



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

2023 Annual Meeting & Hike Fest

Non Hiking Activities

Benton's Smoky Mountain Country Hams

Featured on menus in the finest restaurants in the nation, Benton's relies on the age-old principles of brown sugar, salt and plenty of time to cure their hams. Enjoy the aroma of hickory smoke while selecting ham, bacon, or sausage.

Black Bear Trading Post

The Black Bear Trading Post is a unique chainsaw carving business featuring local art, offering hand turned pens, pottery and custom wood signs. Lots of unique items.

Charles Hall Museum, Tellico Plains, TN

Born in Tellico Plains in 1924, since boyhood, Charles was a local historian. Among the first white settlers in the area, his mother's family settled in Tellico Plains by 1830. His father's family settled in the area by 1908 and moved within the city limits in 1929. Charles served Tellico Plains as mayor for 31 years, as alderman-recorder for two years, as Justice of the Peace for six years, and as a county commissioner for six years. Showcased in two Museum buildings are his magnificent collections of historical memorabilia, artifacts, equipment, guns, antique telephones, coins and currency, photos, and so much more. There currently are over 10,000 artifacts and thousands of historical pictures and documents either displayed or archived for future reference. Tellico Plains is a special place with a rich heritage and limitless possibilities.

Fly-Fishing Class with Trout Unlimited

Learn about the proper gear for fly-fishing — fly rod, line, waders, vest, net, glasses, etc. Identify trout bugs — look at comparable flies as well as "reading" water and safety guidelines.

Additional instruction includes: how to cast a fly rod, set a hook and handle your trout.

Fort Loudoun State Historic Area

This reconstructed fort, located on the banks of Tellico Lake, was originally built by the British in 1756, when this area was known as the Overhill - a designation given to Cherokee communities that rested on the western slopes of the Appalachian Mountains. Explore the barracks, shops and other structures. Step inside the Visitor Center to see artifacts that were recovered from the original fort. A short film details the turbulent history that unfolded in and around the fort in the mid-1700's. Combining history and nature, much of the park's 1,200 acres lie on an island on Tellico Lake.

The Lost Sea Adventure in Sweetwater, TN

Deep inside a mountain is a remarkable body of water known as The Lost Sea. Listed by the Guinness Book of World Records as America's largest underground lake, the Lost Sea is part of an extensive and historic cave system called Craighead Caverns.

The caverns have been known and used since the days of the Cherokee Indians. From the tiny natural opening on the side of the mountain, the cave expands into a series of huge rooms. Nearly a mile from the entrance, in a room now known as "The Council Room," a wide range of Indian artifacts including pottery, arrowheads, weapons, and jewelry have been found, testifying to the use of the cave by the Cherokees.

Your Lost Sea adventure begins with a guided tour of the caverns. This involves a ¾ mile round-trip walk on wide, sloping pathways. Learn about the cavern's colorful history as well as the fascinating geological development of the immense cavern rooms and rare formations. At the bottom of the cave, you will take a boat ride on The Lost Sea, America's Largest Underground Lake.

The 1/3-mile Lost Sea Nature Trail takes you through a cove-hardwood forest, typical of forest conditions of the Southern Appalachian Mountains around the turn of the century.

Sequoyah Birthplace Museum, Vonore, TN

A property of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, The Sequoyah Birthplace Museum, strives to promote the understanding and appreciation of the history of the Cherokee people. Located on the shores of beautiful Tellico Lake, the museum was built in 1986. It was renovated and a new exhibit installed in 2018.

Throughout much of the 18th century, the Overhill Towns of Tanasi and Chota were important Cherokee centers where Cherokees gathered for important councils and religious ceremonies. The State of Tennessee takes its name from Tanasi. After the waters of Tellico Lake covered the sites of Chota and Tanasi in 1979, memorials were placed at the edge of the lake near the site of each town.

Sweetwater Heritage Museum

Sweetwater began in 1858 when I.T. Lenoir deeded a tract of his farm for the location of a railroad depot as well as private lots. Located in the charming downtown, the museum provides visitors a glimpse into the cultural and transportation heritage of Sweetwater.

Vonor Heritage Museum

Artifacts used by the people of Vonore from the late 1800's through the 1950's are on display here. The museum is filled with local memorabilia from the Civil War, WWI, WWII, farms, schools, and more that defines what life in the town of Vonore was like way back when.