheville is a mountain town built around rivers, so streets and highways can be confusing for drivers. This is one town where I always keep my mapping system turned on and a real paper map in my car. I also expect to get lost a few times, but hey relax, you're on vacation. The Crown Resort has a single hotel shuttle, use is free for Reunion participants during the week. Uber is also available in Asheville.

The Asheville Convention and Visitor Bureau official site is “Explore Asheville,” but there are a number of other informative sites, such as “Romantic Asheville.” These sites will introduce you to the hundreds of restaurants in Asheville and the surrounding area, the dozens of breweries and pubs, and tours for chocolate, waterfall hikes, kayaking, wineries, breweries, art galleries, etc.

The Forest Service's Southern Research Station and the National Forests in NC offices are located on Weaver Street, in Asheville. Southern Research Station Director, Rob Doudrick also manages the Bent Creek Experimental Forest, on Brevard Road, south of Asheville. It's original 1,100 acres was initially part the vast Biltmore Estate. Hiking, biking and horse riding are popular on designated trails. The renowned North Carolina Arboretum (fee for parking) is located within the boundaries of the Experimental Forest. To reach the Arboretum, go to their website for directions, as GPS will not correctly identify the location.

Shelly Kelly and Cathryn Dowd offer these responses.

Lunch or Dinner	Taco Temple
Coffee Shop	We drink beer here!
Weekend Drive	U.S. 64 from Franklin NC to Highlands through Nantahala RD
Hidden Gem Place or Food	Roan Mountain (65 mile north of Asheville)
Short Hike	Moore Cove Falls, Pisgah RD
Expansive View	Black Balsam, Pisgah RD
Best Sunset/Sunrise View	Max Patch, Appalachian RD

Places to Take Family and Friends	River Arts District, Asheville
Most Unique Forest Experience	Sliding Rock, Pisgah RD
Best Place to Learn About Local History and Culture	Cradle of Forestry, Biltmore Estate, and town of Cherokee
Most Unique or Favorite Aspect of the Local Culture	Drum Circle every Friday night in Pritchard Park in downtown Asheville
Museum or Visitor Center	Asheville Visitor Center, 36 Montford Ave
Safe Place to Walk Your Dog	Sam Knob Trail, Pisgah RD
Waterfall Hike	Linville Falls on Grandfather RD, Graveyard Fields on Pisgah RD, and Dupont State Forest
Favorite Article or Book About the Local Area	"Pisgah National Forest: A History" by Marci Spencer
Interesting Geological Feature	Looking Glass Rock, Pisgah RD
Favorite Forest Feature While Driving	Looking Glass Falls, Pisgah Rd
Don't Miss This!	New Belgium Brewery, and beyond Asheville: Cherohala Skyway and Grandfather Mountain State Park

Ozark-St. Francis National Forest

Supervisor's Office is in Russellville, Arkansas - about 700 miles, along Interstate 40 from your destination of Asheville.

As you travel from the West on I-40, and leave the grasslands of Oklahoma, you will cross the Arkansas River into Arkansas. On this route, the Ozark-St Francis will be the first National Forest office you will encounter in the Southern Region. The Ozark portion of the Forest lies mostly north of I-40. The Ouachita NF is directly south of I-40.

This National Forest has two distinct Forests. The Ozark in northwest Arkansas covers about 1.2 million acres. The St. Francis is a bottomland and hardwood forest and lies in eastern Arkansas. The St. Francis is one National Forest where you can experience the Mississippi River (Father of the Waters) from it's shoreline.

The Ozark NF lies within the Ozark's Boston Mountains. Visiting the Ozark NF is a chance to see some of the best developed oak-hickory forests in the nation. The primary species are red oak (*Quercus rubra*), white oak (*Q. alba*), and hickory (*Carya* spp, *Carya texana*). The pine species include shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*) and eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*). Some of the Forest's oak product timber sales are highly desired for whisky barrel-making in the States and overseas.

Most mountain ranges in the U.S., lie in a north-south pattern. A few like the Ozark's Boston mountains and the Ouachitas lie in a east-west pattern, a similar western example would be the Siskiyou Mountains in southern Oregon. If you think of an "H" symbol, these ecoregions, had a distinct ability to "catch" the flow and migration of an amazing array of diverse migrating plant and animal species within their horizontal "H" Bar boundaries (thank you Dr. Atzet for this bit of learning)! Today these ecoregions serve as a Pleistocene refugia and have distinctive freshwater communities.

Ok, Forestry lesson over! Mary Wood offers the Forest's rich response for the Insiders Quick Guide Questions.

Lunch or Dinner	Old Post BBQ (Russellville), Bucket List (Center Ridge), Oark Café (Oark Café), and Ozark Café (Jasper)
Coffee Shop	Ozark Café, Jasper
Weekend Drive	Many! Hwy 23, Hwy 7, Hwy 21, Hwy 309/109 and Hwy 5/9/14

Hidden Gem Place or Food	Blanchard Caverns, Haw Creek Falls, Holla Bend
Short Hike	You will see the work of the CCC's on many forest trails/structures. Pedestal Rocks (Bayou RD), White Rock Rim Trail (be careful: bluff hiking) (Boston Mtn RD); Mount Nebo Bench Trail (seasonal waterfall; dogs allowed on leash, Mt. Nebo State Park).
Expansive View	White Rock Mountain (Boston Mtn. RD), Mount Magazine (an Arkansas State Park just south of 1-40), Rotary Ann Overlook scenic drive
Best Sunset/Sunrise View	White Rock Mountain, Mount Magazine, Mount Nebo
Places to Take Family and Friends	Long Pool Recreation area along Big Piney Creek, and Bayou Bluff for scenery and river enthusiasts
Most Unique Forest Experience	Blanchard Caverns Tour, and Mount Magazine
Best Place to Learn About Local History and Culture	Camp Ozone (historic CCC camp), Ozark Folk Center (Mountain View)
Most Unique or Favorite Aspect of the Local Culture	CCC rock work, Ozark Folk Center, Oark store, Ozark mentality
Museum or Visitor Center	Ozark Folk Center (Living History State Park, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Clinton Library (Little Rock)
Safe Place to Walk Your Dog	Bona Sea Trail (Russellville), Lake Dardanelle State Park (Russellville), Pedestal Rocks
Waterfall Hike	Richland Creek, Blanchard Springs
Favorite Article or Book About the Local Area	"The Ozarks" by Scott R. Avetta and Charles Gruche. "Ozark Tales and Superstitions" by Phillip W. Steele
Interesting Geological Feature	Alum Cove, Pedestal Rocks
Favorite Forest Feature While Driving	Falling Water Falls and Mount Magazine
Don't Miss This!	Hawksbill Crags (careful when hiking), Glory Hole Waterfall Trail, White Rock Mountain, Blanchard Springs Caverns