

Cherokee NC visitors guide

Cherokee NC Visitors Guide: Nestled in the picturesque Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina, Cherokee is a vibrant town rich in Native American culture and history. As the homeland of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, this area offers visitors a unique blend of outdoor adventures, cultural experiences, and family-friendly attractions. Whether you are planning a weekend getaway or an extended vacation, this guide will provide you with all the essential information to make the most of your visit to Cherokee, NC.

Getting to Cherokee, NC

Cherokee is conveniently located near several major highways, making it easily accessible by car. The town is approximately:

- 50 miles from Asheville, NC
- 35 miles from Gatlinburg, TN
- 60 miles from Pigeon Forge, TN

If you're flying in, the nearest airport is Asheville Regional Airport (AVL), about an hour's drive away. Rental cars are available at the airport, and there are shuttle services that can take you directly to Cherokee.

Where to Stay

Cherokee offers a variety of accommodations to suit every traveler's needs. From luxurious resorts to budget-friendly motels, you can find the perfect place to rest your head after a day of exploring.

Hotels and Resorts

1. Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort: This upscale resort features an array of amenities, including a full-service casino, spa, and multiple dining options. The resort also offers a beautiful indoor pool and a fitness center.
2. Comfort Inn: Located near the entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, this hotel provides comfortable rooms and easy access to local attractions.
3. Cherokee Lodge: A more rustic option, this lodge offers cozy rooms with a mountain ambiance, perfect for those looking to immerse themselves in nature.

Campsites and Cabins

For those who enjoy the outdoors, Cherokee also has several campgrounds and cabin rentals:

- Smokemont Campground: Located within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, this campground offers breathtaking views and access to hiking trails.
- Cabins at Cherokee: Rent a cabin for a more private experience, with options ranging from luxurious to more basic accommodations.

Attractions and Activities

Cherokee is packed with attractions that showcase its rich history and stunning natural beauty. Here are some must-visit spots and activities:

Cultural Experiences

1. Museum of the Cherokee Indian: This award-winning museum provides an in-depth look at the history, culture, and traditions of the Cherokee people. Through interactive exhibits and artifacts, visitors can learn about the tribe's past and present.
2. Oconaluftee Indian Village: Step back in time at this living history museum, where you can witness traditional Cherokee crafts, storytelling, and dance performances. The village features artisans demonstrating pottery, basket weaving, and more.
3. Unto These Hills Outdoor Drama: This outdoor theater performance tells the story of the Cherokee people, their struggles, and their resilience. The show runs in the summer months and is a must-see for visitors interested in Cherokee heritage.

Outdoor Adventures

Cherokee is surrounded by the natural beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains, offering numerous outdoor activities:

- Hiking: The area boasts a variety of hiking trails suitable for all skill levels. The Oconaluftee Visitor Center is a great starting point for information on trails and maps.
- Fishing: The Oconaluftee River and nearby lakes provide excellent fishing opportunities. Make sure to obtain a fishing license if you plan to cast a line.
- Ziplining: For adrenaline seekers, several companies offer ziplining tours that let you soar through the treetops while enjoying stunning views of the mountains.

Family-Friendly Activities

Cherokee is a great destination for families, with plenty of activities to keep everyone entertained:

1. Cherokee Bear Zoo: This small zoo allows visitors to get up close and personal with black bears

and other animals native to the area. It's a fun and educational experience for children and adults alike.

2. Mini Golf: Enjoy a round of mini-golf at one of the local courses, which often include fun themes and challenging holes.

3. Cherokee Adventures: This adventure company offers a range of activities, including tubing, white-water rafting, and horseback riding, perfect for families looking to bond over thrilling outdoor experiences.

Dining in Cherokee

Cherokee has a diverse dining scene, offering everything from traditional Native American cuisine to modern American fare. Here are some notable restaurants to try:

- The Gathering Place: Known for its homestyle cooking, this restaurant serves up delicious Southern favorites, including fried chicken, catfish, and homemade desserts.
- Paul's Family Restaurant: A local favorite for breakfast, Paul's offers hearty portions and a friendly atmosphere.
- Brio Tuscan Grille: If you're in the mood for Italian, this restaurant provides a cozy setting with a great selection of pasta and pizza.

Shopping in Cherokee

No visit to Cherokee is complete without exploring its shopping options. Here are some places to consider:

- Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual: This cooperative showcases the work of Cherokee artisans, including handmade pottery, jewelry, and textiles. It's a great place to pick up unique souvenirs and support local artists.
- Cherokee Indian Reservation Shops: Various shops around the reservation sell Native American crafts, clothing, and gifts, offering a chance to bring home a piece of Cherokee culture.

Events and Festivals

Throughout the year, Cherokee hosts various events and festivals that celebrate its culture and community. Some popular events include:

- Cherokee Indian Fair: Held annually in October, this fair features traditional games, crafts, food, and performances, showcasing the vibrant culture of the Cherokee people.
- Ghost Town in the Sky: While it originally operated as an amusement park, it now hosts seasonal events and activities that celebrate the history and folklore of the area.

Planning Your Visit

To make the most of your trip to Cherokee, consider the following tips:

- **Best Time to Visit:** Spring and fall are particularly beautiful in Cherokee, offering mild weather and stunning foliage. However, summer is also popular for outdoor activities.
- **Stay Informed:** Check the official Cherokee tourism website for updates on events, attractions, and safety guidelines.
- **Respect the Culture:** As you explore Cherokee, remember to respect the local customs and traditions. Engaging with the community and learning about their culture is part of the experience.

Conclusion

Cherokee, NC, is a destination that offers a unique blend of cultural heritage and outdoor adventure. With its rich history, breathtaking landscapes, and welcoming community, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Whether you're hiking in the Smokies, learning about Cherokee history, or simply relaxing in a cozy cabin, this charming mountain town promises an unforgettable experience. Start planning your visit today, and immerse yourself in the rich tapestry of Cherokee culture and nature.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the top attractions to visit in Cherokee, NC?

Top attractions in Cherokee include the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, the Oconaluftee Indian Village, and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

What outdoor activities can visitors enjoy in Cherokee, NC?

Visitors can enjoy hiking, fishing, tubing, and zip lining, as well as exploring the scenic views in the Great Smoky Mountains.

Are there any cultural experiences available for visitors in Cherokee, NC?

Yes, visitors can experience traditional Cherokee culture through storytelling, dance performances, and workshops at the Oconaluftee Indian Village.

What is the best time of year to visit Cherokee, NC?

The best time to visit Cherokee is during the fall for the stunning foliage, but summer also offers great weather for outdoor activities and events.

Is there accommodation available in Cherokee, NC?

Yes, Cherokee offers a range of accommodations including hotels, cabins, and campgrounds to suit different preferences and budgets.

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