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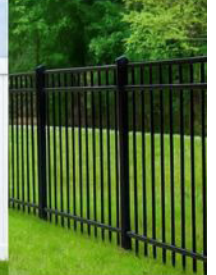
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The Advocate & Democrat publishes the Tennessee Mountain Traveler twice a year and distributes thousands of copies throughout East Tennessee and Western North Carolina. The magazine has become a must-have guide for travelers and an important advertising venue for the many tourist attractions and businesses in the region. It is in high demand at state visitors centers and is popular with local residents as well.

We hope this publication will enhance your visit here and introduce you to some new places. We know you will come back! If you have questions about this magazine or would like to advertise in the next edition, please email sharon.livingston@advocateanddemocrat.com. For more information about things to do in Monroe County, visit www.visitmonroetn.com/

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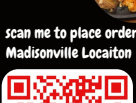
On the cover



This cover photo, courtesy of Monroe County Tourism, features a hiker admiring the vibrant fall colors on the Cherohala Skyway, a national scenic byway visited by millions of people each year.

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Won't you take me to Pumpkintown?



Historic downtown Athens and Friendly City Festivals are busy preparing for one of the area's biggest fall festivals — Pumpkintown: A festival of history, harvest and heritage on Saturday, Oct. 11.

Scheduled from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., this is the 23rd annual event celebrating the cultural history of East Tennessee by highlighting Native American culture, local history and displaying elements of times past that are unique and interesting for all ages.

Pumpkintown is among the area's premiere fall festivals and is one of the largest annually-attended events with over 26,000 in attendance last year. The day-long celebration brings to life the rich cultural history and heritage of the county and is named for a former McMinn County settlement.

If a person were to try to locate Pumpkintown today, they'd find themselves somewhere on Mayfield Dairy Farms about two miles north of downtown Athens and still within city limits.

It's not certain when Pumpkintown began or who founded it. It is known that

around 1820, a postmaster was named. Hugh Kelso, one of the first postmasters of McMinn County, distributed mail arriving by stagecoach.

The county itself was a newborn formed in 1819 and named after Joseph McMinn, who governed Tennessee at the time.

Pumpkintown was once described as a "home for transients and ne'er-do-wells" and it is surmised the name came from the native crop grown on the premises.

Legend would have people believe that Pumpkintown was considered to be the actual site for what would become the City of Athens, but that didn't quite happen. After much discussion and dissent, the permanent location of the county seat was located midpoint in the county on donated land and the little pioneer settlement was eventually absorbed into Athens.

Friendly City Festival committee members expect the event will continue to provide a variety of events for all ages to enjoy.

Old favorites will be returning, including the Scott Crisp Memorial PowWow; the infamous McMinn Regional Humane

Society's Mutt Strutt and Pet Costume Contest; the 41st Annual McMinn County Living Heritage Museum Quilt Show; Mayfield Farm Park; Pumpkin Plinko; 300 arts, crafts, info and food booths and local shopping. There will be plenty of children's activities throughout the venue as well as a petting zoo, pony rides, inflatables, larger than life dinosaurs and lots of interactive vendors for all ages.

Pumpkintown officials will also welcome back the USS Ware Reunion to the Friendly City. Activities will include the Commemorative Brick Dedication Ceremony at Veterans Park along with a special exhibit at the Living Heritage Museum.

The festival will also feature live entertainment on three stages throughout the day.

Pumpkintown has free admission.

For more information, contact Meredith Willson at 423-887-3544 or by email at meredithw2009@comcast.net.

More information can also be found online at www.friendlycityfestivals.com



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The Skyway is calling

Momentum is building as the Charles Hall Museum of History & Heritage prepares for its highly anticipated annual Cherohala Skyway Festival, set for Saturday, Oct. 25, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the museum and its grounds in Tellico Plains. With free admission and a full day of activities, this event draws both locals and tourists for a celebration of history, music, and family fun.

Convenient parking will be available in the field behind the museum, with festival entry at 122 Bank Street near Tellicafe. Shuttles will also run throughout the day. Handicap parking is available between the Cherohala Skyway Visitor's Center and the Tellico Plains Public Library. Parking is free.

Admission to the festival is \$5 for ages 16 and older. Children ages 15 and under will be admitted for free. All profits support the Charles Hall Museum of History & Heritage.

"The Cherohala Skyway Festival is one of our most exciting events," said Pam Hall Mathews, president of the Charles Hall Museum Board and event coordinator. "It's like a community reunion where both locals and visitors come together to enjoy the festival and explore the museum's incredible collections."

The festival features the Josh Graves Music Tribute. The tribute will honor the late bluegrass legend with performances by Tim Graves, his band The Farm Hands, and the Graves brothers—Tim, Tedd, and Mike.

Additional performances will include Appalachian Smoke, the Mountain Music String Band, local Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM), and Tim Decker and Tennessee River. Sixteen-year-old mandolin prodigy Wyatt Ellis will take the stage at 4 p.m. Backed by a powerhouse band of Appalachia's finest young musicians, Ellis is becoming one of the youngest regular performers in Grand Ole Opry history.

Albums from artists will be available for purchase. Attendees can also join Deb McCarter on the clogging stage or square dance to Jim Brooks Music.



Families can enjoy a variety of free activities in the Family Fun Zone, including inflatables, horse-drawn wagon rides, hayrides, a petting zoo, and more. The Tellico Plains Police Department's Little Train and craft stations by the Monroe Area Council for the Arts and Tender Heart Ministries will keep kids entertained, while the Sawdust Dig by Volunteer Federal Savings Bank gives children the chance to uncover treasures and cash prizes.

There's something for everyone with a face painting booth, Tellico Plains KOA's Game Zone, and the Tellico Plains High School student bake sale.

Artisans and crafters will showcase their work with over 90 vendors offering handmade goods, photography, jewelry, ceramics, and more. Festival-goers can also purchase delicious eats from food trucks and local vendors.

A highlight of the festival is the living history demonstrations, which offer a glimpse into early settler and Cherokee life in the 1800s. Guests can try Cherokee games, watch doll, pottery and quilting demonstrations, and taste 1800 dishes cooked over open fires. A special long hunter camp will display the tools and equipment used by early frontiersmen. There will be a reenactment of the DeSoto Expedition, offering a look at life in the 1500s.

Other demonstrations will include

blacksmithing, iron ore smelting, and corn grinding. Visitors can try their hand at cross-cut sawing at the Benton MacKaye Trail Association's booth or watch early settlers weaving, quilting, and grinding herbs. Smokey Bear will make an appearance with representatives from the Cherokee National Forest.

Antique tractor, lawn mower, and small engine enthusiasts are invited to display their machines in the Charles Hall Field with no entry fee required. For details, call James Blankenship at 423-519-6009.

As a fundraiser for the museum, a raffle will be held, offering a 50/50 split the pot cash prize with all proceeds going toward repairs for the museum. Tickets can be purchased at the museum, any Volunteer Federal Savings Bank location, or online at www.skywayfestival.com.

The Charles Hall Museum, a non-profit institution offering free admission, will be open for self-guided tours during the festival. Visitors can explore the extensive collection of historical artifacts, photos, and documents that showcase the rich history of the area.

For more information, visit www.skywayfestival.com, contact the museum at charleshallmuseum@hotmail.com, message the museum on Facebook, or call 423-253-8000. The museum is located at 229 Cherohala Skyway in Tellico Plains.

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Festive Fall in Madisonville

The City of Madisonville is preparing for a festive fall season in preparation for this year's Halloween event.

According to Madisonville Main Street Director Karen Carey, the city is planning family-friendly events that "highlight the spirit of community."

"From trick-or-treating and scarecrows to twinkling lights and Christmas cheer, the Courthouse square will once again be the heart of the celebration," Carey said. "The fun begins with Halloween in the City on Thursday, Oct. 31 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The City of Madisonville, Downtown Madisonville Association, Downtown Madisonville Alliance and local businesses have worked hard over the years to provide a safe, free and fun environment for kids of all ages."

She noted that this has become a tradition that brings thousands of trick-or-treaters each year.

Local businesses and organizations are encouraged to join in by handing out candy and treats. There is no fee to participate. To reserve a spot, contact Susan Saunders at 423-261-5140.

"Halloween in the City is more than candy: It's entertainment, food and fun. Highlights include trick-or-treating, food trucks, a dance party, a costume contest and live music on the Memorial Park stage," she noted. "In addition to Halloween night, downtown will be alive with fall traditions all season long. The Scarecrow Stroll returns, with creative displays by businesses, schools and residents lining downtown streets. Visitors can vote for their favorites, with top winners earning 'Mad Money' to spend with downtown merchants (\$100, \$75, \$50, and \$25)."

The city also plans to host a new event this year called Madisonville Trade Days.

"It debuts on Saturday, Oct. 18, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. This community yard sale and flea market event will fill downtown with bargains and treasures," said Carey. "Thanks to community partners for helping create the perfect seasonal atmosphere. Thank you, Hiwassee Bruderhof, for donating cornstalks, and city maintenance crews, Jr. Main Street Board members, and Design Committee volunteers for working hard to decorate downtown for fall."





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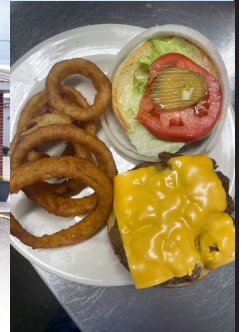


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Once Upon a Small Town

Throughout 2024, Sweetwater has been celebrating its 150th anniversary by hosting a series of events.

The celebration started in January with a candlelight ceremony, followed by a Decades Concert in February and Founder's Day in April. More festivities were held in July, including a Derby Box Car Race and the Fairest of the Fair pageant. In September, the city went back to its roots for a one-time return of the Sweetwater Fair.

In November, to honor the town's 150th anniversary, Sweetwater Main Street's annual musical is entitled, "Once Upon a Small Town."

"It is basically about Sweetwater," said Sweetwater Main Street Director Josh Isaac. "There will be true stories in it, and it is a comedy that I wrote so that it would reflect Sweetwater and all its charm, kind of like a Hallmark movie."

The musical will be a ticketed event with performances planned for Nov. 14 and 15 starting at 6 p.m. with another showing planned for Nov. 21, starting at 6 p.m. and one last show being on Nov. 22 at 1 p.m.

Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at Sweetwater City Hall or by visiting sweetwatertn.gov

"Tickets will be available until they sell out," Isaac expressed. "If we sell out completely then we may add another date. Last year, we sold over 2,000 tickets."

This year's musical marks the third year of live entertainment hosted by the city.

"I'm excited for it," he said. "This is our third year doing the show and it seems that we have acquired a good following from Tellico Plains all the way to Knoxville. We are very excited about being able to do the arts and we have a lot of amazing singers and actors that are sure to get the audience on their feet."

According to Isaac, the musical is the biggest fundraiser held by Sweetwater Main Street and the proceeds gathered by the event are returned to the community.

"We are able to take this money and



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do extra things at Christmas time when we rent the big globe where people can go in and play or do photo booths on Halloween," he said. "We do a live nativity where we have all of the animals around Christmas, so all of that money pours back into our downtown."

Isaac encouraged everyone to watch and support the musical.

"There is something for everyone and there is a character that they can relate to," he expressed. "There are just as many men as there are women that come

to this show, and they really enjoy them because it is not your typical musical. The singers actually sing from side stage, so it feels like a concert or like you are watching a movie, so it is a cool concept for everyone to get involved."

Since Sweetwater was officially incorporated as a town in December of 1875, to wrap up the 150th year, there will be a Candlelight Service on Dec. 8 starting at 5 p.m. in downtown.

For more information about the 150th, visit sweetwatertn150.com

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Reopening of Bald River Falls boosts tourism

Bald River Falls, a popular tourist attraction nestled in Monroe County, recently celebrated its grand reopening after being forced to close for a bridge replacement project.

The closure of the Bald River Falls Bridge was originally planned back in August of 2023 due to the natural deterioration of the bridge over the years.

According to Cherokee Forest Service officials, the bridge was constructed in 1933 and failed to meet the demands of pedestrian safety and modern vehicular traffic. Replacement of the bridge was expected to be completed by fall of 2024; however, damage to the surrounding area by severe weather halted the progress of the bridge.

Tellico Plains received significant water damage during a flash flood that caused many issues and damage to not only the bridge but to businesses and residences in the Tellico Plains area.

"Two main tourism assets that were affected were the Cherohala Skyway and Bald River Falls," said Monroe County Tourism Director Blaina Best at the time of the severe weather.

Following the flooding incident, several other weather events caused more

delays in the bridge project. Much of the project also included work on the roadways that connected to the bridge that had been damaged in the floods.

"Bald River Falls is one of the most iconic and cherished landmarks in our region," Best stated as work continued. "It's often the first stop for travelers coming up the Cherohala Skyway and a favorite photo op for thousands each year. Its accessibility makes it appealing to everyone from families to photographers to international visitors."

In May of this year, a ribbon cutting ceremony took place for the grand reopening of the Bald River Falls Bridge, featuring various guest speakers who further discussed the project.

According to Cherokee National Forest Tellico District Ranger Andrew Carrier, their engineering team worked with their recreation team to assess the needs of the site to create an "excellent project."

"The largest flood event that Tellico has ever seen on record occurred shortly after we started, so we had to adjust our plans and go after additional funding," Carrier stated during the grand reopening. "I say all of that to say that stuff doesn't happen by accident. I hope everybody realizes that it

takes a high quality, purpose-driven and dedicated team who is working on projects like this to accomplish something at this scale and I think that is exactly what you have here."

A few months following the reopening of the bridge, Monroe County witnessed an increase in tourism.

"The response has been incredible. The reopening of the bridge restored full access to one of Monroe County's most iconic destinations. Visitors returned almost immediately, and we've seen steady traffic through the area ever since," Best said recently. "It has been wonderful to see photographers, hikers, motorcyclists and families back enjoying the falls. We appreciate everyone being patient as so many people have been enjoying Bald River Falls since access reopened, and it has been overwhelming at times due to the traffic in that area."

The falls provide a space of natural beauty for residents and visitors alike to enjoy.

"Bald River Falls is a symbol of Monroe County's natural heritage. It's an anchor for both tourism and community pride. The beauty of the falls, combined with the surrounding protected wilderness areas, gives us something truly unique that sets our region apart. It's not just important, it is essential to our tourism identity," Best expressed.

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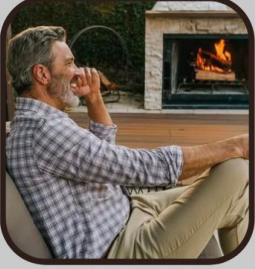
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A Sweet New Chapter for Sweetwater

Three homegrown businesses have joined forces to bring a charming new café and retail destination to life in Sweetwater, Tennessee, with a sweet place to gather and a bite to remember.

Nestled in the heart of downtown Sweetwater, Apéro officially opened its doors at 207 N Main Street with a festive ribbon cutting on Monday, August 25. The new café and retail haven brims with local flavor, offering delightful paninis, baked goods, and toffee in a warm, inviting setting. More than just a business, Apéro stands as a testament to small-town collaboration and creativity.

Behind Apéro's opening are three beloved Sweetwater establishments, each lending their unique flair to turn a dream into reality.



Grain Bin Commodities

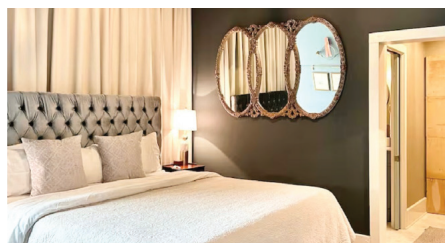
Located on Holt Road, Grain Bin Commodities is Sweetwater's own flavor time capsule, dedicated to reviving beloved recipes from yesteryear. Think seven-layer apple stack cakes, rich caramel frosted cakes, coconut pies crowned with meringue, and peanut-butter cookies that taste of home and memory. With a mantra of "A memory in each bite," their devotion to culinary heritage and heartfelt hospitality made them a

natural partner in Apéro's pantry. Their baked goods evoke tradition, craftsmanship, and comfort.



Towns Toffee

Just a stone's throw from the café, Towns Toffee crafts small-batch artisanal toffee using a timeless, corn-syrup-free recipe. Their offerings range from classic flavors to seasonal specialties, frequently starring pecans and almonds. Located at 1006 N Main Street, their gift shop showcases both handmade sweet confections and one-of-a-kind treasures. With national awards, Towns Toffee brings elevated sweetness to Apéro's dessert lineup.



Remedies Inn

Next door to Apéro, Remedies Inn, offers five boutique suites that blend charm and convenience for visitors to downtown Sweetwater. Situated directly across from the



in partnership with



gazebo and Visitors Center, the Inn's location invites guests to walk just steps from their rooms to the café, shops, and historic sites. Their seamless, self-check-in and dedication to superior hospitality ensures a restful stay wrapped in local warmth.

Sweetwater is more than just a stop between Knoxville and Chattanooga. This historic town is a hidden gem filled with antique shops, family-owned restaurants, and welcoming storefronts that line its walkable downtown. Visitors are greeted with small-town charm, a lively calendar of

"Sweetwater is a small town with a big heart, where history, hospitality, and flavor meet on Main Street."

festivals, and a community that takes pride in sharing its heritage. Just a short drive away, the scenic Cherochala Skyway and Bald River Falls provide outdoor adventures, while the town's rich history and hospitality invite travelers to slow down and stay awhile.

With Apéro now joining the mix, Sweetwater offers even more reasons to visit. Whether you are planning a day trip, a weekend retreat, or simply passing through, Sweetwater is a place where visitors can savor both flavors and experiences.





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Scenic drives in the sky

The small town of Tellico Plains is a road enthusiast's paradise, thanks to the stunning Cherohala Skyway. This National Scenic Byway stretches over 40 miles, connecting Tellico Plains, Tennessee, to Robbinsville, North Carolina, and offering a breathtaking drive through the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests. With elevations ranging from 900 to over 5,400 feet, the Cherohala Skyway is a must-visit destination for motorcyclists and car enthusiasts alike.

The Cherohala Skyway has garnered national recognition, attracting visitors from across the country who come to experience its scenic beauty—especially during the fall, when the mountains are ablaze with vibrant autumn colors.

The Skyway has deep roots in the town's history, with local legend Charles Hall playing a crucial role in its creation. Serving as Tellico Plains' mayor for 31 years and in various public offices for 45 years, Hall championed the development of a road connecting Tellico Plains to Robbinsville. His efforts, which included leading the iconic Wagon Train—a movement that drew thousands of supporters—eventually helped secure funding for the Skyway.

In 1996, the Wagon Train made its final journey across the newly completed Cherohala Skyway before it opened to the public, marking the occasion with a 150-foot ribbon cutting ceremony that stretched across the Tennessee-North Carolina state line. In honor of Hall's dedication, the Tennessee State Legislature named the bridge over Laurel Branch on the Skyway the "Charles Hall Bridge" in 1997.

According to data from the Monroe County Department of Tourism, the Cherohala Skyway attracts around 3 million visitors annually. "Fall is our peak travel season," says Tourism Director Blaina Best, "but year-round, people from all over come to experience the beauty of the Skyway and explore the wonderful attractions in our four Monroe County cities."

For more information about the Cherohala Skyway, visit the website www.visitmonroetn.com/cherohala-skyway



Your Road to Fall

Cherohala Skyway National Scenic Byway

OCTOBER 1ST - OCTOBER 9TH: 5,000+ FT ELEVATIONS

Best leaf peeping spots on the Cherohala Skyway:
Big Junction, Santeetlah, Hooper Bald, Huckleberry, and Spirit Ridge.

OCTOBER 10TH - 16TH: 4,000-5,000 FT ELEVATIONS

Best leaf peeping spots on the Cherohala Skyway:
West Rattlesnake Rock, East Rattlesnake Rock, Unicoi Crest, Stratton Ridge, Mud Gap, Whigg Cove, Haw Knob, and Wright Cove.

OCTOBER 17TH - 23RD: 3,000-4,000 FT ELEVATIONS

Best leaf peeping spots on the Cherohala Skyway:
Lake View, Brushy Ridge, Obadiah, Shute Cove, and Hooper Cove.

OCTOBER 24TH - 31ST: 2,000-3,000 FT ELEVATIONS

Best leaf peeping spots on the Cherohala Skyway:
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Skyway



CHEROHALA Skyway

The wilderness areas

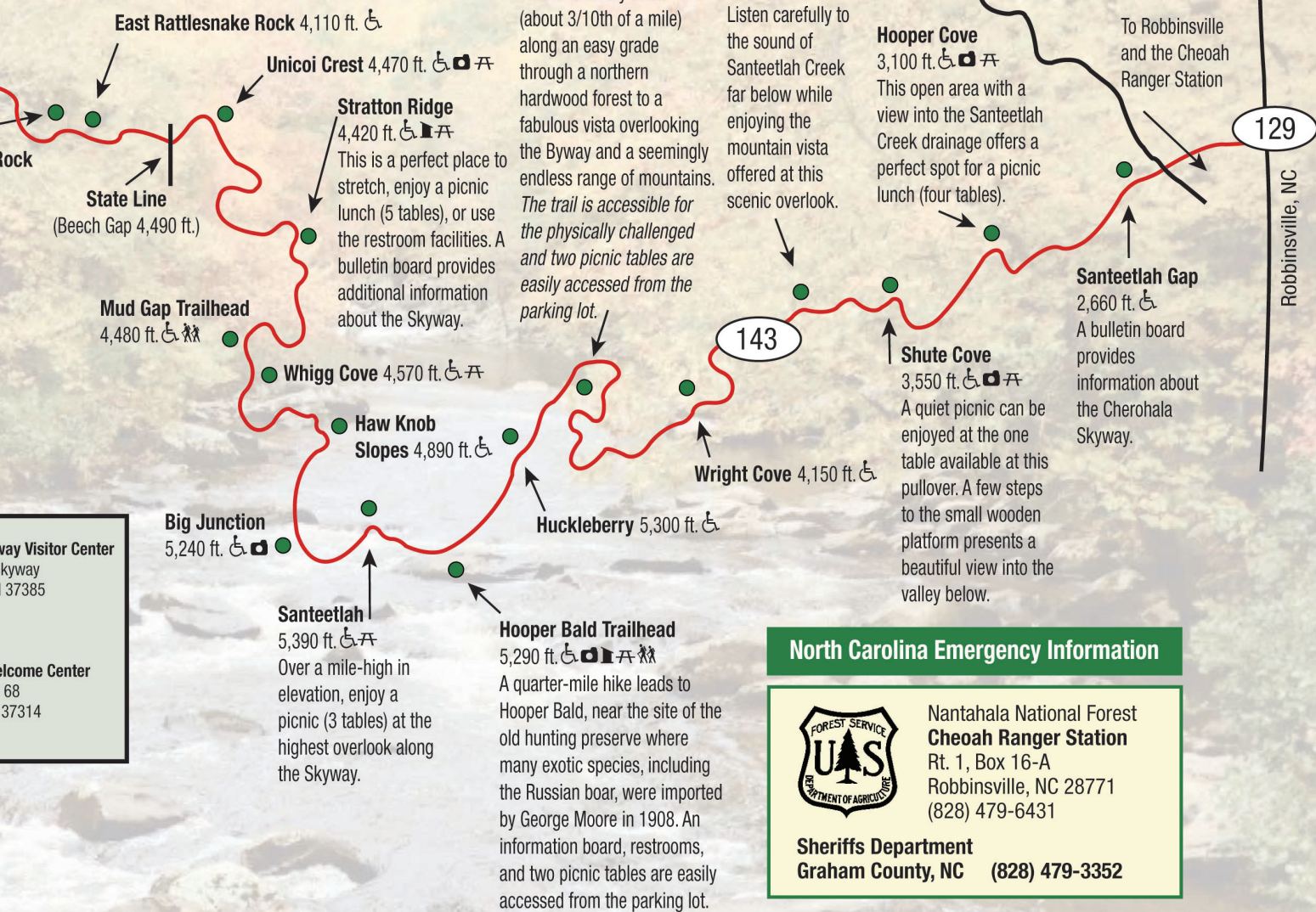
surrounding the Cherohala Skyway are beautiful and alluring, but not necessarily suited for everyone to explore. As a visitor to wilderness, you should be aware that you are entering a primitive environment. You will face the challenge of being entirely self-sufficient—no trail signs, no restrooms, no water spigots. Some people may just rather drive by, enjoy the view, and visit more developed trails and recreation areas.



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In 1936, an extraordinary 3,800 acres of "one of the few remaining tracts of virgin hardwood in the Appalachians" was set aside as a memorial forest in honor of Joyce Kilmer. Kilmer, a poet, journalist, and World War I soldier killed in action, is best remembered for his poem, "Trees." This impressive forest contains some of the finest timber grown in these mountains with many huge trees over 20 feet around the base and more than a hundred feet high. A 2-mile loop trail winds beneath the towering trees and through a forest carpeted by a rich variety of wildflowers, ferns, and moss-covered logs from the fallen giants. The Memorial Forest, also part of the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness, can only be seen on foot.





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Christmas on the 'Sweetest Street in Tennessee'

Experience the magic of the holiday season on the "Sweetest Street in Tennessee" with a visit to Sweetwater! This charming town comes alive with festive cheer, making it the perfect place to kick off your holiday celebrations.

The fun begins on Saturday, Nov. 29, with Sweetwater's annual "Small Town Christmas" from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. This beloved holiday tradition features vendors, food trucks, carriage rides, marshmallow roasting, a kids' zone, music, live entertainment, a nativity scene, and much more!

Before the festivities, stop by the Sweetwater Depot Visitor Center from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. for Pet Pictures with Santa. For just \$5, you'll receive a professional photo of your pet with Santa, plus some special treats.

That same day, Sweetwater's fourth annual "The Sweetest Street Sweepstakes" kicks off. Running from Nov. 29 to Dec. 18, this exciting sweepstakes gives shoppers

the chance to win a grand prize of \$1,000! Pick up a game board at any downtown shop and collect stamps with each purchase. The more stamps, the better your chances—winners will be announced on Dec. 19.

New this year is Sweetwater's Christmas Marketplace! Held from Dec. 6–8 behind the Sweetwater Depot & Visitor's Center, this weekend market transforms the town into a Hallmark movie scene. Browse vendors, enjoy food trucks, and immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of the season. The market runs from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Dec. 5, and 6, and from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Dec. 8.

Be sure to catch Sweetwater's annual Christmas Parade, sponsored by the Sweetwater Kiwanis Club, on Friday, Dec. 5 at 7 p.m.

On Sunday, Dec. 7, from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m., downtown businesses will host "The Jingle Bell Shop." This special shopping event features Christmas sales—and Santa will be at the downtown gazebo. It's also

the only day during "The Sweetest Street Sweepstakes" when purchases earn double stamps. All your favorite local shops will be open 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Returning this year is the popular Polar Express Experience, held in conjunction with "The Jingle Bell Shop." Starting at the depot, children can do crafts, enjoy cookies and hot chocolate, and receive a golden ticket for a ride on the miniature train. The train will drop them off at the Sweetwater Train Car, where the conductor will read "The Polar Express." Afterwards, kids will be whisked away to a secret spot to meet Santa and get their picture taken with him.

The Polar Express Experience takes place on Dec. 7, starting at 1 p.m., and has limited seating. Tickets go on sale Nov. 1, must be purchased in advance—\$20 per ticket.

For more details about these events, please visit www.sweetwatertn.net or call City Hall at 423-337-6979.





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An 18th Century Christmas

Christmas Garrison • Dec. 6

Step back in time and escape the holiday rush with “An 18th Century Christmas” at Fort Loudoun State Historic Area in Vonore. This year’s event, set for Saturday, Dec. 6, offers a unique and festive way to experience the season.

From 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., the fort will be brought to life by re-enactors portraying men, women, and children from the 18th century. The fort, decorated with rustic touches like leaves and berries, captures the atmosphere of Christmas during the French and Indian War. Throughout the day, visitors can enjoy demonstrations of historical cooking, laundering, blacksmithing, and artillery drills. Parson John will lead a traditional Christmas church service, and guests can indulge in a warm wassail tasting.

Don’t miss the opportunity to explore the fort’s buildings, including the infirmary, soldier barracks, and commander’s quarters, or take a stroll through the nearby Cherokee encampment.

As night falls, the event concludes with a candlelight tour of the fort from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. Visitors can walk the path, illuminated by luminaries, from the visitor’s center to the fort. Once inside, the fort’s buildings will be lit by candles, fireplaces, and torches. The evening will also feature a rare night firing of the cannon—a breathtaking sight against the night sky.

About Fort Loudoun

Fort Loudoun State Historic Park spans 1,200 acres and is one of the earliest British fortifications on the western frontier, built in 1756. It was reconstructed during the Great Depression and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1965.

During the French and Indian War, Fort Loudoun played a crucial role in forging alliances between the British Colony of South Carolina and the Overhill Cherokee Nation, helping to secure trade and military support. However, after relations deteriorated, the Cherokee captured the fort in 1760, and it was never used for military purposes again.

The site was largely forgotten until



1917, when the Colonial Dames of America placed a commemorative marker at the fort. In 1933, the Tennessee General Assembly purchased the land and created the Fort Loudoun Association to manage it. In 1977, Fort Loudoun became a Tennessee State Park.

Today, visitors can explore the reconstructed fort and the ruins of the 1794 Tellico Blockhouse, overlooking the scenic Tellico Reservoir and Appalachian Mountains. The park’s interpretative center offers insights into the area’s history and showcases artifacts excavated from the site. Guests can also watch a 15-minute

film, *Fort Loudoun: Forsaken by God and Man*, to learn more about the fort’s storied past.

In addition to its living history programs, Fort Loudoun State Park hosts several popular events throughout the year, including garrison weekends like the Colonial Trades Garrison in March, which highlights the fort’s history through interactive demonstrations.

Fort Loudoun State Historic Area is located on Highway 360 in Vonore. For more information about events or to plan your visit, call 423-420-2331 or visit www.fortloudoun.com.

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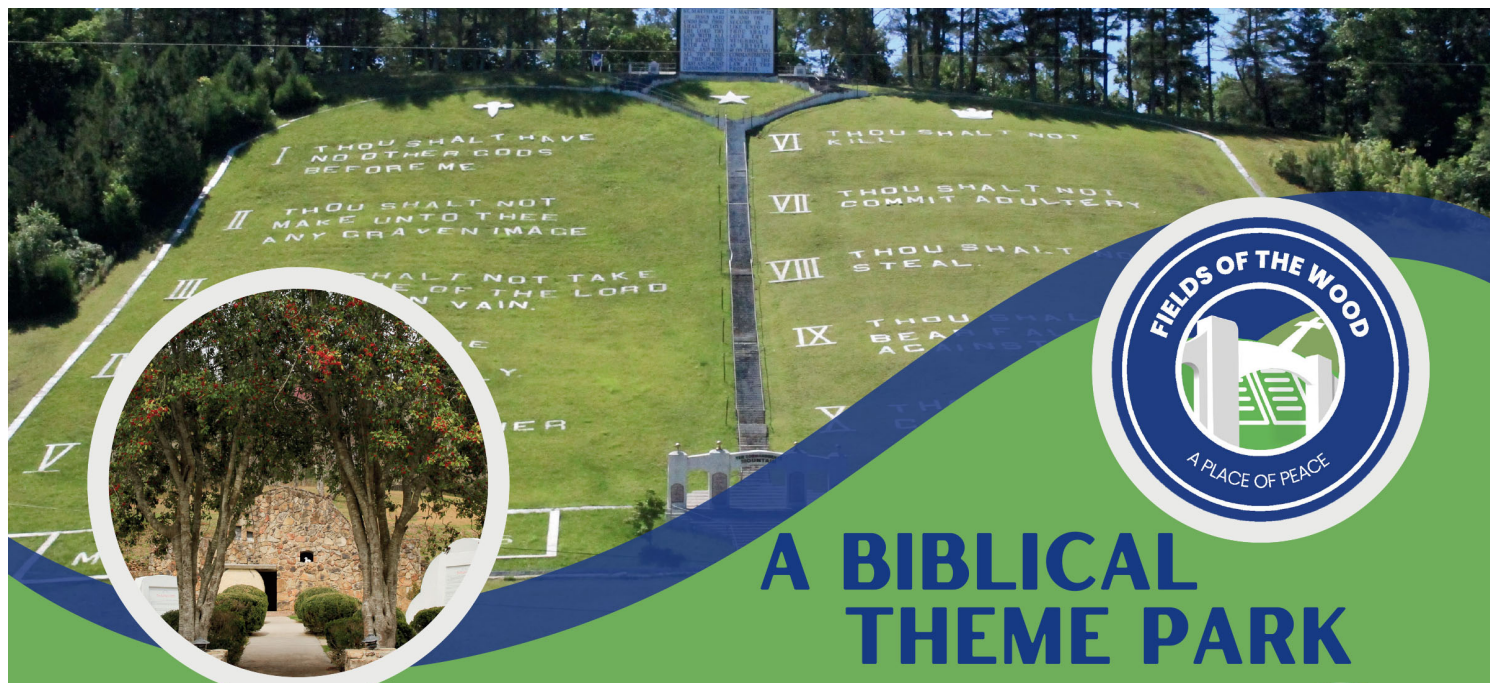
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Candlelight Walk • Dec. 6



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The Town of Tellico Plains and its downtown merchants will be the guiding force behind the 26th annual Candlelight Walk, scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 6, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. This is a free event, which features open houses and shopping in the stores and restaurants downtown.

Luminaries will line the streets, leading the way to a variety of activities, which usually includes horse-drawn carriage rides, a live Nativity scene, entertainment at the gazebo, food, a silent auction, visits and photographs with Santa and Mrs. Claus and the Grinch, and the annual cookie caper. The cookie caper is home-made cookies that you can buy by the pound with a wide variety to choose from. A limited series Christmas ornament will be available for purchase.

The Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony will also be held during the Candlelight Walk, signifying the official start to the holiday season. The tree provides the perfect holiday photograph opportunity.

For more information, contact Tellico Plains City Hall at 423-253-2333.



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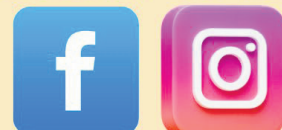
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Magic in Madisonville

Christmas Festival on the Square • Dec. 13

The City of Madisonville is preparing for a variety of Christmas-themed events starting in November.

According to Madisonville Main Street Director Karen Carey, the holiday season will begin with the Miss Merry Christmas Pageant on Saturday, Nov. 16 at the Hiwassee Bruderhof Auditorium starting at 3 p.m.

"This beloved tradition showcases local talent and festive spirit," Carey expressed. "Families are encouraged to sign up now to participate."

The month of November then has two more events following the flow of Thanksgiving.

"Thanksgiving weekend officially launches the holidays with the Lighting of the Square on Friday, Nov. 28, at 7 p.m. Visitors can enjoy nostalgic holiday vendors, the magical moment when downtown is illuminated for the season, and a full performance by the Monroe County Christmas Choir, directed by Charlie Hicks, immediately following the countdown," she noted. "The next morning, Shop Small Saturday on Nov. 29, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m., invites shoppers to support local businesses while enjoying sales, door prizes, refreshments, and character photo opportunities"

Moving to December, the city plans to introduce a new activity leading up to their traditional celebration.

"The season's highlight is the Christmas Festival on the Square on Saturday, Dec. 13, starting at 2 p.m. This celebration fills downtown with shopping, food, live entertainment, children's activities and holiday cheer," said Carey. "New this year, the City of Madisonville is sponsoring an artificial ice rink, open to the public for four days leading up to the festival and concluding on Dec. 13. Families can lace up skates and create lasting memories right in the heart of town."

The festival will end with the Madisonville Kiwanis Christmas Parade at 7 p.m.

According to Carey, the Christmas season is made possible by the support of the community.

"With so much happening in Madisonville, there's truly something for everyone," Carey expressed. "We encourage families to sign up for the pageant and keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for updates on the Christmas Festival because this year, there's more magic than ever."

Learn more at www.visitmadisonville.tn



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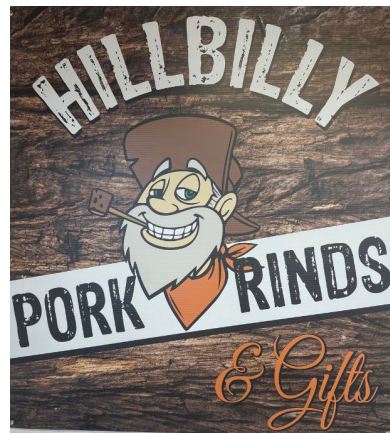


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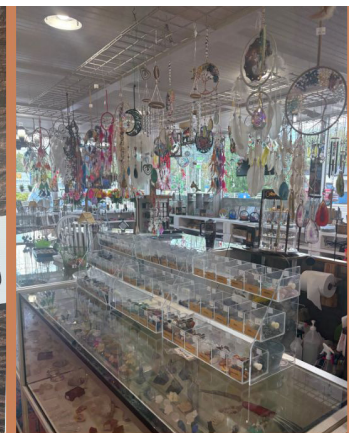
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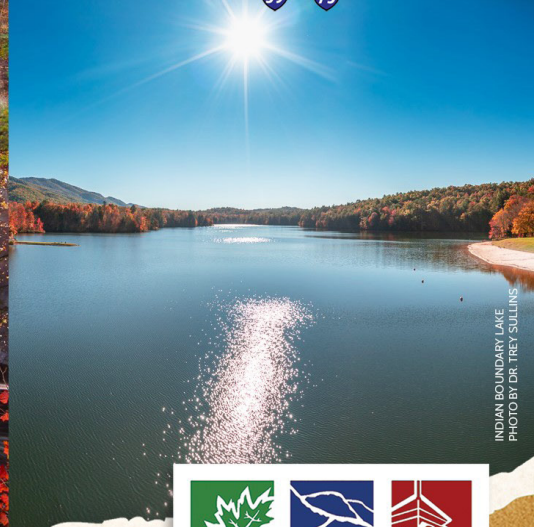


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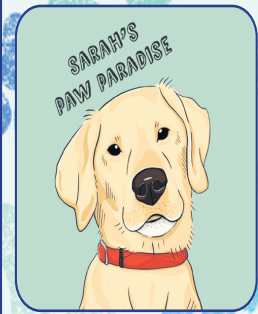
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CHRISTMAS PARADES

Dec. 5

Sweetwater Christmas Parade

The Sweetwater Kiwanis Club will jointly sponsor the 43rd annual Christmas Parade in Sweetwater on Friday, Dec. 5 at 7 p.m.

The parade route will leave from Mayes Avenue, traveling through downtown Sweetwater, and ending at the Plaza 68 Shopping Center on Highway 68.

Dec. 13

Vonore Christmas Parade

The Town of Vonore will hold its annual Christmas Parade on Saturday, Dec. 13 at 4 p.m. The lineup will begin at 3 p.m. at Vonore Middle School. The parade route will travel down Hall Street through downtown onto Church Street, ending at Vonore Baptist Church.

Dec. 13

Madisonville Christmas Parade

"There is No Place Like Home for the Holidays" is the theme of this year's Madisonville Christmas Parade, sponsored by the Madisonville Kiwanis Club. The parade will be held on Saturday, Dec. 13, at 7 p.m. as the conclusion of Madisonville's Christmas Festival on the Square. Joey and Nancy from WIVK will be the grand marshals.

There is a new parade route this year. The parade will no longer turn onto Tellico Street and then down Warren Street. This year's parade will leave from Madisonville Primary School and continue straight through town on College Street, ending at the CO-OP on Anderson Street.

Dec. 20

Tellico Christmas Parade

The Town of Tellico Plains will hold its annual Christmas Parade, sponsored by Tellico Plains Kiwanis, on Saturday, Dec. 20, at 3 p.m. This year's grand

marshal will be Tellico Plains' Without Limits team, along with Smokey Bear.

The parade route will start on Veterans Memorial Drive (near the gazebo) and travel through Town Square, taking a right on Babcock Street then left on Cherohala Skyway, before taking a right onto Bank Street and ending at the Community Center.

Festivities will kick off prior to the parade with Cookies 'n Claus at 2 p.m. with five hospitality stations that will be serving free cookies compliments of Tellicafe, along with coffee, hot chocolate or cider. Stations are Volunteer Federal Savings Bank's parking lot, the first entrance to the Cherohala Skyway Visitors Center, the entrance to the Charles Hall Museum, on Cherohala Skyway near Skyway Realty, and First Baptist Church of Tellico Plains in Town Square.

Santa will be at the Visitors Center for a holiday photo opportunity during this time. Bring your phones and cameras for photos. Then, Santa will make a mad dash and will be riding in the parade on the fire truck tossing out candy for everyone.

Other Holiday Events:

- **Downtown Etowah Christmas tree lighting:** Friday, Nov 28
- **Etowah Shop Local Downtown Christmas Party:** Saturday, Nov 29
- **Durant Tullock Memorial Christmas Parade,** Etowah: Thursday, Dec 4 at 7 p.m.
- **Athens Old Fashioned Downtown Christmas:** Saturday, Dec 6, 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- **Etowah Live Nativity:** Saturday, Dec 13 at 6 p.m.
- **Downtown Decatur Christmas:** Saturday, Dec 13 at 3 p.m.
- **Decatur Christmas Parade:** Sunday, Dec 14



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