

# Trails

**Forest Service Roads** There are many USFS roads in Western NC that offer old wide roadbeds for riding. Most are uphill out and downhill back. These trails are wide so the difficulty rating is based on the amount and steepness of climbing. We've included six of the area's favorite Forest Service roads.

1. **Fontana Village** (Moderate to Difficult) Nearly 20 miles of rooty, rocky trails with some very steep sections. The most technical trail system west of Asheville. There are three loops but lots of ways to create your own route. Located on Hwy 28, half a mile west of Fontana Dam.
2. **Santeetlah Lake Trail** (Easy) Fifteen miles of mostly double track loop trails winding through the peaceful woods along the shores of Lake Santeetlah. West of Robbinsville at the intersection of NC-143 and Snowbird Rd.
3. **Hanging Dog** (Moderate) Approx. 10 miles of predominately old logging roads with some single track sections connecting them. Expect plenty of climbing and steep descents. From Murphy take Joe Brown Hwy for 5 miles to Hanging Dog Campground.
4. **Jackrabbit** (Easy to Moderate) Nestled along the shores of Lake Chatuge, Jackrabbit is a great trail for all riders. Well marked and relatively flat and smooth it appeals to families and novice riders. However, the faster you ride this twisty, curvy trail system the more technical it becomes which makes it great for more advanced riders as well. Near Hayesville, take NC-175 south off US-64 and follow signs to Jackrabbit Mountain.
5. **Stecoah Gap** (Easy to Moderate) 8 miles. A mild and beautiful ride showcasing spring wildflowers and cool summer temperatures. Be sure to stay on the wide trail beyond the Forest Service gate. Bicycles are not permitted on the Appalachian Trail (AT). Located at the AT crossing on NC-143.
6. **Meeting House Mountain** (Moderate) 15 miles. You'll find a beautiful lake view at the end of this rolling Forest Service road system. The paved hill to the start is steep but worth the effort. Approx. 4 miles east of Stecoah off NC-28 N.
7. **Flint Ridge Trail** (Moderate to difficult) 5 miles. Start with 9 switchbacks up the steep face of Nantahala Gorge. Nice views of the Nantahala River on top, ending with a fairly steep downhill ride. Located on US-19/74 at the Nantahala Outdoor Center.
8. **Cheoah Bald** (Moderate to Difficult) 12 miles. This is a deeply wooded ride on a dirt road. The only sounds you'll hear will be the wind in the trees and your heart thudding in your chest. It's pretty steep! Take Ledbetter Rd. off US-129 near Topton.
9. **Tsali** (Moderate) Tsali is the mecca for mountain biking in the east. Consisting of four well-marked loop trails there are a total of 42 miles of fun, flowy single-track. Two trails are open each day for mountain biking, and two for horseback riding. Check the signs at the trailhead for bike use schedule. \$2 per person trail use fee. 12 miles west of Bryson City off NC-28 N.
10. **Upper Shell Stand** (Moderate) 12 miles. Expect an isolated, but pleasant ride with varying degrees of roadbed overgrowth, depending on the season. Off NC-28 N west of Almond; take Panther Creek Rd. to Shell Stand.

11. **Calf Pen Gap** (Moderate) 10 miles. This is a packed gravel roadway with some extensive views of the surrounding mountains. Expect a moderate 5 mile climb and a fast return. Across from the entrance of Tsali off NC-28 N.
12. **GSMNP Deep Creek** (Easy to Moderate) At the Deep Creek entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park you will find two beautiful mixed use trails that are popular for family riding because of the wide trails, clear streams and picturesque waterfalls. Pack a picnic and make a day of it. Three miles from downtown Bryson City, take West Deep Creek Rd into GSMNP.
13. **Fire Mountain Trail System** (Moderate) 10.5 miles of smooth, machine cut trail with sections ranging from beginner to advanced. Solid climbs are rewarded with curvy, flowing descents. Trailhead is at the Oconaluftee Indian Village in Cherokee.
14. **GSMNP Oconaluftee River Trail** (Easy) One of the few flat trails in the area. Start at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center for a 3-mile out and back ride that follows the river into the town of Cherokee. Located on US-441 a mile north of the terminus of the Blue Ridge Parkway in Cherokee.
15. **Western Carolina University Trails** (Moderate) What this gem of a single-track system lacks in length it makes up for in climbing. Expect a smooth, well-groomed trail with plenty of lung-busting climbs and curvy descents. 9 miles total. Located on the WCU campus on NC-107 in Cullowhee. Park at the picnic area behind the softball complex to access the trailhead.
16. **Moses Creek** (Moderate to Difficult) 20 miles. Motorists are permitted, but infrequent on this curving, climb through hardwood forests that end at the Wayehutta ATV course. The 10 mile climb is worth the long coast back. From NC-107 in Cullowhee take Caney Fork to Moses Creek Rd and follow to the Forest Service gate.
17. **Panther town** (Easy to Moderate) Panther town Valley provides some of the most stunning scenery in the area. Trails range from easy to challenging so you'll want to plan before you head out. Tips: 1.) You'll want to take a map. 2.) The trails are in a valley so you'll have a one mile descent from any direction. Keep enough energy for the climb back out. From US-64 in Cashiers take Cedar Creek to Breedlove Rd to get to the west entrance.

**BRYSON CITY**  
North Carolina  
Map Courtesy  
Swain County  
Chamber of Commerce

