

Southeast



The Nantahala Outdoor Center

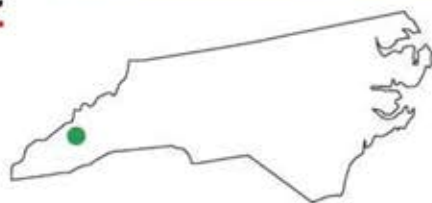


Dawn on Clingmans Dome

Bryson City, NC

▲ Call it the anti-Gatlinburg. Where Great Smoky Mountains National Park's most famous gateway overflows with the mini-golf crowd, this sneak-route entrance is all about sandals-and-trucker-hat-types playing in the nearby Smokies and Nantahala National Forest. "There's a practically unlimited number of trails," says Ben King, co-owner of Bryson City Outdoors. "Everybody in this community takes advantage."

Why You're Here For the locals-only Smokies experience, head to the Deep Creek area, right in Bryson City's backyard. Check it out on a 46.6-mile loop, following Deep Creek, Pole Road Creek, and Noland Divide Trails to 6,644-foot Clingmans Dome for the park's highest views. Then trace the Forney Creek, Springhouse Branch, and Noland Creek Trails to return along Deep Creek. **Trailhead** Deep Creek **Permit** Required; \$4/person per night **Contact** nps.gov/grsm



On the Town

PERK Start your day at Mountain Perks. "Their slogan is 'Hippies always welcome,'" says King. "You'll always be welcome there, no matter what you smell like." 9 Depot St.

PUB The Nantahala Brewing Company gives neighboring hipster hotspot Asheville a run for its beer money with an outdoor patio, barrel-aged brews, and raucous live music acts. 61 Depot St.

TREAT Dig into sundaes, shakes, and scoops at the '50s-style Soda Pop's Ice Cream Parlor. 125 Everett St.

GEAR It stocks plenty of hiking supplies, but it's not really fair to call the Nantahala Outdoor Center a gear shop—what's the best word for a gear shop/whitewater rafting outfitter/live music venue/BBQ joint/hiker bunkhouse/AT thru-hiker rite of passage? 13077 W. Hwy. 19



Bear Rocks Preserve in the Dolly Sods



The Purple Fiddle

Davis & Thomas, WV

◀ Come for the trails, stay for the Southern hospitality. "The funky old ski towns are really social places," says Brent Carminati, a volunteer hiking leader for the area's Sierra Club chapter. And though the Monongahela National Forest's unique upland bogs and scraggy cliffs are no secret to mid-Atlantic backpackers, Davis and Thomas, just 3 miles apart, remain up-and-coming outdoor meccas for now, says Driftland Ski & Sport owner Ian Beckner.

Why You're Here The Dolly Sods Wilderness is more than the sum of its parts: Here, wide-open meadows, stony outcrops, soggy fens, and mossy boreal forests combine to form a one-of-a-kind ecosystem. And a three-day, 24-mile loop circling the entire wilderness tours it all. From the Bear Rocks Trail on the north side, trace Rocky Ridge to the expansive views at Lions Head, then swing north to Red Creek Canyon. **Trailhead** Bear Rocks **Permit** None **Contact** fs.usda.gov/mnf



On the Town

PERK Head to Thomas and choose between the rotating menu of pancake specials at Flying Pigs. 158 E Ave., Thomas, WV

PUB The Purple Fiddle in Thomas will scratch pretty much every post-trip itch you have: cheesy sandwiches, 50-plus microbrews, ice cream cones, and a never-ending roster of top-notch bluegrass and folk acts—and a cheap hostel bed to crash in if you have too good a time. 96 E Ave., Thomas, WV

SEE Hike a .3-mile boardwalk and watch a five-story waterfall spill into a tight gorge at Blackwater Falls State Park, a scant 3-mile drive from downtown Davis. 1584 Blackwater Lodge Rd., Davis, WV