Wilderness.net's Linville Gorge Wilderness Fact Sheet

Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Linville Gorge Wilderness in 1964 and it now has a total of 11,651 acres. All of the wilderness is in North Carolina and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

Native Americans scalped explorers William Linville and his son in 1766, an unhappy ending for a family whose name is now associated with one of the most scenic river gorges in the eastern United States. From its headwaters high on Grandfather Mountain, the powerful Linville River patiently carves the rugged, steep-walled gorge that encloses it for approximately 12 miles. Within the gorge, the river drops a dramatic 2,000 feet before leveling out in the Catawba Valley. East of the gorge is Jonas Ridge; west is Linville Mountain. The gorge's rim extends 3,400 feet, compared to the river's average of 2,000 feet. Plant communities range from lichens and shrubs on the cliffs to laurel and rhododendron along the riverbanks. In some spots, the gorge shelters stands of virgin timber. Assorted odd rock formations along Jonas Ridge--Sitting Bear, Hawksbill, Table Rock, and the Chimneys--attract beginner, intermediate, and advanced rock climbers. With 39 miles of challenging trails, backpackers come to Linville Gorge in substantial numbers. If you want more solitude during your visit, go to the southern half of the Wilderness, south of Conley Cove Trail (1.35 miles) in the western portion and south of the Chimneys in the eastern portion. The rough northern section surrounding Brushy Ridge also receives few visitors. A large black bear population attracts hunters between late October and early January.

Leave No Trace

How to follow the seven standard Leave No Trace principles differs in different parts of the country (desert vs. Rocky Mountains). Click on any of the principles listed below to learn more about how they apply in the Linville Gorge Wilderness.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

For more information on Leave No Trace, Visit the Leave No Trace, Inc. website.
Area Management

The Linville Gorge Wilderness is part of the 111 million acre National Wilderness Preservation System. This System of lands provides clean air, water, and habitat critical for rare and endangered plants and animals. In wilderness, you can enjoy challenging recreational activities like hiking, backpacking, climbing, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, horse packing, bird watching, stargazing, and extraordinary opportunities for solitude. You play an important role in helping to "secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness" as called for by the Congress of the United States through the Wilderness Act of 1964. Please follow the requirements outlined below and use Leave No Trace techniques when visiting the Linville Gorge Wilderness to ensure protection of this unique area.

General Wilderness Prohibitions

Motorized equipment and equipment used for mechanical transport is generally prohibited on all federal lands designated as wilderness. This includes the use of motor vehicles, motorboats, motorized equipment, bicycles, hang gliders, wagons, carts, portage wheels, and the landing of aircraft including helicopters, unless provided for in specific legislation.

In a few areas some exceptions allowing the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport are described in the special regulations in effect for a specific area. Contact the Forest Service office or visit the websites listed below for more specific information.

These general prohibitions have been implemented for all national forest wildernesses in order to implement the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The Wilderness Act requires management of human-caused impacts and protection of the area's wilderness character to insure that it is "unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wilderness." Use of the equipment listed as prohibited in wilderness is inconsistent with the provision in the Wilderness Act which mandates opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation and that wilderness is a place that is in contrast with areas where people and their works are dominant.

Wilderness-Specific Regulations

Wilderness managers often need to take action to limit the impacts caused by visitor activities in order to protect the natural conditions of wilderness as required by the Wilderness Act of 1964. Managers typically implement 'indirect' types of actions such as information and education measures before selecting more restrictive measures. When regulations are necessary, they are implemented with the specific intent of balancing the need to preserve the character of the wilderness while providing for the use and enjoyment of wilderness.

The following wilderness regulations are in effect for this area. Not all regulations are in effect for every wilderness. Contact the Forest Service office or visit the websites listed on the 'Links' tab for more specific information about the regulations listed.

ALL VISITORS

-- Group size is limited to no more than 10 people per party.

-- Dogs must be under verbal control or leashed at all times.

-- Pack out all debris, garbage, or other waste.
OVERNIGHT VISITORS

-- Maximum length of stay is 14 days within any 30-day period.

-- Overnight permits required May 1st to October 31, Fri., Sat., and Holidays.

-- Camping is prohibited within 100 feet of streams.

STOCK USERS

-- No pack or saddle stock is allowed.

Wilderness Permit System

A wilderness permit system has been implemented for this wilderness. This involves a use-limiting permit system with quotas and reservations. Wilderness permit systems are implemented to collect information on use levels and patterns and as an education and information tool. Use-limiting systems are implemented after monitoring has determined that current use levels are resulting in unacceptable impacts to the resource and/or to the wilderness recreation experience. These systems help distribute visitor use throughout the season and help minimize crowded conditions at popular areas. People interested in visiting the Linville Gorge Wilderness should contact the national forest office or visit the websites listed below for more information about this permit system, which may vary by location or time of the year.

Contacts

Grandfather Ranger District
109 EAST LAWING DRIVE
NEBO, NC 28761

Phone: 828-652-2144

Links to Other Websites

National Forests in North Carolina Wilderness

Links on Wilderness.net

National, Regional and Local Wilderness Organizations (NGOs)
A listing of societies, organizations, coalitions and other wilderness-related advocacy and stewardship groups.

Career and Volunteer Opportunities
A listing of sites providing information about wilderness- and environmentally-related career and volunteer opportunities.

Applicable Wilderness Law(s)

| Law | Date | Acreage Change (in acres) |
Public Law 88-577    September 3, 1964    7,655
The Wilderness Act - Public law 88-577 (9/3/1964) To establish a National Wilderness Preservation System for the permanent good of the whole people, and for other purposes

Public Law 98-324    June 19, 1984    3,400
North Carolina Wilderness Act of 1984 - Public law 98-324 (6/19/1984) To designate certain public lands in North Carolina as additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System