French Broad River Recreation Zone

Nolichucky-Unaka Ranger Station
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True to its name, the French Broad River winds boldly along the southern edge of this Recreation Zone. In the heart of the zone lies Paint Creek, where fishing, wading and picnicking are popular activities. Water-based opportunities also include driving along scenic Brush Creek or warm-water fishing in Allen Branch or Paint Creek ponds. This area’s wooded mountainsides and creek gorges are linked by an extensive road and trail system. Lying in a triangle between the Tennessee towns of Greeneville and Newport and Hot Springs, NC, the main routes into this Recreation Zone are TN 70 and TN 107.

Hook a Fish! Paint Creek is a favorite fishing destination and is regularly stocked with rainbow trout. Fishing for catfish and small-mouthed bass is popular in the French Broad River. Allen Branch and paint Creek ponds provide fishing opportunities for bass and bluegill. Allen Branch Pond provides handicap accessible fishing piers and 1/4-mile interpretive shoreline trail.

Explore the Forest! Two scenic drives include Forest Road 209 along Brush Creek to US 25/70, and Paint Creek Campground to Hurricane Gap on Forest Road 31 and then Forest Road 467 to Hot Springs and US 25/70. Visit two of the last remaining firetowers in the Southern Appalachians, Meadow Creek and Rich Mountain. Like explorers in the late 1700s, view majestic Paint Rock, where Paint Creek flows into the French Broad River.

Hit the Trail! Enjoy the scenery from horseback on 35 miles of multi-use trails, open also to mountain bikes and foot travel. Hit the trail from Burnett Gap or Weavers Bend, both accommodating horse trailers. Explore Burnett Gap Trail #510A and Brush Creek Trail #501B, the newest loop system along the crest of Brush Mountain. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail #1, for hiking only, lies along the eastern border of this Recreation Zone.

Sleep under the Stars! Nestled in a bend of the creek, Paint Creek Campground’s 19 single and 2 double sites are equipped with wooden picnic tables, accessible fire rings and lantern posts. Other amenities include water and vault toilets. Most sites can accommodate RVs up to 35 feet, but no hookups are provided. Single sites are $10/day and double sites are $20/day.

Picnic in the Woods! Tables, grills and restrooms are located on Paint Creek corridor, Forest Road 41 and at Murray Branch Recreation Area along the French Broad River. Group picnicking facilities at Houston Valley Recreation Area include clusters of tables, a reservable pavilion and a grassy volleyball court. The day use fee is $2/vehicle.