

NEWS RELEASE



*Where the Sun Rises
on the Smokies*

HAYWOOD COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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CELEBRATE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK
Only Minutes from America's Most-Visited Park, Haywood County Offers Ideal 'Base Camp' for Visit

HAYWOOD COUNTY, N.C. (JANUARY 28, 2009)—The Great Smoky Mountains National Park has a milestone to celebrate in 2009. America's most popular national park—with more than 9 million visitors annually—has been treating people from far and near to its natural splendor, serving as a magical scenic sanctuary and tranquil refuge, for 75 years. That warrants a party—all year long.

There's never been a better time to visit this gem of a national treasure, with special events and activities on tap each month in 2009, along with its usual menu of recreational opportunities, from exploring via foot (a hiker's paradise with 800 miles of trails) to touring by automobile (384 miles of road), from wildlife viewing to scenic photography expeditions.

And there's no better place to set up "base camp" than in Haywood County, North Carolina—located only a short drive from the park's main entrance and just minutes from one of its most unique and beautiful areas.

"Of course, our proximity to the national park makes Haywood County a natural gateway and an ideal spot for visitors to the park to stay," said Lynn Collins, executive director of the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority.

"But perhaps even more importantly, the options are numerous and wide-ranging when it comes to finding a suitable place to stay—whether it's for a weekend or a couple of weeks," Collins said. "No matter what type of lodging accommodations, no matter the desired amenities, no matter the budget, visitors will find exactly what they're looking for here in Haywood County."

In fact, Haywood County—encompassing the towns of Maggie Valley, Waynesville, Canton, Clyde, and Lake Junaluska—is home to more than 200 accommodations, from quaint bed and breakfasts in the heart of downtown to cozy cottages and cabins secluded from the hustle and bustle, from recognizable brand hotels to budget-friendly motels, from golf resorts to historic inns.

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So, during this historic year for this historic national park, take a few days to wake up each day where the sun rises on the Smokies. Then, take the short ride to Cataloochee Valley, a large portion of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park's eastern section located within Haywood County just north of Maggie Valley.

Cataloochee Valley is one of the most remote and most beautiful areas of the park, and a unique place to explore both the natural and cultural history of the Smokies. Once a populous settlement and mountain community prior to the establishment of the national park, Cataloochee Valley is perhaps now best known for elk, which were reintroduced in the valley in 2001 after disappearing from North Carolina in the late 1700s as a result of over-hunting and loss of habitat. Early morning and late evening are regarded as the best times for viewing the elk, or perhaps hearing them bugle (usually as they graze along the roads and in the meadows). Other wildlife, including black bear, white-tailed deer and wild turkeys, also roam the area, so cameras are highly recommended.

Cataloochee Valley is rich in history; with original homesteads still standing (tour a school, churches, a barn, and several homes), learn what life was like for early settlers of the area. There's also plenty of hiking, camping and fishing to be had here, so make sure a trip to Cataloochee Valley is on the itinerary while visiting during 2009 as the park and its neighboring communities remember the past and look to the future.

After a full slate of activities and adventure in the park, visitors are sure to have worked up quite an appetite—another reason Haywood County is the perfect vacation headquarters. With more than 100 restaurants, featuring just about every cuisine imaginable, even the most discerning palates will be pleased.

“From our friendly people to the wide array of accommodations and restaurants, Haywood County is a host visitors won't soon forget,” Collins said. “And if, during their stay, they exhaust all the possibilities inside the park, they'll be only minutes from dozens of entertaining attractions in Haywood County: gun fights and rides at Ghost Town in the Sky theme park, great shops and cafés in downtown Waynesville, and 46-miles of breathtaking scenery along the Blue Ridge Parkway—to name a few.”

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Haywood County, North Carolina, “Where the Sun Rises on the Smokies,” is 554 scenic square miles of spectacular country, with beautiful mountains and valleys dotting the landscape. More than a dozen of its mountain peaks soar to elevations of at least 6,000 feet (more than any east of the Mississippi River), and the county is one of the highest, with a mean elevation of 3,600 feet, east of the Rockies. One of its most notable mountain peaks is Cold Mountain—the basis for the award-winning, best-selling novel by Charles Frazier and the ensuing 2003 major motion picture—at 6,030 feet. The county sits at the western edge of the state, with the Blue Ridge Parkway running along its southwestern border. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Pisgah National Forest are located in the northern section of the county. Call 800.334.9036 to request a Media Guide, or visit www.smokeymountains.net for more information about the Great Smoky Mountains National Park's 75th Anniversary and all that Haywood County has to offer, from accommodations to restaurants to attractions.