

Cherokee National Forest

Fall Color Viewing Report

September 25, 2013

Color (or Expectation):



Unaka Ranger District

2012 File Photo

A hint of color is starting to show in a few places throughout the 650,000 acre Cherokee National Forest.

The northern portion (Watauga & Unaka Ranger Districts) of the Forest and elevations above 3,500' usually reach the peak of color viewing during mid-late October.

The southern portion (Tellico & Ocoee Ranger Districts) of the Forest usually reaches the peak of color viewing during late October and early November.

Recommended Viewing Routes:

www.fs.usda.gov/activity/cherokee/recreation/scenicdrivinginfo



Shook Branch

2012 File Photo

Northeast Tennessee Scenic Drives:

Brush Creek Mountain Loop – Unaka RD, Cocke County, TN - Latitude: 35.964287 - Longitude: -82.943475

Travel along TN 107, Forest Road 209 (some portions are gravel) and US 25/70. FR 209 meanders through a narrow canyon with rhododendron-covered bluffs.

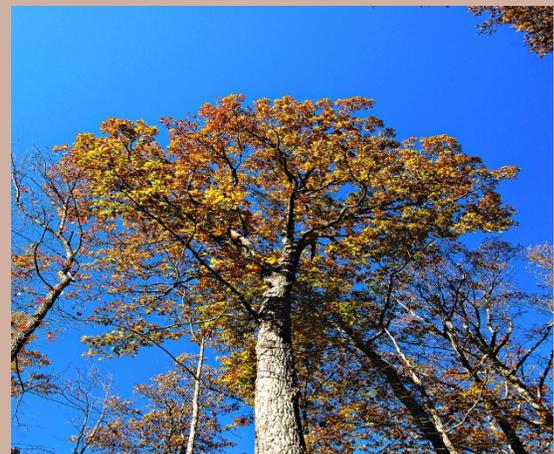
Paint Creek Corridor – Unaka RD, Greene County, TN
Latitude: 35.977583 - Longitude: -82.843763

Meander along 5-mile Paint Creek Corridor to historic paint Rock. Picnicking and many other recreation opportunities are available along scenic Paint Creek Corridor.

Unaka Mountain Scenic Drive – Unaka RD, Unicoi County, TN - Latitude: 36.117632 - Longitude: -82.333151

From Erwin, this drive makes a circle connecting TN 395, graveled Forest Road 230 and TN 107, a state scenic parkway, past Limestone Cove. The route winds from the valley floor in Unicoi County, TN to high-elevation spruce forests and balds atop Unaka Mountain.

TN State Route 143 to Carver's Gap – Watauga RD, Carter County, TN - Latitude: 36.106911 - Longitude: -82.111158. - This state scenic parkway climbs through Roan Mountain State Park to Carvers Gap, with numerous long-distance mountain vistas, picnic spots, rhododendrons and spruce-fir forests spectacular.





Parksville Lake

2012 File Photo

Southeast Tennessee Scenic Drives:

Ocoee Scenic Byway – Ocoee RD, Polk County TN
Latitude: 35.102244 - Longitude: -84.557121

The first designated national forest scenic byway in the nation includes 26 miles of US 64 and Forest Road 77. The two-lane route winds past Parksville Lake, through the scenic rocky bluffs of Ocoee River Gorge and past the Ocoee Whitewater Center. Take a side trip up the 7-mile Chilhowee Scenic Spur, Forest Road 77, to Chilhowee Recreation Area.

Hiwassee River Road – Ocoee RD, Polk County, TN
Latitude: 35.198842 - Longitude: -84.473566

State Route 30 follows Hiwassee State Scenic River to the historic community of Reliance. Cross the bridge and turn east to Forest Road 108. Climb the mountain to Big Bend and Apalachia Powerhouse. Enjoy the views from Hood Mountain overlook and other spectacular sites along the corridor.

Tellico River Road – Tellico RD, Monroe County, TN
Latitude: 35.323117
Longitude: -84.175768

Take State Route 165 from Tellico Plains to Forest Road 210. The route follows Tellico River past Bald River Falls, where you can pull off to view the magnificent falls. A few miles farther, stop to view pools of teeming trout at historic Pheasant Fields Fish Rearing Pools.

Cherohala Skyway – Tellico RD, Monroe County, TN
Latitude: 35.324505 - Longitude: -84.177268

View some of the best mountain scenery in the world from this 43-mile National Scenic Byway through the Cherokee and Nantahala national forests. Drive along the sparkling rush of the Tellico River, stop at overlooks to take in expansive views of the Tennessee Valley and waves of mountain peaks, hike to high elevation mountain balds or nearby Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest. Stop for a picnic at Indian Boundary Recreation Area.



Cherohala Skyway

2012 File Photo

Estimated Peak Period:



The average peak period of fall color in east Tennessee ranges from mid-late October through early November.

Northern Ranger Districts (Watauga & Unaka) - last two weeks of October.

Southern Ranger Districts (Tellico, Ocoee) – Last week of October and first week of November.

Temperature:



As fall begins to move in, the weather is becoming more enjoyable each day.

The coming week weather forecast for east Tennessee calls for mild temperatures and scattered chances of rain during mid-week, with the weekend looking mostly sunny and dry.

Remarks:



Peak periods for the best fall color viewing can vary greatly from year to year.

The factors that influence autumn leaf color are shorter day lengths, weather (primarily cooler temperatures and less moisture) and changing levels of leaf pigments. The only constant factor from year to year is the shortening day length. As days become shorter and nights grow longer, biochemical processes in the leaf initiate changing leaf color. All the other factors vary annually, making the prediction of autumn color peak difficult.

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/cherokee/>