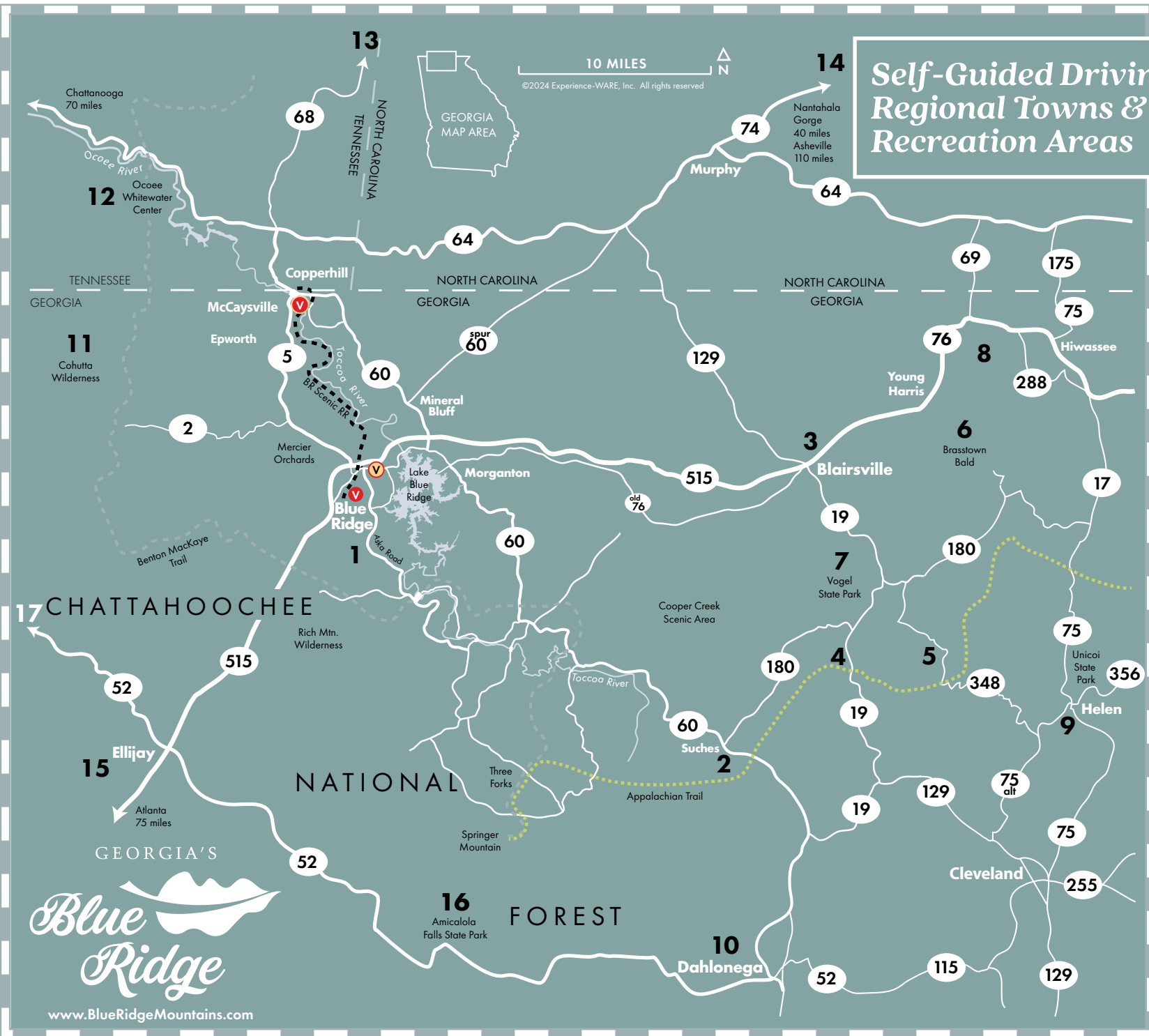


Self-Guided Driving Tours: Regional Towns & Outdoor Recreation Areas

10 MILES
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#2 Self-Guided Driving Tours: Regional Towns & Outdoor Recreation Areas

1 Aska Adventure Area – Toccoa River, Aska Road is one of Blue Ridge's most scenic drives, following the Toccoa River past the Stanley Rapids and historic Shallowford Bridge. The Aska Adventure Area is a hiking and biking trail system 17 miles in length and open year-round. From the start of Aska Road in Blue Ridge go 4.4 miles to the trailhead for the Deep Gap portion of the Aska Trails (2,200 feet elevation). Another trailhead is located 1.5 miles from Deep Gap on Shady Falls Road.

2 Suches, Suches, the highest "community" in the state called "the Valley Above the Clouds." Elevation in "downtown" Suches is 3,000 feet, according to Bill's Guide to Suches. The drive on Hwy 60 south from Morganton to Suches combines some of the prettiest views of the countryside with curvy mountain roads and lots of roadside attractions, including the historic Skeenah Mill, Swinging Bridge on the Toccoa River, Chattahoochee National Fish Hatchery, Deep Hole Recreation Area and Coopers Creek Recreation Area.

3 Blairsville, The town of Blairsville was established in 1835. Stretch your legs at Meeks Park, a one-of-a-kind recreation area with picnic tables, playgrounds, splash pad, walking trails and 18-hole disc golf course. Take a trip to the town square and visit the historic Union County Courthouse (1899). At the Logan Mill Store on the square you can purchase locally milled flour, pancake mix and grits. The square is dotted with specialty shops and some good places to eat. The Blairsville Farmer's Market is one of the best in the mountains, open seasonally on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

4 Blood Mountain – Walasi-Yi Interpretive Center, A historic stone structure completed by the CCC in 1937 marks the only covered portion of the Appalachian Trail. On site is the Mountain Crossings outfitter, an outdoor retailer and Appalachian Trail gift shop.

5 Richard Russell Scenic Highway, Surrounded by the beauty of the Chattahoochee National Forest, this 40.6-mile national byway winds through the valleys and mountain gaps of the southern Appalachians in Georgia. From the vistas atop Brasstown Bald to the cooling mists of waterfalls, scenic wonders fill this region. Hike the Appalachian Trail or fish in a cool mountain stream. Enjoy spectacular views of the mountains and piedmont. Several scenic overlooks and interpretive signs are features of this route.

6 Brasstown Bald, Rising 4,784 feet above sea level is Georgia's highest point atop Brasstown Bald. The visitor center has exhibits on Georgia history, geology and the natural world. A spectacular 360 degree view from the top provides vistas across four states. Combine with a ride on the Russell-Brasstown National Scenic Byway as it winds through southern Appalachian hills and valleys.

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7 Vogel State Park - Located at the base of Blood Mountain in the Chattahoochee National Forest, is one of Georgia's oldest and most popular state parks, Vogel has a 22-acre lake, swimming beach, pedal boats, cottages, campsites and a stepping stone waterfall, Trahyta Falls, that falls 40 feet. Hikers can choose from a variety of trails.

8 Young Harris – Hiawassee, Young Harris is home of the scenic Crane Creek Vineyards and Brasstown Valley Resort and Spa. Hiawassee is located beautiful Lake Chatuge; rent a pontoon, ski boat, jet ski, canoe or kayak at the Ridges Resort for an afternoon of fun on the water. Hiawassee is the home of the Georgia Mountain Fair; check their calendar for concerts and events.

9 Alpine Helen, Visit Georgia's Alpine village for a taste of Bavaria in a mountain setting. Plus Nora Mill Granary and Habersham Vineyards, along with lots of shops and eateries. Nearby is Unicoi State Park & Lodge and Smithgall Woods State Park.

10 Dahlonega, Home of gold mines and wineries, the town square is home of the Dahlonega Gold Museum State Historic Site. Mine for gold at the Crisson or Consolidated mines, or visit some of the best wineries in the mountains.

11 Cohutta Wilderness, With more than 40,000 acres in Georgia and Tennessee (where its known as Big Frog Wilderness Area), the Cohuttas comprise the largest wilderness east of the Mississippi. The Cohutta Mountains are part of the oldest known mountains in the world.

12 Ocoee Whitewater Center/Scenic Byway, Even if you don't want to go whitewater rafting, scenic U.S. Hwy 64 through the gorge offers many photographic opportunities and there are swimming holes and picnic areas. Great hiking and biking trails for families, including a one-mile hiking trail (paved/wood) which crosses a 330-foot suspension bridge and circles the center. This trail is entirely stroller friendly and accessible for those who are physically challenged.

13 Cherohala Skyway, From Tellico Plains, Tenn. to Robbinsville, N.C. Winding through scenery that rivals the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Cherohala Skyway crosses through the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests, providing spectacular mile-high vistas and brilliant fall foliage.

14 Nantahala River & Gorge, Follow Highway 19/74 through the Nantahala Gorge along the Nantahala River. There are lots of places to stop and picnic, watch the whitewater rafting and stick your toe in the water. The Gorge is also the home of the Nantahala Outdoor Center, which provides whitewater rafting, a shop and restaurants, whitewater instruction and other adventure activities. Several other rafting outfitters operate in the area, including

Wildwater Limited.

15 Ellijay, Ellijay's quaint square is lined with historic buildings and charming shops, along with lots of places to eat. Ellijay is known for apples and wineries, and is home to Cartecay, Chateau Meichtry and Engelheim wineries.

16 Amicalola Falls, About 21 miles from Ellijay on Hwy 52 is Amicalola Falls, a spectacular 729 foot falls. Gorgeous scenery and hiking trails make Amicalola Falls State Park & Lodge one of Georgia's most popular state parks. Amicalola Falls is the tallest cascading waterfall east of the Mississippi. Visitors have choices on how to best view the tumbling waters, ranging from an accessible pathway, to a challenging trail with staircases. Those who tackle the latter can join the park's Canyon Climbers Club. An 8.5-mile trail leads from the park to Springer Mountain, the southern end (and starting point for northbound through hikers) of the 2,175-mile Appalachian Trail. Numerous other trails provide shorter day hikes.

17 Fort Mountain, A curvy mountainous scenic drive on Highway 52 from Ellijay over Fort Mountain will lead you to Fort Mountain State Park. Cool off at the lakeside beach or hike to a stone fire tower built by the CCC. Explore an ancient rock wall 855 feet long thought to have been built by early native Americans.

A Word to the Wise ... GPS and cellphones do not work reliably here, please don't rely upon them. Be prepared for wilderness and carry the 10 Essentials (wiki or Google it). When driving on USFS gravel roads we recommend a 4WD vehicle. See the USFS web site at www.fs.fed.us/conf/. The law of the forest is "leave no trace". See www.LNT.org for info. Please pack in all you will need and pack out all your trash. If you build a fire, never leave it unattended. Use good judgment when hiking, particularly around waterfalls where rocks are often wet, moss covered and slippery. If hiking during hunting season, wear a brightly colored vest. Carry a copy of Trails Illustrated Map #777, available at the Visitor Centers.



Main Visitor Center: 152A Orvin Lance Drive, Blue Ridge, GA 30513 1-800-899-MTNS

Downtown Visitor Center: 282 West Main St., Blue Ridge

Downtown McCaysville Visitor Center: 53 East Market St.

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