Leatherwood Wilderness

Ozark - St. Francis National Forests

Sylamore Ranger District

Southern National Forests

Arkansas

Revised: July 2003

Welcome to a Wilderness Experience

The Leatherwood Wilderness was created by the 1984 Arkansas Wilderness Act and contains 16,838 acres located on the Sylamore Ranger District in the Ozark National Forest. It lies approximately 15 miles south of Mountain Home and 20 miles northwest of Mountain View, Arkansas.

Leatherwood is bordered on the north, east, south, and southwest by four high ridge top roads. The western boundary is shared with the Lower Buffalo Wilderness, which is administered by the National Park Service and is part of the Buffalo National River. These two combined wilderness areas offer the visitor the largest, most remote wilderness systems in Arkansas.

This wilderness took its name from Leatherwood Creek, the major drainage. Leatherwood Creek in turn, was named after the shrub, Leatherwood. It is a native plant through most of the Ozark region. Seldom growing over 10 feet in height, this slow-growing shrub blooms a pale yellow flower in the spring.

There are six creeks within the Leatherwood Wilderness, which are separated by some of the most rugged, high ridgeline tracts in the Ozarks. They are characterized by steep-sided ridges over 1,200 feet high. Many are with long exposed sides of sheer vertical rock face and benches giving the appearance of large steps dropping into the drainages below. Elevation varies from 1,300 feet above sea level on the highest ridg tops to 420 feet where Leatherwood Creek exits the Wilderness.

An unusual feature of the Ozark Mountains is that the “mountains” are actually plateaus, uplifted as a unit with few folds or faults. The ruggedness of these mountains is due to erosion of the plateaus caused by swift rivers flowing between them.

The forest is spotted with stands of native shortleaf pine as well as the unique cedar glades nestled within the primarly oak, gum, and hickory forest.

Directions to Access Points

The most popular access points to the wilderness are on Arkansas Highway 341. From US Highway 65 at Marshall, take Arkansas Highway 27 north to Harriet, then take Arkansas Highway 14 east through Big Flat to the intersection of Arkansas 341; for a total of 23.9 miles. Take Arkansas Highway 3+1 north for 2.4 miles to the junction of Forest Service Road 1118, which is the southeast corner of the wilderness.

Please register at one of the trail entrances located at Barkshed Extention Road, Smith Road, Leatherwood Road, and Brush Creek Road. These registration cards help us determine the amount of use that activities receive, and also may help us find you should an emergency arise. Please identify the route you plan to take and when you plan to return.

Points of Interest

Buffalo National River

North Arkansas’s Buffalo River was the country’s first national river, and gets its start in the Ozark National Forest. It is roughly 150 miles long with nearly 95,000 acres of public land along its corridor. The Buffalo originates in the rugged Boston Mountains of the Ozark and heads east to join the White River. Along the way it descends nearly 2,000 feet through layers of sandstone, limestone, and chert.

Lower Buffalo Wilderness

Another real treat is the Lower Buffalo Wilderness, a 22,500-acre tract managed by the National Park Service, is contiguous with the Leatherwood. Visitors to the area can expect to see caves, bluffs, waterfalls, and old cabin sites.

White River

The White River forms the north and east boundary of the Sylamore Ranger District and is known for its abundance of trout and its scenery, featuring some of the best flyfishing in all the Ozarks.

For additional information please contact:

Sylamore Ranger District
P.O. Box 1279
Highway 14 North
Mountain View, AR 72560
870-269-3228

Hunting and fishing are permitted. A valid Arkansas hunting or fishing license is required for anyone 16 years of age or older. Arkansas Game and Fish Commission regulations apply in wilderness areas. For information about licenses, seasons and limits, contact the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, #2 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202. Phone: 1-800-364-4263 or visit www.agfc.com.