

YOUR ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

# Fontana Lake

EXPLORE

**BRYSON CITY**

— *North Carolina* —

[ExploreBrysonCity.com](https://ExploreBrysonCity.com)



# Fontana Lake

Fontana Lake is a unique recreational gem in the North Carolina Smoky Mountains. This unspoiled, scenic lake is 29 miles long and includes more than 240 miles of remote shoreline, much of it bordering Great Smoky Mountains National Park and National Forest land. The result is exceptional recreation for boating, fishing, and paddling on the lake, and for hiking and mountain biking on lakeside trails, some traversing deep into the mountains! Cheoah Lake is a smaller gem, just below Fontana Dam, to add even more options to your adventures.



## Fishing

Fontana Lake and its tributary rivers and streams are an angler's paradise. Fontana Lake, at over 400 feet deep, boasts incredibly diverse fish populations - including walleye, muskie, spotted bass, smallmouth bass, rock bass, bluegill, catfish, and yellow perch. Bass tournaments attract anglers nationwide. Fishing access includes ample public boat ramps and private marinas. Hire expert guides or go DIY - let's go fishing!

## Boating

Make it a day or a week of fun at Fontana Lake, and also nearby Cheoah Lake, below Fontana Dam. Diverse watercraft are available for rent or (dock your own) from various marinas and outfitters servicing the lake. Jetskis, motor boats, touring kayaks, pontoon boats - what's your style? See the map and outfitter list for all your options!

# *Kayak and SUP*

Paddle your way around Fontana or Cheoah Lake for active fun and incredible mountain vistas! These lakes are perfect for beginners or experienced paddlers alike. Rent or bring your own recreational kayak or stand up paddleboard. Paddle for an hour, a day, or a multi-day camping trip along the distant shores by the national park. So many options! A favorite “park and play” spot for family fun to paddle, swim, and picnic is the Fingerlake Day Use area, pictured at left, is open April 1 - October 31, and only minutes from Bryson City. It’s a cut off section of the lake with no power boats allowed. See the outfitters offering paddle rentals and tours in the providers list!



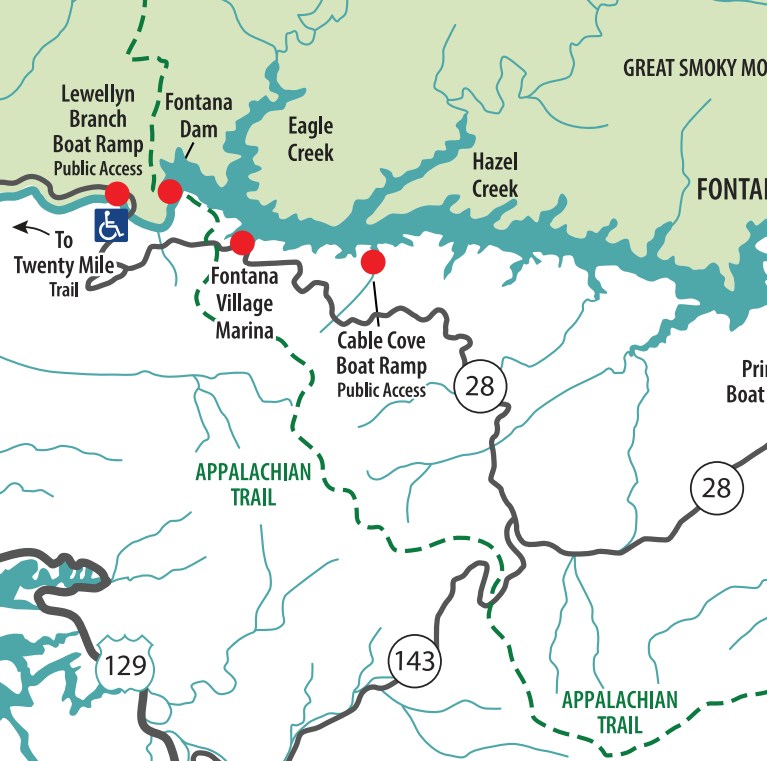
# *Tsali Recreation Area*

The Tsali Trails are rated one of the top 10 places to mountain bike in the USA!

Nestled along Fontana Lake’s shoreline, Tsali attracts thousands of riders to its flowy, 42 mile network of multi-use trails. Mountain bikers, horseback riders, trail runners, and hikers love this trail system. A campground is right there at the entrance to the trails, and a boat ramp serves double use for boaters, paddlers, and bikers who often ride right into the refreshing waters to cool off and clean their bikes!

# *Driving Tours & Motorcycling*

The scenic backroads along Fontana Lake and Cheoah Lake offer renowned cruising. Routes like the scenic Hellbender 28 section along Cheoah Lake and the famous curves of the Tail of the Dragon, just past Fontana Dam, offer something for everyone.



## Outfitters

**Bryson City Outdoors**  
[brysoncityoutdoors.com](http://brysoncityoutdoors.com)

**Carolina Bound Adventures**  
[carolinaboundadventures.com](http://carolinaboundadventures.com)

**Fly Fishing the Smokies**  
[flyfishingthesmokies.net](http://flyfishingthesmokies.net)

**Fontana Guides**  
[fontanaguides.com](http://fontanaguides.com)

**Mac Brown Fly Fishing**  
[macbrownflyfish.com](http://macbrownflyfish.com)

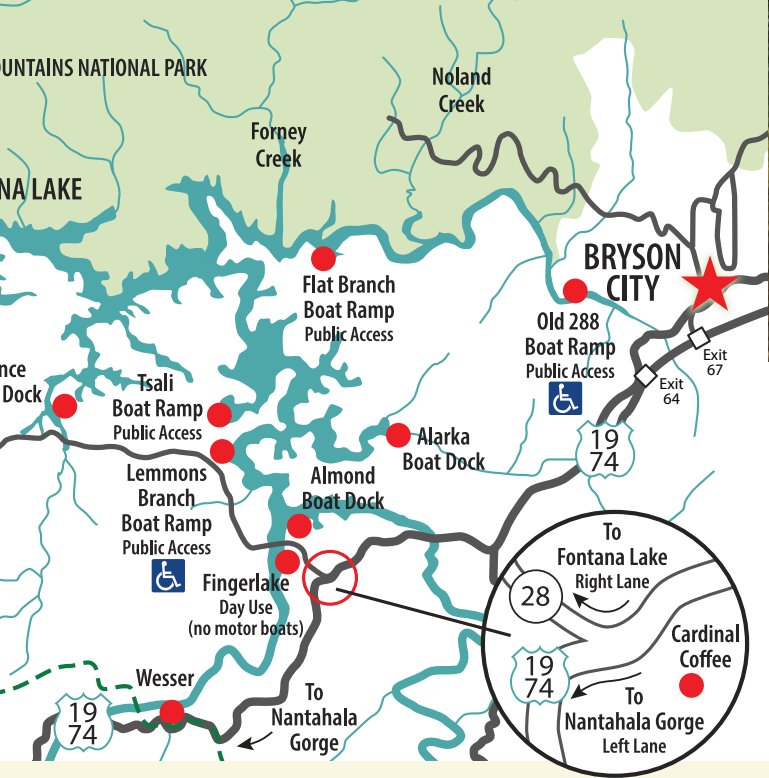
**Nantahala Outdoor Center**  
[noc.com](http://noc.com)

**Root Hog Fly Fishing**  
[fontanafishingguide.com](http://fontanafishingguide.com)

**Smoky MTN Outdoors  
Unlimited**  
[smokymountainoutdoorsunlimited.com](http://smokymountainoutdoorsunlimited.com)

**Sunny Day Adventure Co.**  
[sunnydayadventures.com](http://sunnydayadventures.com)





## *Dining*

Cardinal Coffee

Fontana Village - Mountview Bistro & Wildwood Grill

## *Marinas & Boat Rentals*

Alarka Boat Dock

Almond Boat Dock

Fontana Village Marina

Prince Boat Dock







## Attractions

- Great Smoky Mountains Railroad
- Fontana Dam and Visitor Center
- Stecoah Valley Cultural Arts Center
- Yellow Branch Cheese

## Boat Ramps

Alarka Marina  
Almond Boat Park  
Cable Cove  
Fingerlake Day Use Area  
(Open April-October, no powerboats)  
Flat Branch  
Fontana Marina  
Lemmons Branch  
Lewellyn Branch  
Old Highway 288  
Prince Boat Dock  
Tsali Boat Access Ramp





Exploring Fontana Dam is a must! This engineering marvel built by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is the highest dam in the eastern United States. Visitors can walk, bike, or drive across the top and enjoy incredible views. A large grassy picnic area below the dam is perfect for outings.

## *Fontana Lake Levels*

Fontana Dam created Fontana Lake, and the TVA controls the lake levels. The lake is typically full in the summer and gets drawn down each fall for winter & spring flood control. No matter what the lake level is - fishing and boating are outstanding year-round. It's also fun to explore the submerged road and towns that become visible at low levels. The Appalachian Trail crosses at Fontana Dam.

## *Visiting Fontana Dam*

Fontana Dam is a scenic 32 mile drive west of Bryson City, via US 74 and NC 28 North. The Fontana Dam Visitor Center is open daily April through October. The self-guided dam observation deck and lake public access ramps are open year-round.



## *War History*

Dam construction began in 1942 to meet the urgent need for electric power for aluminum production during World War II. TVA purchased 68,292 acres of land - including existing towns and forests that had to be cleared. The revolutionary dam design required unique engineering. The dam was finished in a record 3 years in January 1945. Nearby Fontana Village Resort was originally the housing site for the Fontana Dam workers. Learn more at [ExploreBrysonCity.com](http://ExploreBrysonCity.com)

# Fontana Lake

Atlanta, GA - 3 hours  
Charlotte, NC - 3 hours 15 minutes  
Asheville, NC - 1 hour 20 min  
Knoxville, TN - 2 hour 20 min  
Chattanooga, TN - 2 hour 30 min  
Nashville, TN - 4 hours 30 min  
Greenville, SC - 2 hour 20 min  
Orlando, FL - 9 hours and 10 min

For more information about Fontana Dam, Bryson City, and Swain County including lodging, dining, shopping, activities, attractions, events, and more visit  
[ExploreBrysonCity.com](https://ExploreBrysonCity.com)



Swain County Tourism Development Authority  
PO Box 85  
2 Everett Street  
Bryson City, NC 28713