



Forest Service

Cherokee National Forest

2800 Ocoee Street N.

Cleveland, TN 37312

Web: <http://fs.usda.gov/cherokee>

News Release



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Cherokee National Forest Eclipse Information

Things to know before you plan to go.

CLEVELAND, TENN, August 10, 2017 – On August 21, 2017, a total solar eclipse will obscure the sun along a path that crosses the U.S. from Oregon to South Carolina. Depending on location, the sun will be completely blocked out for a maximum of 2 minutes 40 seconds.

In east Tennessee, the 70 mile wide path of totality passes over the southern portion of the Cherokee National Forest (Tellico and Ocoee Ranger Districts) at approximately 2:30 PM. The path of totality — or where viewers can see the sun completely eclipsed is expected to be of great interest to a significant number of people from near and far.

Much of the Cherokee National Forest is remote and rugged, and the environment is much different than in urban areas. High clearance vehicles are recommended for many roads in the national forest. Several locations outside of developed recreation areas that may seem suitable for viewing the eclipse in the Cherokee National Forest may have environmental or road access concerns associated with them.

Many of these locations have rough dirt/gravel roads leading to them with limited access, parking, crowd capacity, restricted traffic flow and no sanitation facilities or water. National forest visitors should expect many locations to be heavily visited and congested. Planning your visit ahead of time may help make it safer and more enjoyable.

Forest Service officials remind visitors to use extreme caution when driving and parking, and pay close attention to other vehicles, pedestrians, and bikers that will be sharing the roads. Plan to arrive early at your destination so that you can park safely and legally.

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The goal is for national forest visitors to have a safe and enjoyable experience. To ensure safety, roadways must be kept clear for emergency vehicle use. As you travel on national forest roads, keep in mind that there has to be enough space for fire trucks and ambulances to get up and down roads in case of an emergency.

Parking is not allowed in or on roads. Be very careful not to impede the flow of traffic. Parking along national forest roads is very limited. When parking on a roadside, be aware of unseen obstacles such as rocks, limbs and ditches. Be mindful of the natural resources along narrow road shoulders.

Popular areas will likely meet capacity early in the day, and visitors may be directed elsewhere. Forest Service management is focused on public safety and protecting natural and cultural resources. It will be necessary to control traffic and parking, as well as restrict vehicle access to some areas. The Cherokee National Forest web site provides an array of eclipse information including areas where vehicle access will be restricted - <https://www.fs.usda.gov/cherokee/>

Plan your visit in advance and know what to expect before you arrive. Remote locations outside of developed recreation areas have limited access and parking, restricted traffic flow, and no facilities or potable water. Cell phone service can be limited or unavailable and GPS units are often unreliable in the national forest.

Developed campgrounds in the Ocoee and Tellico Ranger Districts on the reservation system are booked for the weekend of the eclipse. There are some first come first served campsites and they are expected to fill up several days before the eclipse. Dispersed camping outside of developed campgrounds is allowed throughout the Cherokee National Forest unless posted otherwise. Camping is not allowed within 100 feet of water, trails, trailhead parking lots and developed recreation areas, or within 300' of the Cherohala Skyway and the Ocoee Scenic Byway (National Forest System Road 77). Dispersed camping is free and no permits are required.

Remember to be prepared for the unexpected. The eclipse is expected to have impacts on highways, gasoline supplies and other basic needs. Bring plenty of water, food, sunscreen, insect repellent, extra clothing, first aid kit, a map and anything else you might need to help make your visit safer and more enjoyable. Check local weather forecasts periodically and don't forget your solar eclipse viewing glasses.

Forest Supervisors Office – Cleveland: 423-476-9700
Ocoee Ranger District – Benton: 423-338-3300
Tellico Ranger District – Tellico Plains: 423-253-8400
Unaka Ranger District – Greeneville: 423-638-4109
Watauga Ranger District –Unicoi: 423-735-1500

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