Lakeside Camping

Two full-service marinas operate on Laurel River Lake. They are located near Grove and Holly Bay campgrounds. The marinas are privately operated under a special-use permit.

Swimming

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintains a swimming beach at the spillway of Laurel River Dam. Lifeguards are not provided. Swimming is not allowed at boat ramps or marinas.

Boating

Most of the lake is open to motorized and nonmotorized boats. Laurel River Lake has seven public boat ramps for lake access. Holly Bay Campground offers an additional boat ramp for registered campers only.

The Goose Management Area on Cane Branch is closed to motorized boats but open to canoes, kayaks and rowboats. The area provides a unique opportunity to explore the lake at a slower pace.

Wildlife

The quiet coves and surrounding forest offer opportunities for wildlife viewing. The lake is home to Canada geese, bald eagles and other wildlife species. The Canada Goose Management Area in Cane Branch is closed to motorized boats.

Fishing

The lake provides excellent fishing for bass, walleye, crappie, bluegill and catfish. Fishing licenses may be bought at county clerk’s offices, marinas and many local stores. State fishing regulations are enforced.

Picnicking

The Forest Service offers picnicning opportunities at Laurel Bridge and Bald Rock picnic areas. Laurel Bridge offers a picnic shelter that can be reserved through the London Ranger District Office. Bald Rock Picnic Area, on KY 192, has a vault toilet, a volleyball court and horseshoe pits. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintains shelters and a picnic area near Laurel River Dam.

Scuba Diving

The clear waters of Laurel River Lake provide opportunities for scuba diving. Be alert for flags that indicate divers below the water surface. Boats must stay 100 feet away.

Hiking

Hikers will enjoy miles of trails near the lake. The Sheltowee Trace National Recreation Trail skirts the western edge of the lake.

Food Storage

Food storage is required on the Daniel Boone National Forest.

How to store your food and trash...

Store it in a closed vehicle with a solid top or a closed hard-body trailer.

Put it in a bear-resistant container.

Put it in a food storage locker provided by the Forest Service.

Throw trash away in a bear-resistant trash can provided by the Forest Service.

CAMPING

Campgrounds

The Forest Service oversees two developed drive-in campgrounds on Laurel River Lake. Holly Bay and Grove campgrounds provide electricity, drinking water, flush toilets, and showers. Reservation, first-come, first-served, and walk-in tent sites are offered.

Boat-in Campgrounds

Boat-in campgrounds at Grove and White Oak are first-come, first-served and are accessible only by boat or on foot. These campgrounds provide drinking water, vault toilets and trash bins.

Group Campgrounds

Craig Creek Group Area is by reservation only and is designed for groups of 12 or more people. The area has three group sites, a picnic shelter, drinking water, flush toilets, shower facilities and trash bins. A trail leads from the campground to the lake.

Lakeside Camping

Primitive camping is allowed; however, you must be at least 300 feet from roads, trails, streams, and shorelines.

Laurel River Lake

Located within the Daniel Boone National Forest, Laurel River Lake features 5,600 acres of deep, clear water and nearly 200 miles of tree-lined shore. As one of the most scenic lakes in Kentucky, visitors come here to enjoy boating, swimming, fishing and camping in the great outdoors. Laurel River Lake receives heavy use on the weekends during the summer. Week days and the months of September through March offer visitors more solitude.

The U.S.D.A. Forest Service administers the main body of lake and most of its shoreline. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversees the operation of Laurel River Dam, Laurel River Dam Picnic Area, and the Beach/Spillway area. Currently, their Resource Manager’s Office is being shared with the Forest Service.

Recreation Permits

A fee is required to use Craig Creek, Flatwoods, Grove, Holly Bay, Laurel Bridge, and Marsh Branch boat ramps. High top Boat Ramp remains free-use. A permit must be displayed in your vehicle at these locations. Permits may be bought at local stores or Forest Service district offices. Call the London Ranger District for more information.

INFORMATION

London District Office
USDA Forest Service
395 Laurel Lake Road
London, KY 40744
606-864-4163 or 859-428-7706

Daniel Boone National Forest
1700 Bypass Road
Winchester KY 40391
859-745-3100
www.fs.usda.gov/dbnf

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
4133 Laurel Lake Road
London, KY 40744
606-679-6337

Laurel River Lake

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Daniel Boone National Forest | Revised August 2022 | RB-RG 258

Laurel River Lake

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Hikers will enjoy miles of trails near the lake. The Sheltowee Trace National Recreation Trail skirts the western edge of the lake.

Safety

Wear your lifejacket. Wearing a life jacket at all times could have saved 80 percent of all drowning victims according to the U.S. Coast Guard.

Do not swim at boat ramps or marinas. Stray electrical currents can pose serious threats in the water where boats are connected to power.

Watch for submerged hazards. Water levels at Laurel River Lake vary. Rocks, trees, stumps and landforms may lie just below the surface when the lake level changes. Not all underwater hazards are marked. Be alert and reduce your speed.

Alcohol is prohibited. Kentucky law prohibits consumption and open containers of alcohol in public places, including national forest land and Kentucky waterways.

Be aware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Swim away from areas where engines vent exhaust fumes. Never sit or hang on the back deck of boats while engines are running.

Avoid black bear encounters

• Protect yourself and black bears by reducing odors that attract bears. Food and trash storage is mandatory.
• Make noise to avoid surprising a bear.
• Never approach or feed a bear or other wild animal.
• Do not hike in the dark.
• Carry EPA-registered bear pepper spray.
• If a bear is observed nearby, pack up your food and trash and leave immediately.
• If a bear approaches, move away slowly; do not run. Get into a vehicle or a secure building.

Food Storage

Reduce odors that attract bears

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Cooking Area

Sleeping Area

Food Cache

in the backcountry...

Store your food in a bear-resistant container or hang from a tree. Cook and eat at least 100 yards from your tent.

Laurel River Lake

Laurel River Lake at sunset. Photo by Robin Acciardo.

Marinas

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Laurel River Lake

Laurel River Lake in winter. Photo by John Omer.