

CODY/DAVIS



The Cheoah River is rapidly becoming one of the top whitewater runs in the country, thrilling paddlers with fast paced action, blind horizon lines and big flushy holes. Located west of Santeetlah Lake in Graham County, North Carolina, the Cheoah is a spectacular, challenging and fun whitewater adventure, providing World Class paddling opportunities previously unavailable in the Southeast until now.

This exciting river adventure is made possible under a new, 40-year federal license to rejuvenate 9 miles of dry river bed for fishermen and whitewater paddlers. For the opening season the USFS requires all paddlers to buy a fee bracelet to put-in on the river and ride a scheduled shuttle from Robbinsville. Note, however, that the Cheoah is a new recreational resource and its management will be a work in progress for the coming years.

The Cheoah is the new darling of the southeastern paddling community and a great choice if you're looking for a new rafting challenge. However, there is nothing in the southeast harder, longer, steeper, or with more big rapids than the Cheoah. Guided rafting permits for commercial rafting will be issued during opening season to accommodate experienced whitewater enthusiasts looking for a guided adventure on the Cheoah. As use on the river develops, check the **USFS** web site for periodic updates to river user regulations. The website address is www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc.

Plans are underway for public access areas to be constructed at the top and bottom of the Cheoah and several enhanced roadside pull-offs in between, funded by a cost share agreement between the USFS and Alcoa Power Generating, Inc. The USFS is planning to begin construction next year at the designated put-in that will include parking for over 200 vehicles.

Graham County is home to many exciting outdoor adventures and food and lodging are available throughout the county. People can travel to experience the Cheoah River and other county activities for a weekend visit or a week long vacation. Interested boaters may

contact **Graham County Travel & Tourism** for more information on river schedules and the area by call **800-470-3790** or visiting the website at www.grahamcountytravel.com.

For additional information about the Cheoah River, visit the **American Whitewater** website: www.americanwhitewater.org or contact the **Cheoah Ranger District** at **828-479-6431**.

River Regulations

To ensure public safety along the 9 mile high-water section of the Cheoah River, the following regulations will be enforced on the Cheoah River during recreational boating days:

- All paddlers are required to buy a fee bracelet to put-in on the Cheoah River
- No alcoholic beverages within 500 feet of the river.
- No camping within 500 feet of the river.
- No nighttime floating, rafting, or tubing (between sunset and sunrise).
- No parking within 500 feet of the river, except in designated parking areas.
- No watercraft used other than non-motorized, hard-bottom canoes and kayaks, or inflatable watercraft with a minimum of four (4) internal air chambers.
- Users must wear a helmet and a properly fitted personal flotation device (PFD) rated "Coast Guard Approved (Type III, IIIIV, or V)".

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)

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Cheoah River, Graham County NC

Santeetlah Dam to Calderwood Lake

Class IV/IV+
9.25 Miles
Avg Gradient 83 fpm
Max Gradient 146 fpm

Gauge Information

Min. Sug. Level: 500CFS
Max Sug. Level: 1500 CFC

River Description

The recently unleashed Cheoah isn't for the faint of heart. The river has many Class IV/IV+ rapids and lots of residual vegetation that require a high skill level to

negotiate. With the exception of two or three half-mile or so sections, the Cheoah is unusually continuous with a gradient that is consistently steep for a river of its size.

Its warm, western-style paddling features some nice wave trains at higher water levels, frequent series of offset holes, and a number of classic drops. With sufficient water and its historic tree and brush-free channel restored, the crystal clear

Cheoah is becoming one of the crown jewels of the whitewater world.

The Cheoah's 9+ mile run can be broken into three sections: a narrow upper section with a number of sticky holes and a potentially troublesome river-wide ledge downstream of the hydroelectric bypass pipe; a relatively open middle section that features a steep and steady gradient; and a lower section with the most gradient and the most

well-defined drops. The lower two miles of the Cheoah drop 106 and 146 feet. This represents a whitewater experience not often found in the Southeast.

River Information

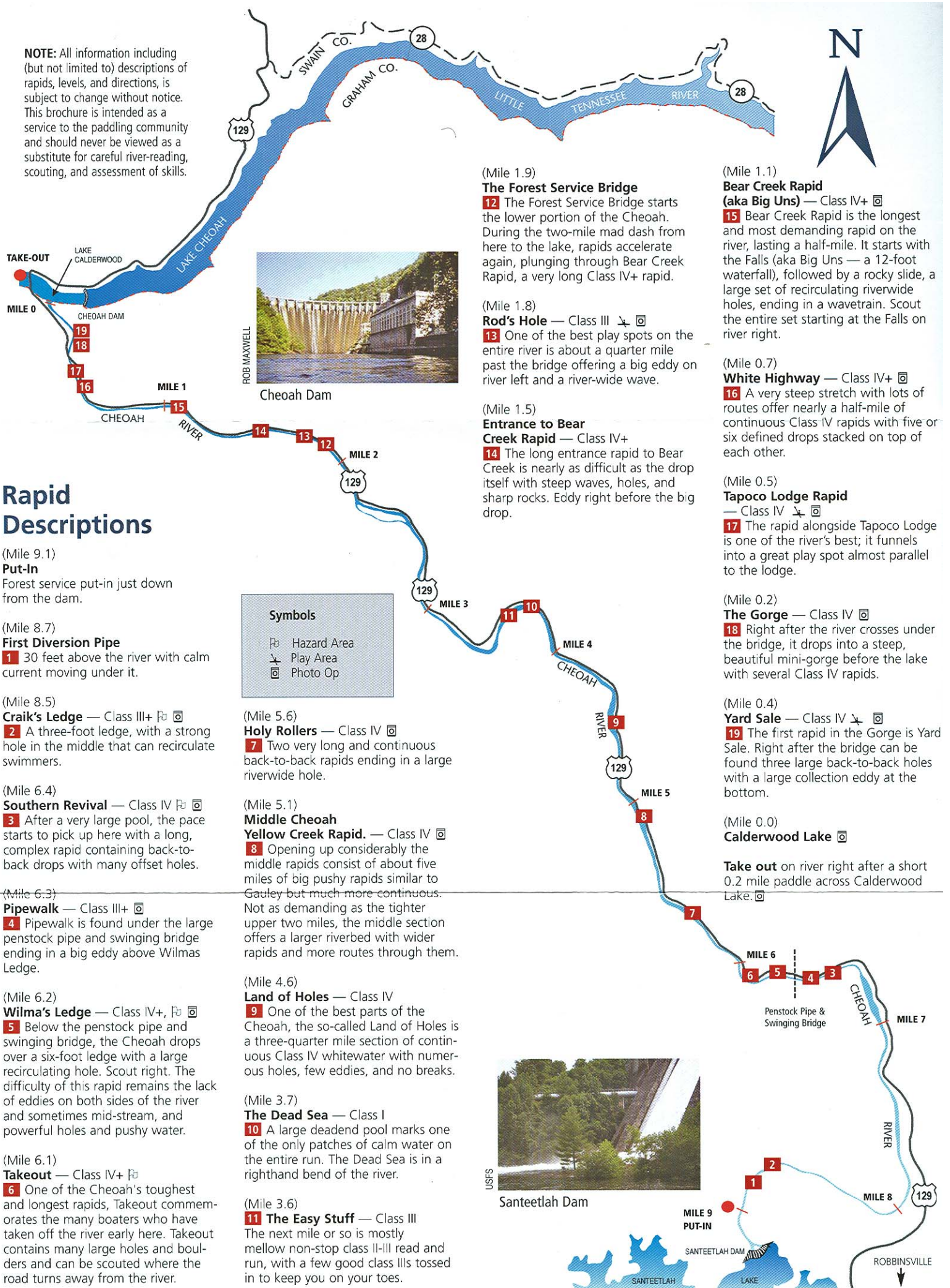
Graham County Travel & Tourism
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NOTE: All information including (but not limited to) descriptions of rapids, levels, and directions, is subject to change without notice. This brochure is intended as a service to the paddling community and should never be viewed as a substitute for careful river-reading, scouting, and assessment of skills.



Rapid Descriptions

(Mile 9.1)
Put-In
Forest service put-in just down from the dam.

(Mile 8.7)
First Diversion Pipe
1 30 feet above the river with calm current moving under it.

(Mile 8.5)
Craik's Ledge — Class III+ [Hazard Area] [Photo Op]
2 A three-foot ledge, with a strong hole in the middle that can recirculate swimmers.

(Mile 6.4)
Southern Revival — Class IV [Hazard Area] [Photo Op]
3 After a very large pool, the pace starts to pick up here with a long, complex rapid containing back-to-back drops with many offset holes.

(Mile 6.3)
Pipewalk — Class III+ [Photo Op]
4 Pipewalk is found under the large penstock pipe and swinging bridge ending in a big eddy above Wilmas Ledge.

(Mile 6.2)
Wilma's Ledge — Class IV+, [Hazard Area] [Photo Op]
5 Below the penstock pipe and swinging bridge, the Cheoah drops over a six-foot ledge with a large recirculating hole. Scout right. The difficulty of this rapid remains the lack of eddies on both sides of the river and sometimes mid-stream, and powerful holes and pushy water.

(Mile 6.1)
Takeout — Class IV+ [Hazard Area]
6 One of the Cheoah's toughest and longest rapids, Takeout commemorates the many boaters who have taken off the river early here. Takeout contains many large holes and boulders and can be scouted where the road turns away from the river.

Symbols	
[Hazard Area]	Hazard Area
[Play Area]	Play Area
[Photo Op]	Photo Op

(Mile 5.6)
Holy Rollers — Class IV [Photo Op]
7 Two very long and continuous back-to-back rapids ending in a large riverwide hole.

(Mile 5.1)
Middle Cheoah Yellow Creek Rapid. — Class IV [Photo Op]
8 Opening up considerably the middle rapids consist of about five miles of big pushy rapids similar to Gauley but much more continuous. Not as demanding as the tighter upper two miles, the middle section offers a larger riverbed with wider rapids and more routes through them.

(Mile 4.6)
Land of Holes — Class IV
9 One of the best parts of the Cheoah, the so-called Land of Holes is a three-quarter mile section of continuous Class IV whitewater with numerous holes, few eddies, and no breaks.

(Mile 3.7)
The Dead Sea — Class I
10 A large deadend pool marks one of the only patches of calm water on the entire run. The Dead Sea is in a righthand bend of the river.

(Mile 3.6)
The Easy Stuff — Class III
11 The next mile or so is mostly mellow non-stop class II-III read and run, with a few good class IIIs tossed in to keep you on your toes.

(Mile 1.9)
The Forest Service Bridge
12 The Forest Service Bridge starts the lower portion of the Cheoah. During the two-mile mad dash from here to the lake, rapids accelerate again, plunging through Bear Creek Rapid, a very long Class IV+ rapid.

(Mile 1.8)
Rod's Hole — Class III [Play Area] [Photo Op]
13 One of the best play spots on the entire river is about a quarter mile past the bridge offering a big eddy on river left and a river-wide wave.

(Mile 1.5)
Entrance to Bear Creek Rapid — Class IV+
14 The long entrance rapid to Bear Creek is nearly as difficult as the drop itself with steep waves, holes, and sharp rocks. Eddy right before the big drop.

(Mile 1.1)
Bear Creek Rapid (aka Big Uns) — Class IV+ [Photo Op]
15 Bear Creek Rapid is the longest and most demanding rapid on the river, lasting a half-mile. It starts with the Falls (aka Big Uns — a 12-foot waterfall), followed by a rocky slide, a large set of recirculating riverwide holes, ending in a wavetrain. Scout the entire set starting at the Falls on river right.

(Mile 0.7)
White Highway — Class IV+ [Photo Op]
16 A very steep stretch with lots of routes offer nearly a half-mile of continuous Class IV rapids with five or six defined drops stacked on top of each other.

(Mile 0.5)
Tapoco Lodge Rapid — Class IV [Play Area] [Photo Op]
17 The rapid alongside Tapoco Lodge is one of the river's best; it funnels into a great play spot almost parallel to the lodge.

(Mile 0.2)
The Gorge — Class IV [Photo Op]
18 Right after the river crosses under the bridge, it drops into a steep, beautiful mini-gorge before the lake with several Class IV rapids.

(Mile 0.4)
Yard Sale — Class IV [Play Area] [Photo Op]
19 The first rapid in the Gorge is Yard Sale. Right after the bridge can be found three large back-to-back holes with a large collection eddy at the bottom.

(Mile 0.0)
Calderwood Lake [Photo Op]
Take out on river right after a short 0.2 mile paddle across Calderwood Lake. [Photo Op]



Santeetlah Dam

