

The Chattanooga Guides Series

# The Big Guide to Chattanooga Outdoors: 71 Adventures

Read time: 15 minutes

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Best for: Adventure seekers, Outdoor enthusiasts, Families, Naturalists

#outdoors #longform

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Chattanooga is the United State's first designated National Park City, by the foundation of the same name. A recognition for it's commitment to conservation, access to nature and outdoor recreation.

The aim of this guide is to help you find an activity or adventure that inspires you to get outside and explore the nearby parks more easily.

A reminder to all to please practice Leave No Trace ethics. Avoid riding muddy trails, pack out waste properly, and be mindful of wildlife.

*This is an ongoing project.* In the future we plan to add activities for **climbs** specifically. There are more parks and

routes to add as well. If you'd like an activity added please [send an email](#) for consideration. This is a outdoors recreation guide, as such are no sportsman's activities.

*Map View of the Chattanooga Locations Below*

## Activities:

Biking

← Try Me

Hiking

← Try Me

Paddling

## Locations:

[← Try Me](#)

Booker T Washington

Chickamauga Battlefield

Cloudland Canyon

Enterprise Nature Park

Local Park

Lookout Mountain

Nature Preserves

Prentice Cooper

Raccoon Mountain

Stringers Ridge

## More:

Kid Friendly

Waterfall

Farm

Cave

Other

## 1. Hike the West Rim Loop .

A 5 mile loop trail that stays on top of the canyon as you follow the canyon rim. The terrain is dirt, rock and has some tree roots. Elevation changes on the trail are mild, about 700ft of elevation gain in total. The park is open 7am–10pm and requires a \$5 daily parking fee.

### Full Trail Details

#hiking

#cloudland

#3-to-5-miles

## 2. Hike the Cherokee and Hemlock Falls Trail .

A shorter 1.2 mile out-and-back hike where you descend into the canyon and explore two of the parks waterfalls. Not advisable to bring dogs as the metal grate of the descending stairway can be painful and challenging for them. In all about

450ft of elevation gain. The park is open 7am–10pm and requires a \$5 daily parking fee.

### Full Trail Details

#hiking

#waterfalls

#cloudland

#1-to-2-miles

## 3. Hike the Sitton's Gulch Trail .

A well shaded 5 mile out-and-back hike that descends into the gorge with ~1000ft of elevation gain. Known for beautiful creek and waterfall views. The park is open 7am–10pm and requires a \$5 daily parking fee.

### Full Trail Details

#hiking

#waterfalls

#cloudland

#3-to-5-miles

## 4. Hike the Overlook Trail .

A short and easy out and back trail with expansive views of the canyon, around 1 mile total distance out and back. Ideal for families or a quick visit.

### Full Trail Details

#hiking

#cloudland

#1-to-2-miles

#kid-friendly

## 5. Bike or hike the River to Clouds Route .

An exciting but technical 34 mile interconnected trail system that starts at Cloudland Canyon State Park and Lookout Mountain into Chattanooga. Visit their website for more technical details.

### More Information

#biking

#hiking

#cloudland

#lookout-mtn

#20-plus-miles

## 6. Hang Glide at Lookout Mountain Flight Park .

Get your pen out to cross a long standing item from your bucket list. Tandem hang gliding around Lookout Mountain. After being towed up by a small plane (an experience unto itself), you'll then typically glide anywhere from 1500-3000ft above the valley depending on the day's thermal conditions.

### Their Website

#hang-gliding

#lookout-mtn

#other

## 7. Explore Ruby Falls Underground Waterfall .

A famed Chattanooga adventure. Take a guided walking tour of the 145 foot underground waterfall and learn all about stalactites, stalagmites and the explorers who made it all possible.

## Their Website

#cave

#lookout-mtn

#kid-friendly

## 8. Explore Reflection Riding Arboretum & Nature Center .

300 acres and 10 miles of trails to explore in this Lookout Mountain preserve. Guided tours get you close to endangered red wolves and birds of prey. The welcome center is open 9am-4pm Tuesday-Saturday. Donations are accepted and help keep the preserve operational.

## Their Website

#kid-friendly

#preserve

#wildlife

#lookout-mtn

#hiking

## 9. Visit a Wildlife Sanctuary at Reflection Riding .

Advanced planning required. You can either attend a scheduled event, or request a private guided tour to get the chance to see wildlife like a Red Wolf, Bobcat, birds of prey and others.

## Events Request Private Tour

#animals

#lookout-mtn

## 10. Bike or hike the Guild Hardy Trail .

Starting near the base of Lookout Mountain on Ochs Highway you can take this multi use trail as far as you want up (it'll take you to the top) and around the mountain. In total it's an 11 mile loop with ~1700 ft of elevation gain.

### Trail Details

#biking

#hiking

#lookout-mtn

#10-to-20-miles

## 11. Hike the Glen Falls Trail .

An easier out and back one mile hike that will take you to a scenic waterfall. If you want to cool off you can take a swim at the base of it. Kid and dog friendly but like all of Chattanooga it's rocky terrain so proper footwear is recommended.

### Trail Details

#hiking

#lookout-mtn

#swim

#1-to-2-miles

## 12. Lula Lake Classic Loop .

The Lula Lake area is privately owned by the Lula Lake Land Trust. It is not frequently open to visitors so check the availability link for preparing your visit. Once planned, this 4 mile loop will take you to a scenic waterfall and lake, be prepared for crowds near the falls.

### Availability Details Trail Details

#lookout-mtn

#hike

#waterfall

## 13. Walk the Virginia Ave Greenway .

Tucked into the St Elmo neighborhood, this 1.4 mile (one way) greenway offers scenic views of both Lookout Mountain and the charming houses of the historic district. It is a popular paved greenway with one-way vehicle traffic, be mindful with children and dogs. Access the greenway by parking near The Woodshop at the intersection of 55th Street and Virginia Ave. After your walk, The Woodshop is a great spot for live music.

### Live Music at The Woodshop

#greenway

#lookout-mtn

## 14. Explore Point Park .

Take a walk around this historic Civil War preserved site known for the famous Battle of Lookout Mountain. Appealing to those with a passion for scenic overlooks and historic monuments. Entry fee of \$10, children 15 or under don't pay a fee.

### More Information Location Civil War in Chattanooga

#lookout-mtn

#park

#history

## 15. See Rock City .

A Chattanooga mountaintop attraction famed for being able to see 7 states from a single lookout and kid friendly adventures like Fairyland Caverns and Mother Goose Village. Entry fee required.

### More Information

#kid-friendly

#lookout-mtn

## 16. Wild Cave Tour of Raccoon Mountain .

Get down and dirty on a guided crawl through the ageless caverns of Raccoon Mountain. Tours are either 2 or 3.5 hours depending on your selected option. Minimum requirements - age: 8, height: 56 inches, max weight: 275lbs.

### Tour Details

#cave

#raccoon-mtn

## 17. Walking Tour of Raccoon Mountain Caves .

Significantly less messy than the Wild Cave Tour, this 45-55 minute guided walking tour takes you through a quarter mile of the system as you take in the novel sights, history and lighted pathways. Children must be 3 years of age.

### Tour Details

#cave

#kid-friendly

#raccoon-mtn

## 18. Bike or hike a 14 mile Raccoon Mountain Reservoir Loop .

A 14 mile technical trail loop. It's considered moderately difficult but the distance and 1450ft of elevation gain put it close to a hard route. Handfuls of opportunities for scenic views on this lap around the mountain. The trails were built for MTB but are multi-use so look out for one another.

### Trail Details

#raccoon-mtn

#10-to-20-miles

#biking

#hiking

## 19. Bike a 4 mile Raccoon Mountain Reservoir Loop .

When looking for an easier MTB ride with views, this half hour ride should be on the shortlist. Raccoon Mountain overall can get pretty rocky but this 4.5mi, 275ft elevation gain route is a bit friendlier than some of the others.

### Trail Details

#raccoon-mtn

#3-to-5-miles

#biking

## 20. Bike Route for an 11 mile Raccoon Mountain Loop .

This combination of the popular High Voltage and Live Wire make an 11 mile 1400ft loop through the mountain. Good

fitness and a comfort with rocky terrain recommended, it's quite choppy and bouldery in some sections of this loop.

### Trail Details

#raccoon-mtn

#10-to-20-miles

#biking

## 21. Hike Poe Path Run to Hidden Lake .

Hike 3 miles through Enterprise Nature Park. This is one of the easier and more widely recommended hikes in the 2800 acre park. It's shaded, well maintained and has a scenic water view. Expect to see others on the trail.

### Trail Details

#hiking

#enterprise-nature

## 22. Hike Poe Path Run + Deer Hollow .

Instead of the 3 mile hike above, try adding in another trail for more forest scenery, less foot traffic. This hike is 5 miles long and considered closer to intermediate in difficulty. You're likely to spot wildlife adding more mileage and a less traversed trail.

### Trail Details

#hiking

#enterprise-nature

#3-to-5-miles

## 23. Hike Hawks Ridge Loop .

A different 3 mile hike in Enterprise Nature Park. This one tends to be less crowded for those looking for more solitude in their nature visit. It's difficulty sits between easy/intermediate depending on who you ask.

### More Information

#hiking

#enterprise-nature

#3-to-5-miles

## 24. Hike Enterprise Nature Park South Loop .

Explore the entire park using this route. It's 17 miles in length taking you out, around and through different areas of the park. Roughly 1,500 feet of elevation gain on mostly multi-use trails. Dogs on leash are welcome.

### Trail Details

#hiking

#enterprise-nature

#10-to-20-miles

## 25. Bike Black Forest MTB trail .

A flowy beginner friendly MTB trail. It's roughly 3.5 miles in total distance. Not overly technical, nor too intense of climbing but a fun ride through the woods. Follow the park signs for whether to ride clockwise or counter clockwise, the direction changes depending on the day of the week.

Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday are clockwise, the remaining days counterclockwise.

### More Information

#biking

#mtb

#enterprise-nature

#3-to-5-miles

## 26. Bike TNT MTB trail .

Another beginner MTB trail, considered a bit more difficult than the Black Forest trail. It's 4.4 miles in total distance with a few more climbs than Black Forest. Combine the two for an 8 mile ride on the day. Follow the park signs for whether to ride clockwise or counter clockwise, the direction changes depending on the day of the week. Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday are clockwise, the remaining days counterclockwise.

### More Information

#biking

#mtb

#enterprise-nature

#3-to-5-miles

## 27. Bike or hike Blue Trail .

This 3.5 mile loop is considered moderately difficult due to some of the climbs. Located in the heart of Chattanooga, Stringers Ridge is a wonderfully accessible park for a easy escape into nature.

### Trail Details

#stringers-ridge

#3-to-5-miles

#hiking

#biking

#loop

## 28. Bike or hike Cherokee and Strut Trail .

Another great outdoors option at Stringers Ridge. This trail is an easier 2.5 mile loop with 272 feet of elevation gain. If you're hiking, expect to see mountain bikers.

### Trail Details

#stringers-ridge

#3-to-5-miles

#hiking

#biking

#loop

## 29. Hike Rainbow Lake and Bee Branch Trail .

An easier 2 mile scenic hike that loops through Signal Mountain. Known for features such as a suspension bridge, lake views, creeks and dams.

### Trail Details

#signal-mtn

#hiking

#1-to-2-miles

## 30. Hike Rainbow Lake to Edwards Point .

This hike a moderately difficult 4.8 mile loop. Shares many of the same features as the Rainbow Lake and Bee Branch Trail route but continue on to be rewarded with the spectacular view of the gorge from Edward's Ward.

### Trail Details

#signal-mtn

#hiking

#3-to-5-miles

## 31. Hike Pot Point Loop .

One of the longer, harder day hikes in Chattanooga. This 11.5 mile loop provides scenic views of the Tennessee River, state forest creeks and stunning rock walls as you travel difficult terrain and gain 1500 feet of elevation. Plan accordingly.

### Trail Details

#prentice-cooper

#hiking

#10-to-20-miles

## 32. Hike Mullens Cove Loop .

It's labelled a moderate hike but with 1500 ft of elevation gain and 9+ miles in distance make sure you feel comfortable before embarking. This loop in Prentice Cooper State Forest offers views of the gorge and some water features as you traverse piece of the Cumberland Trail.

### More Information

#prentice-cooper

#hiking

#10-to-20-miles

## 33. Bike Chickamauga Military Park Road Loop .

A road ride through history. Ride through the well preserved history and nature of the Chickamauga Battlefield park. This is

an easy ride with lots of opportunity to stop and take in some of the historic sites. Expect other bikers on the route as well.

### Trail Details

#chickamauga-battlefield

#10-to-20-miles

#biking

## 34. Hike a 9 mile Chickamauga Military Park Loop .

An easy 9 mile walk through nature and history. A great place to escape for an extended day trip into nature with your dog or your family. Historic monuments, creek water features and rolling woodland hills makes for a great day hike.

### Trail Details

#chickamauga-battlefield

#5-to-10-miles

#hiking

## 35. Hike a 4 mile Chickamauga Military Park Loop .

A shorter loop hike through a different section the Chickamauga Battlefield and Military Park with the same great history and nature features as some of our other entries.

### Trail Details

#chickamauga-battlefield

#3-to-5-miles

#hiking

## 36. Hike or Bike the Inner Loop 1 and 2 .

Two trails combined into one route, they are both are considered easy trails. Inner Loop 1 is 1.2 miles in length and Loop 2 is 2.2, making this a 3.4 mile ride together. Being on the inner part of the park these trails take you through mostly forest covered rolling hills.

### Parking

#booker-t-washington

#hiking

#biking

#3-to-5-miles

## 37. Hike or Bike the Outer Loop .

The most popular route in Booker T Washington State Park. This one is 3.9 miles and considered an easy route as well. A good portion of this trail provides views of the expansive Chickamauga Lake, as well as sections of wooded forest.

### Parking

#booker-t-washington

#hiking

#biking

#3-to-5-miles

## 38. Paddle the Chickamauga Lake .

Chickamauga Lake is a massive 35,000 acre reservoir accessible from the boat ramp at Booker T Washington. Take your Kayaking, SUP, or Canoe for a paddle, but be aware motor boats are permitted as well.

### Boat Ramp Location

#paddling

#booker-t-washington

## 39. Explore Audubon Acres Nature Preserve .

In the heart of Chattanooga sits 130 preserved acres and 5 miles of easy walking trails. This land protects flora, fauna and also documented Cherokee history. Bring your boots, it can get muddy along the Chickamauga Creek which flows through the preserve. There is a \$5 for adults and \$3 for children entry fee.

### Their Website

#preserve

#wildlife

#kid-friendly

#hiking

## 40. Explore Standifer Gap Marsh .

One of the best marsh habitats in the Chattanooga area. This wildlife refuge is a wonderful place to spot birds, reptiles, butterflies and small mammals. It's a great place for an hour or two's walk for naturalists in your family.

#wildlife

#preserve

#kid-friendly

#hiking

## 41. Greenway Farms Park .

This is a 180 acre recreational park situated along the North Chickamauga Creek. It's popular for a variety of recreation like hiking forested trails, fishing the creek and their dog park.

In the spring and fall Scenic City Shakespeare performs outdoor shows here.

### More Information [Shakespeare in the Park](#)

#park

## 42. Sculpture Fields .

Walk amongst 50 large sculptures through 1.5 miles of winding trails around the 33 acre park in Montauge Park. Take in the artwork, walk your dog and after have a lunch at nearby Chattanooga restaurants.

### More Information

#park

## 43. Camp Jordan Loop .

An easy two mile paved loop where you can walk, run or bike. It's outer rim is surrounded by woodlands and inside are sports fields and a disc golf park. This loop connects to the South Chickamauga Greenway via the only bridge in the park seen along the loop, if you want a longer run. The Camp Jordan area also has several sports bars nearby.

### Nearby Sports Bars

#greenway

#park

## 44. Visit Rosie Mae's Alpaca Farm .

Visit a family owned Alpaca Farm in Wildwood, Georgia. They have 9 alpacas on the farm and they also run a coffee shop and boutique onsite. A great option for children and animal lovers.

[Their Website](#) [Private Tour](#)

#wildlife

#farm

#kid-friendly

## 45. Visit Highland Cattle at Blessing Creek .

Blessing Creek Farms opens their doors for visitors to interact with their Highland Cattle and other farm animals. Located in Lafayette, Georgia. Tours are available by appointment only.

[Their Website](#)

#wildlife

#farm

#kid-friendly

## 46. Family Farm Visit at Hidden Hills Farm .

Bring your family out to meet goats, sheep, donkeys, ponies and chickens and watch the daily farm activities. More details: \$50 for a group of up to 6 people. \$5 per additional person, 15 people max. Pony rides available for \$10.

[More Information](#)

#farm

#kid-friendly

## 47. Pick Tulips and Sunflowers at Lorenzen Farm .

A feast for the eyes and nose farm experience in Dayton, TN. Walk through fields of tulips, sunflowers and wildflowers and gather your favorites for a DIY bouquet, while taking memorable photos along the way.

### More Information

#farm

#flower-picking

## 48. Visit Flat Top Mountain Farm for Seasonal Pickings .

Lavender, flowers, pumpkins and Christmas trees, there's a reason to visit every season. Check their website for dates of operation and availability.

### More Information

#farm

#kid-friendly

## 49. South Chickamauga Creek Greenway .

This is a 13 mile part paved, part gravel multi-use trail along the South Chickamauga Creek. There are a variety of access

points like Camp Jordan, Brainerd Levee and Sterchi Farm to list a few.

### More Information [On the Map](#)

#greenway

#kid-friendly

## 50. Tennessee Riverwalk .

A 16 mile paved walkway along the Tennessee Riverfront. This is a multi-use trail that ties into multiple sections of downtown Chattanooga. Access points at Wheland Foundry, Ross's Landing and Chestnut Street, among others. Pro tip: Ross's Landing hosts free outdoor concerts on summer Saturday evenings.

### More Information [Live Music at Ross's Landing](#)

#greenway

#kid-friendly

## 51. Explore the Sterchi Farms Trailhead .

This is a popular section of the larger Chickamauga Greenway. It's known as one of the calmer and scenic sections of the greenway and for its creek accessibility for paddling and fishing.

### Location

#greenway

## 52. Paddle to view a Bat Cave .

Take a guided or self directed kayak trip to see ~100,000 bats exit their cave for a nightly insect hunt along the Tennessee River. If you choose the tour its about a 3 mile paddle altogether.

### Guided Tour Info

#paddling

#cave

#wildlife

#kid-friendly

## 53. Paddle to view the Sand Hill Crane Migration .

During their winter migration thousands of once endangered Sandhill Cranes take an extended stay at the Hiwassee Island. You can plan a trip out there yourself or take a beginner friendly guided kayak trip. The cranes are typically there from November – February.

### Guided Tour Info

#wildlife

#paddling

#kid-friendly

## 54. Paddle the Tennessee River Blueway .

This is a 45 mile mostly flatwater + mild currents paddling route. Paddle the whole route starting near the Chickamauga Dam and follow the river north to Nickajack Dam. This route can be shortened using any number of access points. You can also make it a multi day experience by camping at one of

the primitive sites along the way like on Maclellan Island or at Prentice Cooper State Forest.

### More Information

#paddling

## 55. Paddle the Chickamauga Creek .

A slow paddle southeast of downtown Chattanooga. This route meanders through woods, fields and towns. The route extends roughly 30 miles.

### More Information

#paddling

## 56. Paddle the Hiwassee River .

A beginner/intermediate paddling route depending on current conditions. This is a 55 mile route with class 1 or 2 whitewater in some sections. It runs from Appalachia Dam in North Carolina to Blythe's Ferry on the Tennessee River. Guide options are available.

### More Information

#paddling

## 57. Flat water paddle Parksville Lake .

A scenic flat water paddle 45 minutes from Chattanooga on a 1,930 acres reservoir. Explore the islands, beaches and enjoy some mountain views.

### Boat Launch

#parksville-lake

#paddling

#flat-water

## 58. Flat water paddle Chester Frost Park .

Chester Frost Park is about 25 minutes north of downtown Chattanooga. Here you can paddle Chickamauga Lake, a massive 36,000 acre reservoir. It can get crowded near the launch on weekends but eases as you make your way further into the lake reservoir.

### Boat Launch

#chester-frost-park

#paddling

#flat-water

## 59. Solo paddle West Chickamauga Creek .

This is calm Class 1 (mostly flatwater) paddle upstream and back, you can turn around whenever you want. Recreational kayaks/canoes work great here. The route is wooded, shaded and usually minimal traffic.

### Launch Point

#paddling

#flatwater

## 60. Paddle West Chickamauga Creek to Camp Jordan .

Launch at Cloud Springs Canoe Launch and paddle downstream with the current to Camp Jordan. This is a calm, Class I float of roughly 2.5–3 miles, with reliable parking at both the put-in and take-out.

[Launch Point](#) [Exit Point](#)

#paddling

#flatwater

#1-to-3-miles

## 61. Greenway Farms to Tennessee River Paddle Route .

Paddle from Greenway Farms about a mile and a half southwest to the Tennessee River. Then take the river another mile to the River Park Boat Ramp. This is a Class 1 flatwater paddle route.

[Launch Point](#)

#flatwater

#greenway-farms

#paddling

## 62. Solo paddle Greenway Farms .

Paddle North starting from the Greenway Farms boat launch. Take the creek as long as you'd like upstream before an easy downstream turnaround.

## Launch Point

#paddling

#greenway-farms

#flatwater

## 63. Solo paddle Lookout Creek .

Paddle upstream (heading south) a few miles and back downstream. This launch is located at Reflection Riding, call ahead to reserve a canoe rental or check that the creek levels are safe 423-821-1160.

## Entry Point

#paddling

#flatwater

## 64. Whitewater Kayak North Chickamauga Creek. Class III-IV .

Located near Montlake, TN is this 1.7 mile whitewater kayaking route for more advanced paddlers along North Chickamauga Creek. Access details in the link below.

## More Information

#paddling

#class-III-IV

#whitewater

## 65. Whitewater Kayak North Chickamauga Creek. Class IV-V .

A much longer whitewater paddle totaling 10.5 miles if taken the whole way. Another route for more advanced paddlers following North Chickamauga Creek. Access details in the link below.

### More Information

#paddling

#class-IV-V

#whitewater

## 66. Hike Big Soddy Creek Gulf .

This is a well maintained picturesque out and back trail that follows the Soddy Creek as you gradually climb through shaded woodland. It's a flexible route, take it as far as you want out and back, with ample opportunities to sit and take a break along the way.

### Trail Details

#soddy-daisy

#hiking

#3-to-5-miles

## 67. Horseback ride at Scenic City Equestrian Center .

Take a 60-90 minute trail ride on Scenic City Equestrian's 86 acre property. More details: \$60 per rider, minimum 10 years old, maximum rider weight is 250 lbs, close toed shoes and long pants required, must book appointment at least a week ahead of time.

### More Information

#horseback-riding

## 68. Horseback ride at Hidden Hills Farm .

Ride for 60 minutes on 200 acres of farmland, no experience required, must book in advance. More details: \$55 per rider, minimum 10 years old, maximum rider weight is 230 lbs, close toed shoes and long pants required, must book appointment at least a week ahead of time.

### More Information

#horseback-riding

#farm

## 69. Stargaze with Barnard Astronomical Society .

Passing 100 years of operation in 2023, the BAS is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing education and love for astronomy in Chattanooga. Check the linked website for upcoming events, like their free 'star parties'.

### Upcoming Events

#astronomy

#kid-friendly

#other

## 70. Star Walk at Harrison Bay State Park .

On a clear night take self guided walk along a dedicated star walk path at Harrison Bay State Park. Educational signage

along the path about stars, constellations and other astronomy information. It's a flat walk, around a half a mile in length.

## Location

#astronomy

#hike

#harrison-bay

#kid-friendly

## 71. Cave Visit at Fricks Cave Preserve .

Advanced planning required. This cave is a preserved site for endangered gray bats, only open in the winter with very limited availability please call ahead (423) 771-9671.

### Location More Information

#cave

Have we done enough to satisfy your craving for the outdoors? If no, [send us an email](#), all feedback helps (constructive preferred). If yes, [send us an email](#), a bit of praise never hurt anyone.

This guide will continue to be added to and refined over time, so please check back in after you've gathered yourself following your latest Chattanooga adventure.