



Nestled in the heart of Western North Carolina, the charming town of Highlands is a true gem for anglers, boasting an incredible 2,200 miles of abundant waterways, all within an hour's drive. From meandering rivers to tranquil lakes and streams, this region offers an unparalleled fishing experience that keeps fishing enthusiasts coming back year-round.

Whether you are an avid trout angler or prefer chasing bass, catfish, or crappie, the waters surrounding Highlands offer a diverse range of fish species to target. But fishing in Highlands is about much more than just catching fish. It is a chance to immerse yourself in nature's embrace and find a serene place where there's only water, mountains, and the vast sky above. As you cast, you will feel the stress of daily life melt away, replaced by a sense of peace and connection with the natural world.

A highlight of the local fishing calendar is the annual 3 River Fly Fishing Festival which attracts anglers from all corners of the U.S. for a competitive trout fishing tournament. Beyond the competitive spirit, the festival fosters camaraderie among fellow enthusiasts and provides a chance to celebrate the art of fly fishing against the breathtaking backdrop of the surrounding natural beauty.

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (ncwildlife.org) diligently manages fishing seasons and enforces regulations regarding bait, size, and creel limits. Before embarking on your fishing adventure, remember to secure a North Carolina fishing license, which can easily be obtained online at goutdoorsnorthcarolina.com.

CHATOOGA RIVER

The upper Chattooga River above the Iron Bridge on Bull Pen Road is an easily accessible native trout stream that can be accessed by a trail beginning at the Iron Bridge and continuing along the river for approximately two miles upstream. Caution should always be used in wading this stream due to numerous deep holes and an abundance of boulders and shelf rocks. The Chattooga holds a good population of both Brown and Rainbow trout. As a native trout stream, regulations require single hook artificial lures only and four fish, seven-inch minimum limit.

Directions: Take Main Street, which becomes Horse Cove Road, and drive approximately four miles. The road is very windy, so care must be taken while driving. Here, the pavement ends and two gravel roads split. Take the right fork to get on Bull Pen Road. From here, it is approximately three miles to the parking area at the Iron Bridge.

CULLASAJA RIVER

The Cullasaja runs between Highlands and Franklin on Highway 64 West. It is a beautiful and scenic river full of waterfalls, deep pools, and slow glassy runs. The river is stocked with brook, brown, and rainbow trout, but browns and rainbows seem to be much of the stream born population. The area between Turtle Pond Bridge (approximately five miles from Highlands) and Gold Mine Bridge (approximately eight miles from Highlands) offers numerous pull-offs with easy access to the river. The Cullasaja should be waded with extreme caution around waterfalls and during high water times.

Directions: From Highlands take Highway 64 west toward Franklin.

DAVIDSON RIVER

The Davidson River is in the Pisgah National Forest, north of Brevard. It offers some of the best wild segments in the region. The area beneath Avery Creek is great for large brown trout.

Directions: From Cashiers, drive east on Highway 64 approximately 29 miles to Brevard. Continue through Brevard on Highway 64 to Highway 276 north, approximately 3.4 miles. Turn left onto Highway 276 and enter the Pisgah National Forest. The Davidson River parallels the left side of the road for approximately three miles.

LAKE GLENVILLE

Lake Glenville is a stunning 1,470-acre reservoir that came into existence in 1941 when the west fork of the Tuckaseegee River was dammed. Its depths mirror the surrounding mountains, with steep plunges just off the shoreline, reaching an impressive 80 feet or more. The lake comes alive in spring, offering a prime opportunity to reel in prized catches like walleye and bass, especially below the falls and around the rocky areas. As summer sets in, the best fishing experiences are to be had early in the day or during the late hours when the sun's intensity softens. Come fall, as the water cools, trout and walleye gracefully move shallower, inviting anglers to test their skills. Lake Glenville features two ADA fishing areas—Pine Creek and the Powerhouse Site—making it inclusive and enjoyable for all visitors, regardless of their abilities.

Directions: From Highlands head towards Cashiers on Highway 64 east. Once you reach the four-way light in Cashiers, turn left; the headwaters at Hurricane Creek are less than two miles on the left.

NANTAHALA RIVER

The Nantahala River, one of the "Top 100 Trout Streams in the U.S.," is a freestone river that is 52 miles from Highlands. It is stocked with brook, brown, and rainbow with brown and rainbows holding onto the stream born population. This is classic trout water full of runs, pools, and pocket water, which is great for the beginning fly angler to learn to read water. Nantahala also has wonderful hatches of both mayfly and caddis offering anglers great dry fly fishing in the spring and fall.

Directions: From Highlands take Highway 64 west to Franklin and turn left on Highway 441 south/64 west. Take Highway 64 west for six miles until you get to Old Murphy Road (across from Baptist Church) and turn right. Go down Old Murphy Road for 100 yards until you get to a small gas station then turn left on Wayah Road. Follow Wayah Road over the mountain and down the other side past Nantahala Lake until the road meets the river. There is a delayed harvest section of the river from October 1 through June 1, but it is on hatchery regulations the rest of the year.

PANTHERTOWN CREEK

The headwaters of the East Fork of the Tuckaseegee River and twenty miles of native brook trout streams, including Panthertown, Greenland, and Flat Creeks, wind through Panthertown Valley, which is known as the "Yosemite of the East" because



of its bowl shape and rocky bluffs. The streams are stained brown with tannic acid from leaves that fall into the water.

Directions: From Highlands take Highway 64 east for 12 miles. Turn left on Cedar Creek Road. Go 2.3 miles and turn right onto Breedlove Road.

TANASEE CREEK

Off Tanasee Creek Road, east of Tuckasegee, is a stretch of North Carolina water that shelters plenty of wild brown trout. Tanasee Creek, named one of the "Ten Best Places to Go Fly Fishing in the U.S." by Travel + Leisure, is found within the scenic Nantahala National Forest. The creek is one of 15 fly fishing spots accessed by the Western North Carolina Fly Fishing Trail (flyfishingtrail.com), the only designated fly-fishing trail in the U.S.

Directions: From Highlands take Highway 64 east to the traffic signal in Cashiers. Turn left on Highway 107. In approximately 14 miles turn right onto Highway 281, travel 21 miles to Tanasee Creek Road. Parking and access are available at the bridge on Tanasee Creek Road.

TUCKASEEGEE RIVER

The Tuckasegee or "Tuck" is the largest river in the Highlands-Cashiers area. This is a dam controlled river with power generation dams located on the east and west forks of the river upstream of the "delayed harvest" section. From October 1 through June 1, the six-mile section from Western Carolina University to Highway 441 in Dillsboro is stocked with large hatchery fish. During this period, the regulations are catch and release only. During early spring, 30 to 40 fish days are not unusual. From June 1 to October 1 normal general trout water regulations prevail allowing anglers to keep seven fish any size and quantities of fish decline quickly. Use caution as water levels may change at any time. For flow schedules, call Nantahala Power Company-Tuckasegee Flow at 866-332-5253.

Directions: From Highlands, take Highway 64 west toward Franklin 18 miles. Turn right on 441 north to bridge over Tuckasegee at Dillsboro. Take the first right past the bridge on River Road.



WHITEWATER RIVER

The Whitewater River above the Highway 281 bridge is accessible by several angler paths. The paths start out well defined but disappear quickly.

Directions: From Cashiers take Highway 107 south, go past the South Carolina State border. Approximately nine and a quarter miles south of Cashiers, one mile past the state line, you will come to Wigington Road (SC 413). There are several signs at the intersection. They read "Whitewater Falls 3 Mi.", "To Salem", "To SC 103". Turn left onto Wigington Road and drive two and a quarter miles to the stop sign at SC 130. Turn left and drive two miles to the bridge over the Whitewater River, approximately 0.8 miles past the entrance to Whitewater Falls. Park your vehicle at the bridge, there are pull-offs on both sides of the bridge. From the bridge, follow the angler trails down to the river.

To book a guided tour with an experienced angler, contact one of our local outfitters.

Brookings Anglers

273 Spring Street
Highlands, NC
brookingsonline.com
828-482-9444

Highland Hiker

601 Main Street
Highlands, NC
highlandhiker.com
828-526-5298

Family friendly fishing spots:

Cliffside Lake Recreation Area & VanHook Glade

14014 Highlands Road, Highlands, NC
gofindoutdoors.org | 828-526-5912
Stocked trout can be taken by bait, spinner, or fly for a small usage fee.

Harris Lake Park

1241 Leonard Street, Highlands, NC
highlandsnr.org | 828-526-3556
The lake contains a healthy population of bass, catfish, crappie, sunfish, white bass, and northern pike.

Highlands Outpost

7420 Dillard Road, Scaly Mountain, NC
highlandsoutpost.com | 828-526-3737
Stocked trout fishing. Gear provided.

Sapphire Valley Resort

100 Cherokee Trail, Sapphire, NC
sapphirevalley.com | 828-619-0097

Fairfield Lake is home to several fish species, including bass, catfish, bluegill, and crappie. Fishing gear is available to rent.



Help us preserve our waters. Please remember to leave no trace on your next fishing trip.



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