



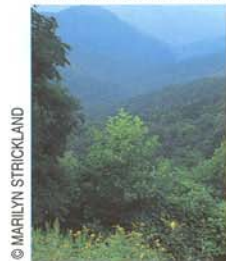
© D. KESERIC

**T**wisting through scenery that rivals the Blue Ridge Parkway, the **Cherochala Skyway** crosses through the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests connecting Tellico Plains in southeast Tennessee to Robbinsville, NC. The Skyway's name comes from a combination of the two forests—**Chero**, from Cherokee, and **hala**, from Nantahala. It took over 30 years to build and cost \$100 million, but it's spectacular and **scenery is what this skyway is all about!**

Covering portions of what was once a Cherokee Indian trading route, this 40+ mile, two-lane blacktop road passes crystal-clear rivers, climbs to breathtaking scenic overlooks (5,390 ft. elevation) and skirts the shoreline of a beautiful North Carolina mountain lake.

Paralleling the Tellico River in Tennessee, the Skyway winds along this classic Appalachian river at 1,000 ft. elevation, offering canoeing and fishing opportunities between mile post 2 and 4. Approaching mp 5 the river disappears and the Skyway begins its ascent through hills and valleys offering enticing mountaintop glimpses of changing forest types as you climb through the dense foliage of the Cherokee National Forest to over 4,000 ft. elevation.

Be ready for your first full-view of spectacular mountain tops and deep valleys as you pass mp 14. Turkey Creek Overlook (2,630 ft.), between mp15-16, offers picnic tables or you can proceed to mp 18 where you may hike or take photos. The Skyway climbs through Brushy Ridge, (3,750 ft) then on to East and West Rattlesnake Rock. Just after East Rattlesnake Rock (4,110 ft.) the Skyway passes by a black bear refuge and offers spectacular views of the rugged mountains.



© MARILYN STRICKLAND



© BILL LEA



© BILL LEA



© BILL LEA

At Beech Gap (4490 ft.) the Skyway crosses into North Carolina and the Nantahala National Forest. Just after entering into North Carolina, Unicoi Crest Overlook (4,594 ft.) offers beautiful views into both North Carolina and Tennessee. Then you can continue to Hooper Bald (5,290 ft.) for a hike at mp 8 or you may prefer to stop along the way at Stratton Meadows (4,320 ft.), Haw Knob Slopes (4,890 ft.), Big Junction (5,240 ft.), or the highest overlook—Santeetlah (5,390 ft.).

The last 10 miles of the Skyway after Hooper Bald skirts the mountain slopes offering breathtaking views of Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest and Santeetlah Valley. You can stop at Shute Cove overlooking Horse Cove Ridge or Obadiah Overlook as you drop down and wind your way into Robbinsville, NC.

The Cherochala Skyway provides numerous opportunities to view magnificent mountain scenery, take photographs, indulge in picnic lunches, stroll along short trails, and delight in an almost never-ending showcase of elegant wildflowers.

Designed for the traveler to savor all of the area's natural beauty, the Skyway has few passing zones—so please take your time and enjoy the wonderful views. **Allowing for stops, it takes about 1-1/2 to 2 hours to travel the length of the Skyway.**



© GENE REIGHARD

### Mileage to Robbinsville, NC from:

Asheville	.96	Dallas	.849
Atlanta	.160	Knoxville	.75
Charleston	.355	Nashville	.240
Charlotte	.190	Raleigh	.337
Chattanooga	.120	Savannah	.380
Chicago	.650	Tampa	.570
Columbia	.253	Wilmington	.415

(mileage is approximate)

## Graham County, NC



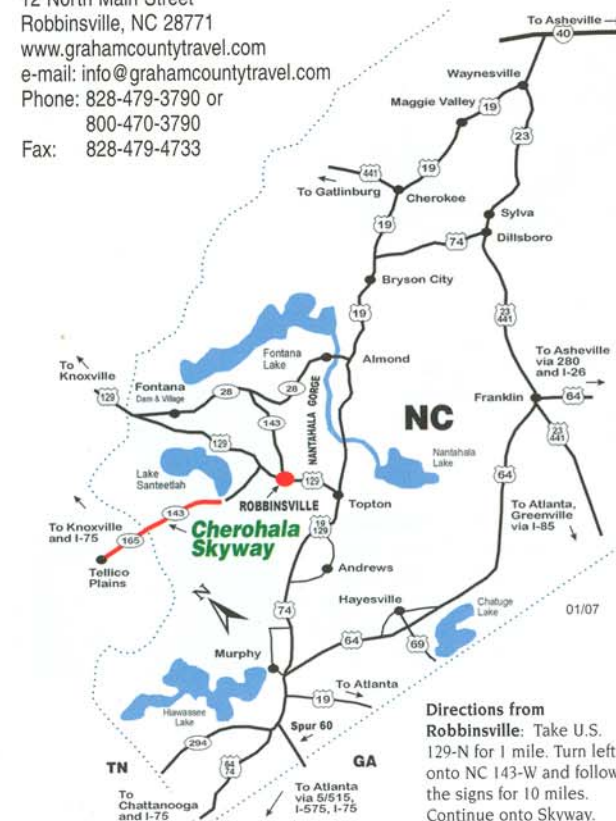
© BILL LEA

Serenely nestled between the Unicoi and Great Smoky Mountains in western North Carolina, Graham County presents unparalleled opportunities as a mountain oasis. With thousands of acres of lush forests and miles of clear, swift streams; outdoor recreational activities abound. Hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, paddling and fishing opportunities are all excellent here and can be found within minutes of the Cherochala Skyway. Over

two thousand native plant species make this region a botanical paradise, while abundant populations of rainbow, brown and brook trout present challenging angling opportunities for any skill level. If lake fishing is your preference, then choose from several of the deep, cool, emerald waters in the area. Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, one of the last remaining old growth forests in the east, offers a rare experience as you hike the groves of towering forest giants. Whatever your tastes, Graham County offers an unforgettable experience for the nature lover in all of us.

### Graham County Travel and Tourism Authority

12 North Main Street  
 Robbinsville, NC 28771  
[www.grahamcountytravel.com](http://www.grahamcountytravel.com)  
 e-mail: [info@grahamcountytravel.com](mailto:info@grahamcountytravel.com)  
 Phone: 828-479-3790 or  
 800-470-3790  
 Fax: 828-479-4733



**Directions from Robbinsville:** Take U.S. 129-N for 1 mile. Turn left onto NC 143-W and follow the signs for 10 miles. Continue onto Skyway.

Published for the Graham County Travel & Tourism Authority by Inside The Nantahala Forest, Inc. Produced from a matching fund grant from the North Carolina Department of Commerce and the Graham County Travel & Tourism Authority.

# CHEROHALA Skyway

CONNECTING WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA TO EASTERN TENNESSEE



*Drive the Crest of the Unicoi Mountains*

COVER PHOTOS: © MARILYN STRICKLAND



**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.

**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. ♿

**Tellico Ranger Station** ♿

**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.



© BILL LEA

**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 for information.

**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.

**Eagle Gap Trailhead**  
3,600 ft. ♿ ♿

**Grassy Gap Trailhead**  
3,400 ft. ♿ ♿

**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.

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

**West Rattlesnake Rock Trailhead**  
4,000 ft. ♿ ♿

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.



© BILL LEA

**East Rattlesnake Rock** 4,110 ft. ♿

**Unicoi Crest** 4,470 ft. ♿ ♿ ♿

**Stratton Ridge**  
4,420 ft. ♿ ♿ ♿  
This is a perfect place to stretch, enjoy a picnic lunch (5 tables), or use the restroom facilities. A bulletin board provides additional information about the Skyway.

**Mud Gap Trailhead**  
4,480 ft. ♿ ♿ ♿

**Whigg Cove** 4,570 ft. ♿ ♿

**Haw Knob Slopes** 4,890 ft. ♿

**Big Junction**  
5,240 ft. ♿ ♿ ♿

**Santeetlah**  
5,390 ft. ♿ ♿ ♿  
Over a mile-high in elevation, enjoy a picnic (3 tables) at the highest overlook along the Skyway.

**Hooper Bald Trailhead**  
5,290 ft. ♿ ♿ ♿ ♿ ♿  
A quarter-mile hike leads to Hooper Bald, near the site of the old hunting preserve where many exotic species, including the Russian boar, were imported by George Moore in 1908. An information board, restrooms, and two picnic tables are easily accessed from the parking lot.

**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 fallen giants. The Memorial Forest, also part of the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness, can only be seen on foot.



© ROBERT SPENCER

**Horse Cove Campground**

**Rattler Ford Group Campground**  
(By reservation through the Cheoah Ranger Station)

**Hooper Cove**  
3,100 ft. ♿ ♿ ♿  
This open area with a view into the Santeetlah Creek drainage offers a perfect spot for a picnic lunch (four tables).

**Santeetlah Gap**  
2,660 ft. ♿  
A bulletin board provides information about the Cherokee Skyway.

**Shute Cove**  
3,550 ft. ♿ ♿ ♿  
A quiet picnic can be enjoyed at the one table available at this pullover. A few steps to the small wooden platform presents a beautiful view into the valley below.

**Wright Cove** 4,150 ft. ♿

**Huckleberry** 5,300 ft. ♿

**Weather Conditions** are 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.



© MARILYN STRICKLAND

# C H E R O H A L A Skyway

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

## Tennessee Information



Cherokee National Forest  
**Tellico Ranger Station**  
250 Ranger Station Road  
Tellico Plains, TN 37385  
(423) 253-2520

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

## North Carolina Information



Nantahala National Forest  
**Cheoah Ranger Station**  
1133 Massey Branch Rd.  
Robbinsville NC 28771  
(828) 479-6431  
<http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc>

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