

Spring/Summer Edition 2026

TENNESSEE MOUNTAIN *Traveler*

A special publication of The Advocate & Democrat



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With beautiful mountains, forests, winding streams, roaring rivers and peaceful lakes, spring and summer are popular times to visit Tennessee Mountain Traveler country as East Tennessee's natural resources provide the makings of an outdoor paradise.

From hiking, camping, boating and fishing, there are so many things to do outdoors this time of year. Our small towns offer relaxed shopping, friendly residents and unique attractions you won't find anywhere else. Where else can you tour the largest underground lake in America and afterwards be on one of the most beautiful Scenic Byways within minutes?

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 again!

If you have questions about this magazine or would like to advertise in the next edition, email sharon.livingston@advocateanddemocrat.com.

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Chasing Waterfalls



Bald River Falls

People are often drawn to Southeast Tennessee to explore the beautiful natural landscapes of the Tennessee Overhill region, a three-county area that includes the southern half of the Cherokee National Forest.

Some of the biggest great outdoor attractions in this area are the many natural waterfalls located throughout the forest. There are more than 60 waterfalls ranging from five feet to 130 feet high. A few of the most popular waterfalls are as follows:

BENTON FALLS

Located in the Chilhowee Recreation Area, Benton Falls is a 65-foot waterfall cascading down step-like rocks.

The 3-mile round-trip hike is rated easy/moderate. From Ocoee Scenic Byway (Highway 64), take Forest Service Road 77 to Chilhowee Recreation Area (day use fee).



COKER CREEK FALLS

Forty-five foot Coker Creek Falls with a series of waterfalls/cascades ranging from eight feet to 20 feet high is a kayaker's and photographer's favorite. Stop at Coker Creek Welcome Center/Post Office on Highway 68 to get directions. The hike is around 3 miles but you don't need to make the entire trip to see a waterfall. The hike is rated easy/moderate.



TURTLETOWN FALLS

Turtletown Falls is 40 feet high and flows over a large ledge then separates into two falls. A bonus waterfall, Lower Turtletown Falls, may be seen if you hike a little further downstream from the main falls. On Highway 68, turn at Farmer Post Office, cross the railroad and turn left on Duggan Road, bear left on Farmer Road entrance to the falls, Forest Service Road 1166, is the first



road on the right. Follow the dirt road for 1.5 miles down to the fall's parking lot. The trail is three miles roundtrip and rated easy/moderate.

BALD RIVER FALLS

The spectacular 90-foot Bald River Falls can be seen from the bridge on Forest Service Road 210 (a paved road just a few miles from Tellico Plains). Have your camera handy; a photo from the bridge with the falls behind you will be one of your trip's favorites.

FALL BRANCH FALLS

Fall Branch Falls is an 80-foot waterfall located off of the Cherohala Skyway (Highway 165). At the Rattlesnake Rock parking area, hike about 100 feet (take the left fork) to the Fall Branch Trail 87. Once at the falls, follow the creek downstream to see cascades. The roundtrip is about a 3-mile moderate hike.



Summer in the Friendly City



National MooFest, McMinn County's dairy festival, is scheduled for Saturday, June 6. Taking place from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. in historic downtown Athens, Tennessee, the festival features several activities, including the Maggie Strutt; local shopping; live entertainment on three stages plus MooGrass Jam Session; over 300 food, crafts and arts vendors; Mayfield Dairy Farms contests; and AgAvenue.

MooFest is presented by Friendly City Festivals, The City of Athens, McMinn County Tourism Board and Mayfield Dairy Farm.



Live music will once again fill the air in the City of Athens this summer as the 15th Annual Sounds of Summer concert series will be held on Saturday nights at 7 p.m. at Market Pavilion in historic downtown Athens.

This year's lineup features:

- Saturday, June 6 - Cole Sitzlar
- Saturday, June 13 - September Song
- Friday, July 4 - Mendingwall
- Saturday, July 18 - Dexter Thomas Band
- Saturday, Aug. 8 - Scenic City Sound of Chattanooga
- Saturday, Aug. 15 - Confederate Railroad

Last year's series averaged around 400 attendees for each concert.

All Friendly City Festival events are free to the public. For more information, visit their website at willsonthropic.org/friendlycityfestivals, their Facebook page at facebook.com/friendlycityfestivals or Instagram [@friendlycityfestivals](https://instagram.com/friendlycityfestivals). They can also be contacted by phone at 423-887-3544 or through the mail at P.O. Box 1336 Athens, TN 37371



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Red, White & Boom

The Fourth of July is a time to celebrate in Tellico Plains — celebrate not only independence, but a significant birthday.

On July 4, 1911, Tellico Plains was incorporated as a town by the State of Tennessee. Named after the Cherokee capital of Telliqualah, which was once along the shores of the Tellico River, the small town celebrates in style with an annual event (formerly called the Square Dance).

The Tellico Plains Kiwanis Club sponsors the annual festivities, keeping tradition alive. Proceeds from the event help the Kiwanis Club's mission of serving the children of the community.

"Very few organizations use 100% of their proceeds for their projects, but we do," said Kent Mathews, president of the Tellico Plains Kiwanis Club.

The Kiwanis Club has announced that Red, White and Boom is scheduled for Saturday, June 27, in the town's historic Town Square from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Admission is free.

Last year's event saw a crowd of more than 5,600, according to geo tracking from Monroe County Tourism.

Riley Wear will play from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. followed by this year's headliner, Highway 33, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. on the Town of Tellico Plains/Peoples Bank stage. Highway 33 plays a variety of country (old and new), classic rock, and rock-n-roll.

Returning this year is the Volunteer Federal Savings Bank's Kid Zone with

a water slide and inflatables from BB's Bouncers. Wrist bands will be available for \$5 each.

"It'll be unlimited play for the kids for a low price. There will always be volunteers at the Kid Zone throughout the night so the kids will be safe," said Mathews. "Parents can go enjoy some dancing and know their kids are being taken care of."

Additional activities will include JTEK's Pendleton's Playground featuring tea cup and Jeep rides (wristbands will be sold), children's activities, and craft vendors. Local merchants are also sponsoring Til Ragnork Axe Throw, so attendees can test their axe throwing skills at no charge.

Food vendors Midlife Frys, Tellico Mountain Bear & Boar Club, and Fresh Start Ministries will be on site, but make sure to save room for elephant ears, cotton candy and snow cones!

Chota Community Health Services' mobile unit will be on site for any medical emergencies.

A fireworks show by Cub Pow, sponsored by the Tellico Plains Police Department and Arrow Recycling, will conclude the night.

The downtown area will close to all traffic for the event, but there are several parking areas available for attendees.

Attendees should bring a lawn chair.

For more information about Red, White and Boom or to sign up to be a vendor, call Joyce McDaniel at 615-347-0086 or e-mail jamcdaniel@tds.net.



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Gone Fishing

Rhea County's beautiful scenery is the perfect setting for anglers to get out on the water and fish.

Portions of Chickamauga and Watts Bar Lakes and the Tennessee River snake their way through the county, and parts of three wildlife refuges managed by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency can also be found in the county.

According to TWRA Region 3 Reservoir Fisheries Biologist Mike Jolley there are several types of fishing opportunities available in Rhea County in Chickamauga and Watts Bar Reservoirs as well as some of their tributaries. In regards to these reservoirs there are many species that may be targets for anglers, such as:

Black Bass

(largemouth, smallmouth, spotted)

Excellent opportunities for "bass" fishing exist on Chickamauga and Watts Bar Reservoirs. Springtime fishing is when most anglers pursue these species due to the high activity this time of year by bass in pre spawn to post spawn conditions (April to June). Summertime fishing is also prevalent, especially at night. Fishing for bass in these reservoirs is pursued year around in some fashion with good success. Targeting bass in their preferred habitat (brush, rip rap banks, points, humps, etc.), as one would suspect, is advantageous. A variety of artificial baits such as plastics, crankbaits, topwater lures, jigs, spinnerbaits and also some live bait are the tackle of choice.

Crappie (black, white)

Many anglers pursue crappie for their excellent table fare. Most pursuits are conducted during the months of March and April which correlate with spawning activities. Several anglers have learned to catch crappie year around with good success. Various types of small jig-type lures and artificial flies are used as well as live minnows. Preferred habitat for crappie consist of brush piles, tree tops, stumps, etc. "Blacknose" black crappie may be caught in these reservoirs as well. These fish have been stocked in Watts Bar on a limited basis. "Blacknose" crappie are simply a blackz crappie with a black genetic stripe down the top of their head.

Sunfish (bluegill, redear)

Large numbers of both bluegill and redear(shellcracker) exist in both reservoirs. These fish can be caught in a variety of habitat using many different kinds of bait. Because of this, they are a good target for introducing kids to fishing. Most fishing for these species is conducted in late spring throughout the summer months. Like crappie, these species also offer great table fare. The baits of choice are usually very small artificial lures, worms (earth, wax and meal worms), crickets, and flies.

Sauger

These fish are stocked into Chickamauga Reservoirs on a regular basis and have been stocked into Watts Bar in the past. Sauger are mostly pursued in the cooler months (pre-spring). They are usually caught while drift fishing in the river current. Some very effective areas for catching sauger are tailwaters, shoals, and mouths of certain creeks.

Walleye

A new walleye stocking program was initiated in Watts Bar Reservoir in 2011. This will replace the sauger stocking program there. The plans are to stock these fish annually in hopes of establishing a walleye fishery. Walleye are closely related to sauger and many of the same tactics can be used to catch them. However, typically walleye live longer and over year around fishing opportunities.

Striped Bass

These fish are known for their fierce fight and large size. They are stocked into Watts Bar Reservoir annually by TWRA. However, populations exist in Chickamauga Reservoir as well through dam passage. Many anglers travel from out of state to encounter these fish. The tailwaters are the most popular areas for fishing for striped bass. Larger fishing gear and equipment are necessary when pursuing these fish. Live gizzard shad or skipjack are the baits of choice. But many large artificial baits can be quite effective as well.

Catfish

The most common types of catfish caught in this area are blue, channel, and flatheads. Drift fishing various types of cut fish bait and "stink" baits (commercial pellets, chicken livers, worms, hot dogs, etc.) are usually the most effective. These fish are usually caught drift fishing while good current exists. However, many people catch these fish by using trotlines and jug fishing.

Trout

Rainbow trout are stocked annually, during the spring time in Piney Creek located in the Spring City Area. Stockings usually occur in the "park area" up Shut-In Gap Road from Highway 68. Stocking schedules are listed in the TN Fishing Guide. Lures and baits of choice are com, worms, small spinners, flies, etc.

It is recommended that anglers consult the most recent version of the Tennessee Fishing Guide, which is distributed by TWRA and available at various stores and online. This guide will educate the angler about current regulations and other facts regarding these species and info on all reservoirs in the state.





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The Sweet Side of Life

There's something about a small-town square that holds onto time a little longer than the rest of the world. In Madisonville, the bricks seem to remember footsteps, the air carries echoes of laughter, and the buildings—especially the old ones—feel like they're waiting for their next chapter.

This spring, one of those chapters is being written in sugar, butter, and a whole lot of heart.

For 21 years, Bradley's BBQ has been more than a restaurant: it's been a steady presence, the kind of place where families gather, where stories are swapped over plates, where "regulars" aren't just customers but neighbors. And for the past eight years, Sweet Side in Sweetwater has carried that same spirit into the world of desserts, quietly building a reputation for comfort you can taste.

Now, that sweetness is finding a new home.

Tucked into the historic bones of the old City Hall building in downtown Madisonville, Bradley's Sweet Side is preparing to open its doors, bringing with it the same goodness people have come to love, just dressed in a new setting. Right next to Memorial Park, it's the kind of location that feels almost too perfect with a walk-up window, a convenient drive-thru, and just steps away, a park dotted with rocking chairs that seem to invite you to stay awhile.

And you should.

Because this isn't just about ice cream. It's about slowing down long enough to enjoy it.

Inside, you'll find homemade cakes, brownies, and cookies—the kind that don't try to be fancy, just honest and good. The kind that reminds you of kitchens where someone cared enough to make it from scratch. Alongside those are more than 20 flavors of hand-dipped ice cream, each one a small decision that feels bigger than it should. Chocolate or strawberry? Something classic or something new? It's the kind of choice that makes you smile before you even take the first bite.

And for those who need something different, there's space for that too, including soft serve, dairy-free options, and no-sugar-added selections because sweetness, in all its forms, should be something everyone can share.

What makes this opening feel special isn't just the menu. It's the intention behind it. There's a quiet promise here: that even as things grow and expand, they won't lose what made them matter in the first place. Come mid-May, when the doors open and the first scoops are served, it won't just be another business launch. It'll be a continuation of something that's already been feeding this community for decades, just in a slightly sweeter way.

So, stop by for a treat, take it over to the park, settle into one of those rocking chairs, and let the day stretch out a little longer than usual. Because sometimes, the best stories aren't the loud ones; they're the ones you taste, slowly, one bite at a time.





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Take a Step Back in Time



Fort Loudoun State Historic Area in Vonore provides visitors with an opportunity to step back in time and explore area history. The state park features a reconstruction of Fort Loudoun, located right on the banks of Tellico Lake.

Fort Loudoun was originally built by the British in 1756, when this area was known as the Overhill—a designation given to Cherokee communities that rested on the western slopes of the Appalachian Mountains.

While exploring the barracks, shops and structures, you will step back in time to the 1700s. Some artifacts in the reconstructed fort were recovered from the original fort.

Combining the past and nature, much of the park's 1,200 acres lie on the island on Tellico Lake, offering opportunities for swimming, boating and fishing. Fort Loudoun now also offers kayak rentals on site.

Living history reenactments, demonstrations and other activities take place throughout the year at Fort Loudoun.

One of the most popular events at the fort is Garrison Weekends. Garrison Weekend is a free, family-friendly, living his-

tory event that features the daily lives of the men, women and children of Fort Loudoun. See soldiers and Cherokee going about their day, training, firing cannons, working about the fort and demonstrating the folkways of the time. There will be blacksmiths working the forge, the surgeon giving talks in the infirmary and soldiers living in the barracks. Scheduled programs occur every hour.

The remaining Garrison Weekend schedule for the 2026 season includes Aug. 8 and Nov. 7-8.

The fort will also hold a special Christmas Garrison on Saturday, Dec. 5.

Garrison Weekend is from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday of the event and 10 a.m.

to 2 p.m. on Sunday. There is no admission fee for Garrison Weekend events.

Fort Loudoun State Historic Area is located at 338 Fort Loudoun Road, Vonore.

For more information, visit the Tennessee State Parks' website at tnstateparks.com/parks/fort-loudoun or call 423-420-2331.





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You know that place where you didn't plan to stop, but end up staying way longer than you meant to?

This is that place.



Tucked into the foothills of East Tennessee, Madisonville, the county seat of Monroe County, is quietly becoming the kind of destination people talk about after they've been. Maybe it's because something about it feels familiar, like stepping into a place just as it's beginning.

There's an energy here you can't quite explain, but you can feel it. A sense that something is happening. That something bigger is on the way.

Start downtown.

Grab a coffee from 10-80 Roasters, wander into Story Hollow Bookstore, give yourself time, you'll need it, and explore a mix of boutiques, gift shops, and thrift stores that make shopping feel more like a treasure hunt than a quick errand.

Then follow your nose.

Right in the heart of downtown, Donna's Cafe serves a full Southern comfort buffet, the kind of meal that feels like grandma's house on a Sunday afternoon. Step next door to The Patio and sit awhile. Just outside downtown, The LampPost Restaurant is where locals gather, old friends catching up, families ordering their usual. And yes, Madisonville still has one of the few remaining A&W locations, a classic stop that feels like stepping back in time.

And then there's the flavor you'll hear about long after you leave. Benton's Bacon isn't just local, it's legendary.

Looking to slow things down? Tsali Notch Vineyard offers award winning wines and views worth lingering over.

But Madisonville isn't a walk around and leave kind of town. It's a stay awhile town.



On May 21, everything kicks off with the Farmers and Makers Market at Memorial Park. Held Thursdays from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., it brings live music, food trucks, fresh produce, and local makers together, and they're always welcoming new vendors and entertainers.

Nearby, Houston Park comes alive when the splash pad opens Memorial Day. And for a full day outside, Kefauver Park offers walking trails, pickleball, tennis, a dog park, basketball courts, and picnic areas.

Here's the real kicker. Madisonville is just your launch point.

Within 30 minutes, you can explore The Lost Sea Adventure, drive the Cherohala Skyway, float through Tellico Plains with Big Bear Tubing, or visit Bald River Falls. Add Tellico Lake, the Sequoyah Birthplace Museum, and Fort Loudoun State Historic Park, and your quick stop turns into a weekend.

Stay a while.

From Airbnbs and cabin stays to glamping at The Domes at Hidden Rock, you'll want Madisonville on your itinerary.

With America's 250th approaching, the town is leaning into its story through murals, a community mosaic, and a new banner project, history you don't just read, but experience.

So go ahead, plan the stop. Just don't plan on leaving when you thought you would.

This is just a snippet of what's happening. Sign up for the newsletter for monthly updates on events, experiences, and what's next.

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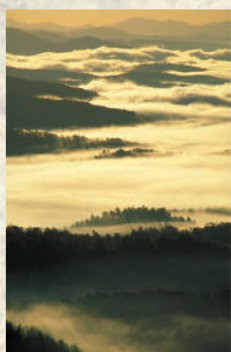
Skyway



To Chattanooga

Monroe Co. Visitor Center at Sweetwater

Tellico River
920 ft. ♿
The Tellico River has been the scene of human occupation for 12,000 years. For much of this time it was the domain of Native Americans. From at least 1650 AD, the Cherokee Indians resided here. After the Cherokee Removal in 1838, the area was opened for Euro-American settlement. Tellico, "tel-li-quo" means "plains" in Cherokee.



Indian Boundary Campground ♿ ♿ ♿ ♿ ♿ ♿ ♿
Just off the scenic Skyway on Forest Service Road 345. Offering 100 campsites as well as day use picnicking, swimming and biking. Open April-September. Reservations are recommended. Call the Tellico Ranger Station or the Cherokee Skyway Visitor Center for information.

11

Sweetwater

Madisonville

411

Cherokee Skyway Visitor Center

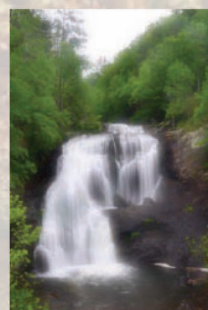
Charles Hall Museum

68

Tellico Plains

Information Station ♿
Bulletin board welcomes visitors with general information about the Skyway and Tellico Ranger District.

Tellico River
950 ft. ♿
The Tellico River is famous for its trout fishing.



Turkey Creek
2,630 ft. ♿ ♿ ♿
Overlook with 3 picnic tables and Restroom. Beautiful view from the Appalachians over the Tennessee River Valley. Tellico Plains can be seen in the distance.

Oosterneck Creek
1,045 ft. ♿ ♿ ♿
Overlook and boating takeout on the Tellico River. When the water is up, the Tellico River, with its Class III, IV, V, rapids, is quite a challenge for canoeists and kayakers.

Caney Branch 1,370 ft. ♿

165

Lake View
3,360 ft. ♿ ♿
A perfect place to enjoy distant views of Tellico Lake. This lake was created from TVA dams of the Little Tennessee River.

Eagle Gap Trailhead
3,600 ft. ♿ ♿

Grassy Gap Trailhead
3,400 ft. ♿ ♿

Brushy Ridge
3,750 ft. ♿ ♿ ♿
Overlooking Sassafras Ridge and other major ridges running south down to the Tellico River.

West Rattlesnake Trailhead
4,000 ft. ♿ ♿

Coker Creek Welcome Center

Tennessee Emergency Information



Cherokee National Forest
Tellico Ranger Station
250 Ranger Station Road
Tellico Plains, TN 37385
(423) 253-8400

Sheriffs Department
Monroe County, TN (423) 442-3911

Weather Conditions

Important to consider before traveling the Skyway. Snow is common from mid November through mid April- especially in the higher elevations.

Note: The Cherokee Skyway is a State maintained road, with the amenities maintained by the US Forest Service. For each state, please contact the appropriate Sheriffs Department for road conditions and the appropriate Forest Service Ranger Station for recreation information.



Cherokee Skyway Visitor Center
225 Cherokee Skyway
Tellico Plains, TN 37385
423-253-8010



Coker Creek Welcome Center
12197 New Hwy
Coker Creek, TN 37322
423-261-2286

Cell phone coverage along the Cherokee Skyway is very sporadic. There is a public phone at the Cherokee Skyway Visitor Center. Above Indian Boundary there is some cell phone coverage.

CHEOHALA Skyway

The wilderness areas

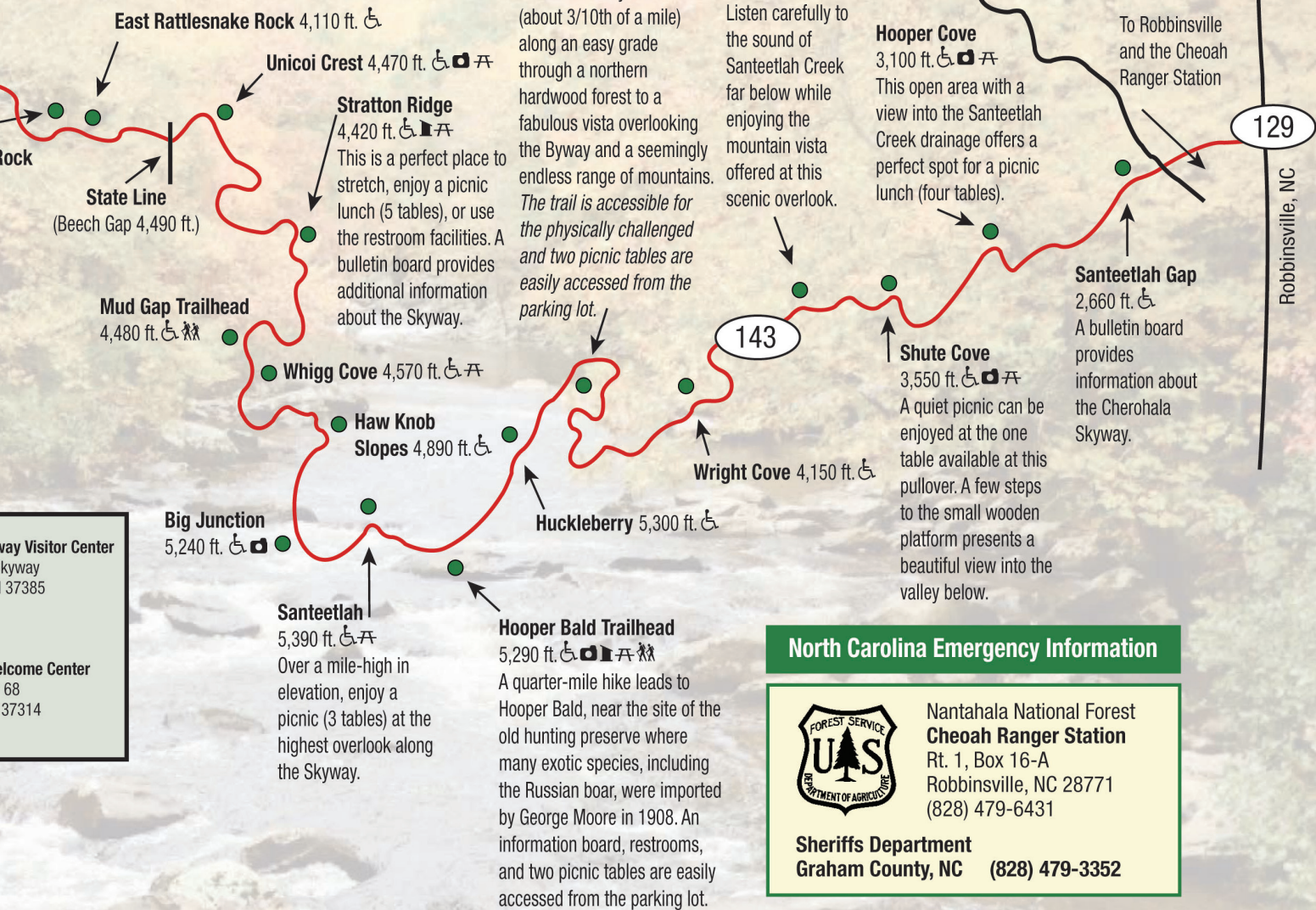
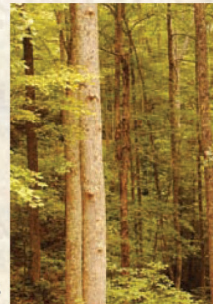
surrounding the Cherokee Skyway are beautiful and alluring, but not necessarily suited for everyone to explore. As a visitor to wilderness, you should be aware that you are entering a primitive environment. You will face the challenge of being entirely self-sufficient—no trail signs, no restrooms, no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



- Restrooms (no water)
- Photo Site
- Wheel Chair Accessible
- Fishing
- Picnic Tables
- Hiking
- Canoeing
- Camping
- Cell Phone Coverage

Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest

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.



Way Visitor Center
kyway
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37314

North Carolina Emergency Information



Nantahala National Forest
Cheoah Ranger Station
Rt. 1, Box 16-A
Robbinsville, NC 28771
(828) 479-6431

Sheriffs Department
Graham County, NC (828) 479-3352

Scenic drives in the sky

The small town of Tellico Plains is a road enthusiast's dream, thanks to the Cherohala Skyway.

The Cherohala Skyway, a National Scenic Byway, is more than 40 miles long and connects Tellico Plains to Robbinsville, North Carolina. The road crosses through the Cherokee National Forest in Tennessee and the Nantahala National Forest in North Carolina. With elevations ranging from 900 feet above sea level to more than 5,400 feet, the Cherohala Skyway is a tourist attraction for both motorcyclists and car enthusiasts.

The Cherohala Skyway has been included on numerous national lists, garnering the attention of people across the nation who make a pit stop in the small town of Tellico Plains to view the picturesque scenery along the Cherohala Skyway.

"The Cherohala Skyway takes you to some of the most beautiful scenery that God has created," said Tellico Plains Mayor Marilyn Parker. "We are privileged to have this beauty in our backyard—the 'Little Town with the Big Backyard.' We welcome the opportunity to show our hospitality to all visitors. As we grow, we are working on keeping our integrity as a warm, welcoming town."

According to the Monroe County Department of Tourism, the Cherohala Skyway sees around 3 million visitors annually.

"We see the largest influx of visitors in the fall, making it our peak travel season in Monroe County," said Tourism Director Blaina Best. "But year round, people from all over come to see the beauty of the Cherohala Skyway and take advantage of all of the wonderful things you can do in each of our four cities in Monroe County."

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

Best also encourages visitors to follow Visit Monroe TN on Facebook and Instagram to keep up with all of the events happening throughout the county.



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Whether it's fishing, hiking or just spending a relaxing day on Lake Chickamauga in Dayton or Watts Bar Lake in Spring City, there is no shortage of outdoor recreation opportunities in Rhea County, Tenn.

Laurel-Snow State Natural Area is a 2,259-acre natural area located in Rhea County. The natural area occurs on the Walden Ridge of the Cumberland Plateau and contains a section of gorge that is deeply dissected by Morgan, Henderson, Laurel and Richland Creeks.

The site is named after two scenic waterfalls, Laurel Falls (80 feet) and Snow Falls (35 feet) and features two prominent overlooks, Buzzard Point and Bryan Overlook.

The natural area also has scenic creeks, steep gorges, geologic features, a small stand of virgin timber and a wide variety of plants.

After about 1.5 miles of hiking into the

natural area beside Richland Creek, the trail forks. You can reach Buzzard Point and Snow Falls by following the trail as it forks to the left going west. The trail to the right leads to Laurel Snow Falls and then eventually climbs to the top of the falls. The distance for both trails is about eight miles round trip.

The land use history of this area remains evident in places. Logging and deep mining took place in some portions of the area in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Some remnants of the mining activities can still be seen along the trail near the parking area.

Part of Richland Creek was dammed to serve as the Dayton Reservoir and was once the water supply for the town of Dayton. The low dam across the stream can still be seen, although water is no longer collected here for the town.

The Laurel-Snow trail was the first National Recreation Trail designated in

Tennessee.

Laurel-Snow State Natural Area is part of the Cumberland Trail State Scenic Trail, and the area includes trailhead parking and an open section of the Cumberland Trail.

See <http://www.cumberlandtrail.org/> for general information and stipulations on backcountry camping in the area.

The Cumberland Trail, the state's only linear state park, when completed, will be 300 miles in length cutting through 11 Tennessee counties from the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park on the Tennessee-Virginia-Kentucky border to Signal Point near Chattanooga.

Public access is allowed; parking and hiking trails are provided. The natural area has 10.5 miles of hiking trails.

Backcountry camping is by permit only. Call the Cumberland Trail State Park at (423) 566-2229 to obtain a permit or request more information.

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Main Street Musicals

Sweetwater Takes the Stage

Sweetwater has built a reputation for shopping, dining and small-town charm. Visitors can stroll along the creek at Duck Park, hear trains pass near Main Street and enjoy homemade ice cream at Sweetwater Creamery. The city proudly embraces its nickname as the “Sweetest Street in Tennessee.”

In recent years, Sweetwater has also gained attention for its hometown musicals. This year marks the fourth consecutive year local residents have come together to stage a full-length original production. These shows, performed exclusively in Sweetwater, have become so popular they run several nights and regularly sell out.

Guests travel from across Tennessee to attend, with many returning for multiple performances while staying in local hotels and short-term rentals.

Each production is written, directed and produced by Josh Issac, director of Sweetwater Main Street. Known for blending humor, heart and relatable characters, Issac uses the stage to celebrate the community’s talent and storytelling traditions.

This year’s production marks his 11th full-length musical. The Southern comedy, “The Confessions of June Jacobs Smith Tramel Zimmerman Fairchild,” follows June, a four-time widower and author of the bestselling memoir “4 Weddings, 3 Funerals, and a Missing Body: The Stories of How to Be a Fabulous Widower.”

During a book tour, June becomes stranded at a nursing home during an unexpected snowstorm, where she meets fellow travelers whose life stories come to life on stage. Original music and standout vocal performances add to the experience.

Performances are scheduled for Nov. 12-15. Tickets go on sale in October. For more information, visit the Sweetwater Main Street page on Facebook or contact Sweetwater City Hall.





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Living History

Cherokee Fall Festival at Sequoyah Birthplace Museum • Sept. 12-13

Sequoyah Birthplace Museum in Vonore is set to host its 34th annual Cherokee Fall Festival on Sept. 12-13. The event is scheduled to start at 10 a.m. on both days and will go until 4 p.m.

Visitors will have the opportunity to step back in time to experience Native American food, Cherokee arts and crafts demonstrations, music and dance.

In the museum, there will be demonstrations of the 1800s Acorn Printing Press. A blacksmith will be doing on-site demonstrations in the shop both days. Other demonstrations and displays will include Cherokee life in 1700s and a Civil War reenactment.

Visitors will be able to meet and talk with Cherokees from the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina.

Special entertainment will be provided by the Warrior Dancers of Ani-Kituhwa, who are the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians' official ambassadors.

Guests can check out the reconstructed 1800s dog-trot log cabin, meet and chat with Miss Cherokee, and have your name written in Cherokee. There will also be posters from Cherokee Elementary School, and a children's blowgun competition and an adult blowgun competition on both days.

Traditional Indian fry bread, Indian tacos,

and other food and drinks will be sold.

The event is funded in part by the Tennessee Arts Commission Rural Arts Program Grant and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians.

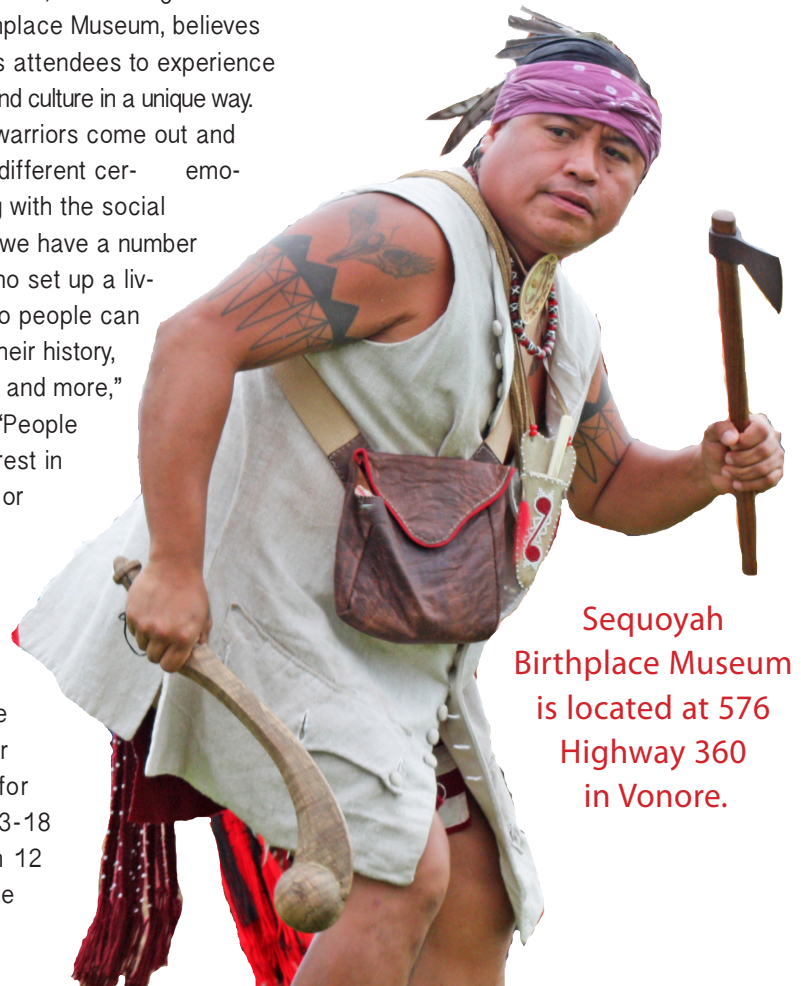
Charlie Rhodarmer, the manager/director of Sequoyah Birthplace Museum, believes the festival allows attendees to experience Cherokee history and culture in a unique way.

"We have the warriors come out and demonstrate the different ceremonial dances along with the social dances and then we have a number of the warriors who set up a living history area so people can ask them about their history, clothing, customs and more," Rhodarmer said. "People who have an interest in Cherokee history or culture can come out and actually speak to living Cherokee historians."

Tickets for the event are \$10 for adults. Tickets for children ages 13-18 are \$5. Children 12 and under will be

admitted for free. A family rate of \$25 will also be available.

For more information, contact the Sequoyah Birthplace Museum at 423-884-6246 or visit www.sequoyahmuseum.org/



Sequoyah Birthplace Museum is located at 576 Highway 360 in Vonore.



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Splashpad



Athens Regional Park Splashpad is open Spring through Fall and is fun for all ages. Ingleside Pool opens May 24 and hosts a variety of swim lessons throughout the summer. The Ingleside Pool is also available for after-hours party rentals.

Disc Golf



Eureka Trail



Friday Nights
June 14 - August 30

The Eureka Trail is a 5.6 mile down and back multipurpose gravel packed trail and is great for beginners or bicycle enthusiasts. Make your trip down and back and then head to the Mayfield Visitor Center for a frozen treat.

Festivals



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Savor the Flavor



Taste of Monroe • October 12 •

The Monroe County Chamber of Commerce invites residents and visitors to one of the area's signature fall events, Taste of Monroe, set for Oct. 12 in downtown Madisonville.

Held from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m., the family-friendly gathering celebrates the food, community and hospitality that define Monroe County. Guests can sample dishes from Chamber member restaurants and food vendors, featuring everything from savory entrees and desserts to specialty beverages.

"Taste of Monroe is one of those events that truly captures the heart of our community," said Brandy Gentry, president/CEO of the Monroe County Chamber of Commerce. "It brings people together, supports our local businesses and gives everyone a chance to experience the incredible talent and hospitality we have here in Monroe County."

Set against the backdrop of downtown Madisonville, the event also offers activities for children, including face painting and interactive entertainment.

Vendors will compete for honors such as Overall Favorite, Best Entree, Best Dessert and Best Beverage, allowing attendees to help select this year's winners.

"Taste of Monroe is about more than food," Gentry said. "It's about making memories, discovering new favorites and celebrating the businesses and people who make this county such a special place to visit and call home."

Organizers say the event is one of many experiences offered throughout the year by Chamber members across the county.

For more information about Taste of Monroe and upcoming events, visit the Monroe County Chamber of Commerce website at www.monroecountychamber.org



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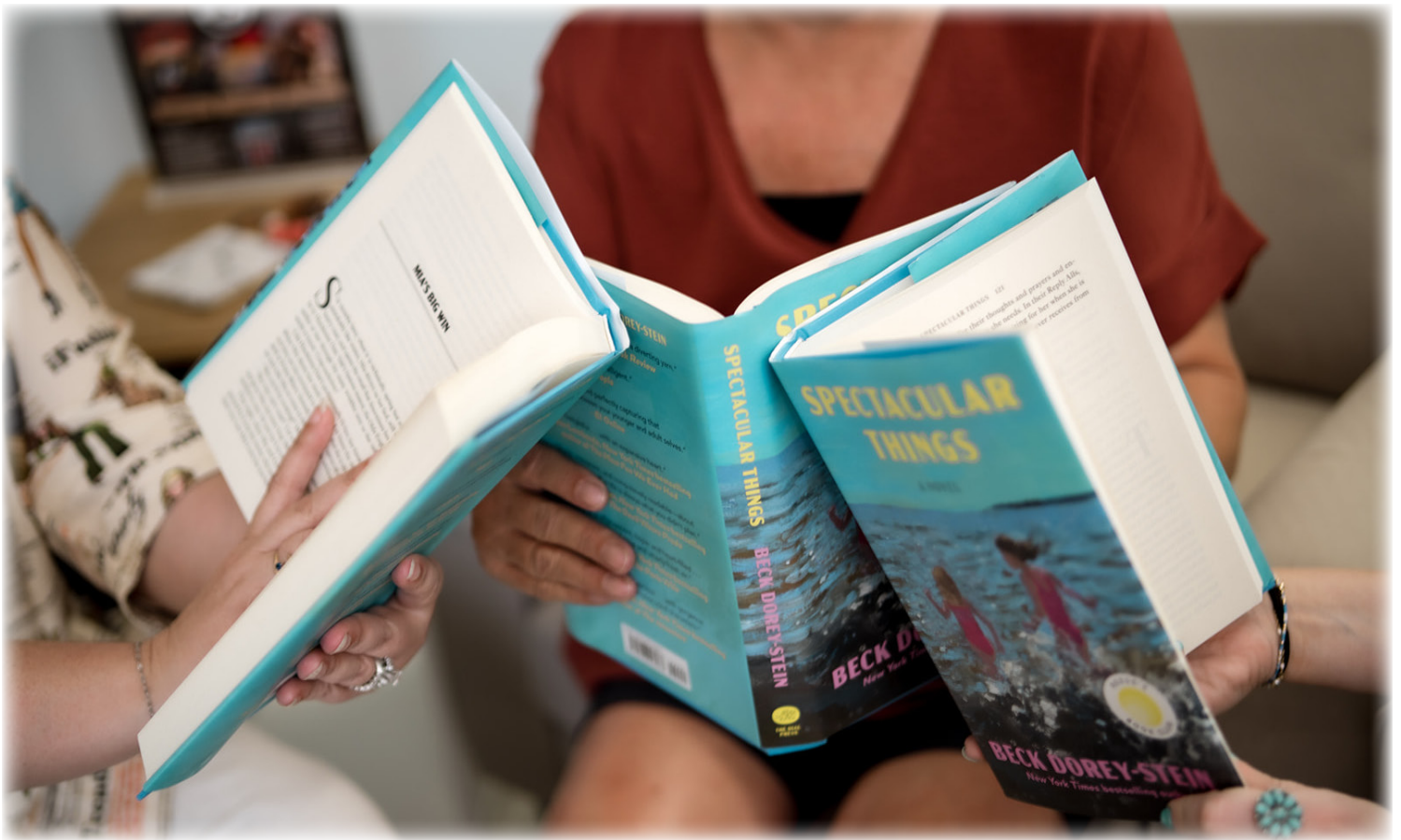
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A new chapter is unfolding

Right in the heart of Downtown Madisonville, a new chapter is unfolding at Story Hollow—one that invites both locals and travelers alike to slow down, step inside, and experience something special.

Recently relocated to a new home along College Street, Story Hollow has quickly become a must-visit destination for those exploring Monroe County. Surrounded by charming small-town storefronts and just steps from beloved local spots like Donna's Cafe, the bookstore offers a warm, welcoming atmosphere that feels like it's been part of the community for generations.

But Story Hollow is more than just a place to shop for books—it's an experience.

Visitors will find thoughtfully curated shelves filled with new releases across



every genre, cozy reading nooks, and a steady rhythm of activity that makes every visit feel alive. Whether it's a children's story time, a lively book club, or an author signing, there's always something happening that brings

people together.

For travelers making their way through East Tennessee—perhaps visiting nearby attractions like The Lost Sea Adventure or driving the scenic Cherohala Skyway—Story Hollow offers the perfect place to pause. It's a chance to stretch your legs, discover your next great read, and experience the heart of a small town that values connection and community.

The move to this new location marks an exciting step forward. With more space to grow, Story Hollow is expanding its role as a gathering place, offering additional book clubs, workshops, and events designed to welcome both familiar faces and first-time visitors. It's a place where conversations start easily, where

recommendations are personal, and where every guest is treated like a regular.

At its core, Story Hollow reflects the spirit of Madisonville itself: friendly, inviting, and full of stories waiting to be discovered.

So the next time you find yourself in East Tennessee, take a detour through downtown Madisonville. Step into Story Hollow, browse the shelves, and stay a while. You might arrive as a visitor—but you'll leave feeling like part of the story.



Famed local attractions

Places to explore while visiting Monroe County

Sweetwater Valley Farm

Sweetwater Valley Farm is famous for its cheese. Located between the towns of Philadelphia and Loudon in Loudon County, the farm is in the heart of Southeast Tennessee's dairy-rich Sweetwater Valley on Highway 11 just off Interstate 75's Exit 68. While today's Sweetwater Valley Farm cheese is produced in a state-of-the-art facility, owner John Harrison has preserved the fine art and craft of making cheese in the traditional farmstead manner in which the farm controls the process from cow to consumer in order to create high-quality cheddar cheese. Plan to stop by the farm store to sample one of the award-winning cheddars. If the weather permits, you can go on one of the farm excursions. The on-site restaurant offers great lunch selections featuring a variety of farm fresh favorites. For more information about the farm or to purchase products, visit <http://www.sweetwatervalley.com>



Tsali Notch Vineyard

Named after an historic Cherokee leader, Tsali Notch Vineyard is located approximately nine miles off of Interstate 75 in between Sweetwater and Madisonville. The vineyard specializes in muscadine grapes, grown on more than 6,000 vines on 21 miles of trellis, covering 35 acres of a 202-acre estate. The property has an average elevation of 1,150 feet and is ringed by sweeping mountain views. Featuring a large party barn, a reconstructed log building tasting room, and a refurbished 19th-century, two-room farmhouse christened The Jackson Lounge, Tsali Notch Vineyard is host to weddings, reunions, and other special events.



During harvest season, Tsali Notch welcomes individuals and families to pick muscadines for their own juice, jelly and winemaking.

To learn more about Tsali Notch Vineyard, visit the website at tsalinotch.com or call 423-506-9895.

Sequoyah Birthplace Museum

Sequoyah Birthplace Museum is owned and operated by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Its mission is to promote appreciation of the history and culture of the Cherokee Indians in Eastern Tennessee, particularly the life and contributions of Sequoyah. Born more than 200 years ago, Sequoyah created a writing system that, within months of its introduction, enabled thousands of Cherokee to read and write in their own language. The museum features video, electronic displays and exhibits from periods of Cherokee occupation of the Tennessee Overhill area.



Sequoyah Birthplace Museum is located at 576 Highway 360 in Vonore. For more information, call 423-884-6246 or visit www.sequoyahmuseum.org.

The Lost Sea

The Lost Sea is America's largest underground lake and one of the region's most popular attractions. It is a must see if you are in Tennessee Mountain Traveler Country!

The temperature at Lost Sea is a constant 58 degrees so in the summer it is cool but in the winter when it is really cold outside, it feels nice and warm inside.

You can ride one of the glass-bottom boats to get a unique view of the underground lake.

The Lost Sea attraction has daily tours, places to eat and explore, a gem mine, a nature trail, and a gift shop. You can even stay overnight during one of the exclusive Wild Cave tours.

The Losa Sea is located at 140 Lost Sea Road in Sweetwater. For more information, visit the website at thelostsea.com.





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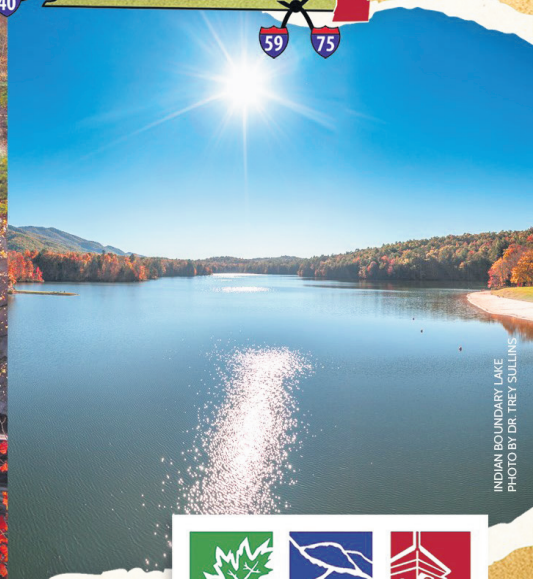
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Saturday, August 9th - Scenic City Sound

Saturday, August 15th - Confederate Railroad