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CHEROKEE MEDIA KIT

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## ALL ABOUT CHEROKEE: A MEDIA RESOURCE GUIDE

To get the clearest picture of Cherokee and its abundant attractions, it's best to start with some background about the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. So, we begin our media resource guide with brief sections on our Tribe's history and traditions, modern day Cherokee, and the responsibilities we take very much to heart.

These initial background sections will be followed by a detailed listing of key attractions and amenities offered in the Cherokee area, along with specific links and, where possible, persons you can contact to learn more. This information is designed to help you write your story and we're here to help any way we can.

### The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians: Traditions, Stewardship

**Background:** The Cherokee people have lived in the Southeastern United States for more than 11,000 years. Our people were known as the Aniyunwiyah or the Principal People. We are also known as the Anikituwahgi People or the people from Kituwah. Kituwah is the first village of the Cherokee which is adjacent to the Tuckasegee River not far from the present day Qualla Boundary. Pre-contact Cherokee population estimates the Cherokee at 50,000 who lived over a range of 140,000 square miles in what is now parts of seven southern states.

Our people first encountered Europeans during DeSoto's expedition in 1540, which led to period of devastating disease, war and, eventually, giving up land to European colonizers. The present day Eastern Band, some 15,000 enrolled tribal members, consists of descendants of Cherokee people who survived the infamous "Removal" (also known as "The Trail of Tears") in 1839, during which thousands perished.

**Life ways:** The Cherokee people lived in villages along the broad river valleys of the southern Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains. We were an agricultural people who gathered wild food and kept farms of corn, beans, and squash.

Cherokee villages varied in size with some as large as 60 homes centered around a large council house. The central plaza was used for public events and the council house held the population of the village to conduct business in a democratic form of government.



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Cherokee hunters sought deer, bear, other small game, turkeys and other small birds and fished the rivers and streams. They controlled hunting grounds in the highlands and maintained hunting camps there throughout the year.

**Social structure:** Historically, the tribe is organized into seven clans of familial organization. They are the Bird, Deer, Wolf, Blue, Long Hair, Wild Potato and Paint. Familial ties and clan affiliations came through Cherokee women who owned the houses and fields and passed them on to their daughters.

Of the 15,000 enrolled members of the EBCI, about 8,000 live on the Qualla Boundary in western North Carolina with the town of Cherokee the governmental center.

**Preserving our language:** Today, there are a few hundred tribal members who continue to speak Cherokee and with this number diminishing through the years, we have worked diligently to resurrect and preserve our native language:

- The Kituwah Language Academy is a tribal total immersion school that instructs children from infancy to fifth grade in the Cherokee Language.
- Tribal Cherokee language experts, in cooperation with colleagues in the Cherokee Nation, are also hard at work translating English language texts and other materials, including films, into our Native language.
- Cherokee Central Schools, the tribe's public school system, integrates language, arts and crafts, and Cherokee history into the curriculum.
- Western Carolina University has a Cherokee Studies program with both Cherokee language and Cherokee History courses and works to develop Cherokee language teachers for Cherokee Schools.
- Recently, the North Carolina General Assembly enacted legislation allowing college foreign language credit for students taking Cherokee language courses in the state.

**Artistic expression:** The Cherokee people are renowned for their artistic expression, which takes many forms: Basketry, pottery, bead working, wood and stone carving, dance, singing and storytelling have traditionally played important roles in Cherokee life.



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- The Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual, Inc. is a Cherokee-operated artists' cooperative formed in 1946 to help secure fair prices and provide a year-round market for Eastern Band members. All of the art created by the approximately 300 Cherokee artists that make up the Qualla Mutual is handmade and contemporary artists blend traditional aesthetics with historic traditions.
- The Cherokee Historical Association operates the Oconaluftee Indian Village, a re-creation of a 17<sup>th</sup> century Cherokee town and the Unto These Hills outdoor drama which provides summer visitors with historic re-enactments.
- Traditional storytelling, dance and singing are important components of the Cherokee heritage. The Qualla Boundary is alive much of the year with festivals, fairs, pow wows, and other special events that showcase our Native culture.

***Sustaining Nature:*** Cherokee's location in the heart of the storied Great Smoky Mountains offers both great opportunity and significant responsibility. Many years ago, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians committed to proactively preserving and enhancing our environment and our area's once-prolific natural resources. Among our environmental stewardship programs:

- Trout fishing remains an important mainstay of both tribal culture and our growing tourism enterprise. The tribe maintains its own fish hatchery that supplies numerous trout species to 30 miles of pristine rivers and streams.
- The Tribe is also reintroducing threatened species, such the Sicklefin Redhorse and white tail deer, into restored habitats on tribal lands.
- The EBCI is also actively promoting traditional farming methods, including propagation of Native food plants using a new state-of-the-art sustainable greenhouse.

### **Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians: About Our Tribe**

***The tribe:*** The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), the only federally recognized tribe in North Carolina, now occupies the 56,000-acre Qualla Boundary. The tribe operates as a sovereign nation with government headquartered in Cherokee, N.C. About 8,000 of the EBCI's 15,000 registered members live on the Boundary which is situated in Swain and Jackson counties and parts of Cherokee and Graham counties in western North Carolina. Boundary lands are held in federal trust for tribal members.



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**Tribal government**, with a structure similar to national and state governments, has three branches: Executive, legislative and judicial.

- The *executive branch*, currently headed by Principal Chief Richard Sneed and Vice-Chief Alan B. Ensley, who are both serving their first terms, are elected by popular vote every four years. These elected officials carry out tribal laws and are responsible for day-to-day operations. The principal chief is also the tribe's chief executive officer.
- The 12-member tribal council constitutes the EBCI's *legislative branch* that establishes laws governing the tribe. Tribal council members are elected for two-year terms from districts or townships that include: Yellowhill, Big Cove, Birdtown, Wolfstown and Painttown. Cherokee and Graham Counties (Snowbird) constitute the remaining township. The current council includes:
  - Chairman, Adam Wachacha, Snowbird/Cherokee County
  - Vice Chairman, David Wolfe. Yellowhill
  - Tom Wahneetah, Yellowhill
  - Bucky Brown, Snowbird/Cherokee County
  - Richard French, Big Cove
  - Perry Shell, Big Cove
  - Bo Crowe, Big Y/Wolfetown
  - Jeremy Wilson, Big Y/Wolfetown
  - Lisa Taylor, Painttown
  - Tommye Saunooke, Painttown
  - Albert D. Rose, Birdtown
  - Boyd Owle, Birdtown
- The EBCI *judicial branch* consists of the supreme court, tribal criminal court and tribal civil court. Justices are appointed by the Tribal Council upon recommendation of the executive branch. All judges and justices must be members of the North Carolina Bar Association.

Funding for government operations comes from a number of sources including grants, taxable income from a tribal levy and gaming income.

**Tribal services.** EBCI tribal government provides a variety of services to enrolled members and those living in the region, including:

**Education:** The Cherokee Central School system operates elementary, middle and high schools serving the tribal community.



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- ***Cherokee School System (CSS):*** All schools are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and teachers follow the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and the schools use the N.C. program for testing in all grades. All classrooms incorporate high speed, wireless Internet. Cherokee High School offers Project Based Learning (PBL), dual enrollment college courses and N.C. Virtual Public School (NCVPS) courses. There's a 1:1 computer ratio in most core curriculum classrooms and students must complete N.C. Future Core Requirements for Graduation as well as a graduation project. Cherokee culture is integrated into all curriculum areas.

The CSS is managed by a popularly elected school board of tribal members that represent tribal communities.

- ***EBCI Youth and Adult Education Services:*** Offers an array of services to enrolled members ranging from the Kituwah Preservation and Education program and its Kituwah Academy - the Cherokee language immersion school, education and training programs providing financial assistance to those pursuing post-secondary education, workforce training, and tribal summer youth activities. The division also operates the Qualla Public Library, the Dora Reed Tribal Child Care center, and Graham County Indian Education.

***Health care:*** EBCI Public Health and Human Services provides a variety of health, wellness, treatment and education programs to enrolled members. Through programs such as Cherokee Choices, Healthy Cherokee, Heart to Heart juvenile services and home health initiatives, and Tsali Care Nursing Home, PHHS helps assure that the medical and lifestyle needs for tribal members of all ages, from the very young to the very old, are addressed.

At the center of the EBCI health care system is the new \$75 million, 150-thousand square foot Cherokee Indian Hospital opened in fall 2015. This state-of-the-art medical care facility is designed to deliver the latest medical care with an eye toward tribal traditions and culture.

***Social services:*** EBCI Family Support Services assists residents of the Qualla Boundary with public and social welfare issues such as child custody, family problems and financial hardships. FSS offers other programs such as family preservation; food pantry; SSI payee assistance; Christmas store; Indian Child



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Welfare Act services; parenting classes; court-ordered parent-child visitations, home studies and adoptive home studies; emergency assistance; fuel program; burial services; and, the tribal medical referral program.

**Public safety:** The 65-member (60 sworn police officers) Cherokee Police Department (CPD) covers the 56thousand-acre Qualla Boundary, 300 miles of road and a service population of more than 55 thousand. The CPD provides patrol services, corrections, a K-9 unit, and tribal complex security among other services.

**Housing:** EBCI Housing and Community Development administers a variety of housing programs that assist residents to purchase, rent or rehabilitate existing housing units in tribal communities. EBCI is dedicated to improving the quality of life on the Qualla Boundary and to creating more livable neighborhoods.

**Recreation:** EBCI Recreational Services operates programs to enhance the health and wellness of the Cherokee community. Through facilities such as the Cherokee Life Center, Recreation Services offers exercise venues and programs for all ages including pools, gyms, running/walking tracks, a softball and baseball complex, soccer fields and parks. Recreation programs focus on youth activities with offerings such as T-ball, baseball, volleyball, wrestling, football, cheer leading, basketball, after-school programs, and day/athletic camps.

**Elder Services:** The tribe also has a focus on adult and senior programs, the Tsali Manor provides daily meal service and oversees home-bound meal delivery. The program also provides home improvement assistance, arts and crafts classes, and training for Senior Games events.

**The environment:** In a 2006 proclamation, Eastern Band tribal leaders pledged to take an active role in helping enhance and preserve the natural environment of the western region of North Carolina.

Making use of a tribal Integrated Resource Management Plan (IRMP), the EBCI began a focused effort to observe a high standard of resource management and environmental protection, including striving to lead the nation in establishing sanctuaries for natural resources on tribal lands.

Through the efforts of Tribal Fisheries & Wildlife Management, the Tribal Environmental Offices, and Revitalization of Traditional Cherokee Artisans programs, the tribe has begun to replenish threatened native species of animals and plants, taken steps to assure sources of Native food and medicinal and consumable plants, revitalize greenways and waters, enhance bike and walking



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pathways, restrict development on environmentally-sensitive land, reintroduce traditional agricultural methods, and build eco-tourism.

### **Modern day Cherokee: Resurgence and Discovery**

**Background:** Ever since The Removal in 1839 and its aftermath, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, like many other Native tribes, struggled for survival. Our people subsisted mostly through subsistence agriculture, sales of Native arts and craft items, and limited seasonal tourism jobs.

The advent and continuing expansion of the successful Harrah's Casino Resort provided additional resources, abundant employment opportunities, and rapid growth in tourism helped fuel a viable economic engine not just for Cherokee, but throughout the western region. Through foresight, coupled with careful planning, management and a revitalized governmental structure committed to growth, the resources delivered through this world-class resort have played a major role in a new prosperity in and around The Qualla Boundary.

**Economic development:** The EBCI Commerce Department mobilizes economic resources to enhance the overall quality of life for tribal members by growing job opportunities, improving the tribe's business climate and tax base, and promoting a self-sustaining and diverse economy on the Qualla Boundary. A few key economic advantages:

- No North Carolina sales tax
- No county property taxes
- Native American employers may be eligible for tax credits including empowerment zone employment credit; Indian employment credit; Work employment credit; Earned Income tax credit; and, New markets credit
- Favorable depreciation rates for investments on tribal lands
- Huge employment base

**Tourism:** (See detail in the sections that follow) Thanks to its ideal location and an abundance of destination amenities attractive to tourists, Cherokee tourism has enjoyed significant growth in recent years. The town of Cherokee is located at the entrance to both the Blue Ridge Parkway and Great Smoky Mountains National Park

(GSMNP) which are two of the top three U.S. tourist destinations. Plus, the Nantahala National Forest with its famed white water and the Appalachian Trail are nearby, attracting thousands of visitors annually. In recent years, Cherokee tourism success can be measured by:

- 3.6 million annual visitors to Harrah's Cherokee Resort and Casino



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- 2.2 million annual visitors to the Cherokee entrance to the GSMNP
- \$156.6 million in annual visitor spending in Cherokee.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians has inhabited this area for generations. The Cherokee people cultivated the land, created a civilization, and lived off the land of the scenic Smoky Mountains. Several attractions pay homage to the rich cultural history of the Cherokee, including The Museum of Cherokee Indians, and the Oconaluftee Indian Village that showcase the struggles, the triumphs and the everyday lives of the Cherokee people throughout history.

In addition to the world-class Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort, there are other major area attractions such as the Oconaluftee Islands Park, the acclaimed *Unto These Hills* outdoor drama, the Mountain Farm Museum and Saunooke Village, for a variety of dining and shopping. The abundance of hiking and biking trails, camping venues, streams and lakes, and wildlife offer an array of opportunities for eco tourists and those who simply enjoy the outdoors.

**Arts and crafts:** From weaponry, the decorative beadwork, intricate finger weaving, or exquisite wood and stone carving, the Qualla Arts & Crafts Mutual, Inc. is the largest home of authentic Cherokee art east of the Mississippi and attracts collectors from all over the world.

**Sports and recreation:** From fishing to golf, to climbing, mountain biking to hiking, Cherokee has become a major destination for tourists looking for outdoor sports and adventure.

- **Fishing:** With 30 miles of freestone streams, the longest stretch of managed private fishery in the eastern U.S., the fisheries of Cherokee is stocked with trout: rainbow, brook, golden, and brown. Numerous shops and stores offer tribally authorized fishing permits, and a growing number of tackle shops supply both expert and novice gear including flies, tackle, and bait.
  - There are also handicapped fishing piers, a tribal fish hatchery and several fishing ponds.
- **Golf:** The 6,057-yard Sequoyah National Golf Club is a Robert Trent Jones II designed course boasting dramatic mountain beauty. It's a challenging layout infused with rich Cherokee history. Sequoyah National offers a fun, intriguing challenge for golfers of every level. *Golf Magazine's* #2 rated Sequoyah National the "Best New Course You Can Play" in 2009.





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- **Camping:** Less than an hour west of Asheville, just three hours from Atlanta, Chattanooga and Charlotte, and two hours from Greenville and Knoxville the numerous campgrounds in and around Cherokee serve up a variety of camping experiences from tents to rustic cabins to camping resorts. Visitors can enjoy the great outdoors and yet be minutes away from local attractions, shops, restaurants and grocery stores.
- **Hiking:** With more than 800 miles of hiking trails, Great Smoky Mountains National Park near Cherokee serves up some of the most stunning natural beauty in the country. Hiking trails run the gamut from rugged backcountry trails to easy walks in the woods, all offering chances to view wildlife from deer, to hawks to elk. There are also scenic walking trails throughout the Qualla Boundary.
- **Mountain biking:** It's been said there's no better mountain biking venue than the Smokies. Among the best known is the famous 42-mile multiuse network of Tsali trails, named after the 19<sup>th</sup> century Cherokee martyr. The Fire Mountain Trails are Cherokee's newest source for big adventure—a multiuse 10.5-mile trail system that's made to mountain bike, hike, or run.

**Responsible use of gaming resources:  
Preserving our heritage, enhancing our society, benefitting our region**

**Background:** The “About our Tribe” section outlines the many programs of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians designed to enhance the health, well-being, and life experiences of our tribal members, as well as to rebuild a strong and resilient social structure based on Cherokee values, traditions, and rich heritage.

The success of these initiatives can be attributed both to the hard work and commitment of tribal leaders and the Cherokee people themselves as well as the responsible use of resources now provided by Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort which has become an important regional economic engine.

**Gaming and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians:** Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort opened in 1997. The resort is owned by the EB CI and managed by Caesars Entertainment Corporation, one of the world's leading gaming resort companies. Approximately 3.1 million people visited the casino in 2013; 70% of gaming revenues are from guests outside North Carolina.



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- **Largest private tourist attraction:** According to a 2011 study by the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the casino has evolved “from a simple bingo operation to a large, complex resort, which reportedly is the largest private tourist attraction in North Carolina.”
- **Luxury hotel and casino:** Harrah’s Cherokee Casino Resort features a 21-story luxury hotel with 1,108 rooms and 150,000 square feet of gaming space, which includes 3,800 slot machines and over 100 traditional table games such as black jack, roulette and craps.
- **Amenities:** The property also features 10 restaurants, the Essence Lounge, a 3,000 seat Event Center, a spa and retail shops **and Ultrastar, a multi-entertainment bowling alley entertainment center**

**How gaming resources benefit Cherokee:** Proceeds from casino operations have a direct, positive impact on North Carolina’s western region and the Cherokee community:

- **Casino resort revenues** are returned to the EBCI through employee compensation, purchases from local suppliers, income to businesses surrounding the casino, and direct distributions to the tribe. (Half the casino’s annual profits are distributed directly to the tribe’s enrolled members).
- **Casino payroll** has a huge impact on the community: 399 employees out of 2,495 total casino employees are enrolled members of the EBCI; \$96 million in payroll expenses were contributed to the local economy in 2013.
- **Local supplier purchases:** The casino purchased \$16.5 million in goods and services from local vendors in Jackson and Swain counties in 2013.
- **Giving back to the community:**
  - **Education:** Not only do casino resources support the Cherokee School System with programming, they recently funded a new \$130 million campus for the schools. The EBCI also supports Cherokee language instruction in local public schools in Jackson, Swain and Graham counties, which have a significant population of Cherokee students.
  - **Housing:** Casino resources have led to the construction of several new housing projects in the Cherokee area, including the Sarah Smoker and Bill Ledford housing projects for senior citizens and handicapped tribal



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members. The projects include apartments, duplex and single family homes. Dozens of other area site homes have been developed.

- **Infrastructure and public safety:** Using casino-generated income, the EBCI has invested in several infrastructure projects including a wastewater treatment plant, fresh water treatment plant, road improvement projects, expansion of solid waste sanitation and recycling facilities. There have also been expansions in community services such as fire, police and emergency medical services as well a new Emergency Operations Center.

**The Cherokee Preservation Foundation**, a nonprofit foundation funded by the EBCI from gaming revenues, awarded \$5.1 million in grants to 45 programs and organizations in 2013. These grants support cultural preservation, economic development, job creation and environmental preservation.

Among those receiving grants last year were the Cherokee Youth Council for leadership training; The Blue Ridge Resource Conservation and Development Council to help restore a three-acre tract of river cane along the Cane River and to educate the public about river cane; and the WNC EdNet Stem-E Program to enable the implementation of the STEM-E framework for a science, technology, engineering and mathematics curriculum with an entrepreneurial focus in the Cherokee Central Schools as well as turn key training for other districts across the region.

**Gaming's impact on Western North Carolina:** Just as in Cherokee itself, Harrah's economic impact is felt far and wide in North Carolina's western counties through employee compensation, local purchases, tourist spending and tax revenues.

- **Employee compensation:** Harrah's employees about 2,500 people from the area and presently contributes \$96 million in payroll expenses to the local economy each year.
- **Local purchases:** The casino purchased \$16.5 million in goods and services from local vendors in Jackson and Swain counties in 2013.
- **Growing personal income:** Median household income in Swain and Jackson Counties has increased dramatically since 1990, before Harrah's was built:
  - *Swain County:* \$15,756 to \$43,426 (2012).
  - *Jackson County* \$21,061 to \$36,403 (2012).

**The new Cherokee Valley River Casino and Hotel:** In October, 2013, the Eastern Band broke ground on a new \$110 million destination casino outside Murphy, N.C. The facility



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is owned by the tribe and managed by Caesar's Entertainment Corporation. Because of its easy accessibility, the new resort will augment the market reach of tribal gaming enterprises into Tennessee, South Carolina, and Georgia.

The Cherokee County facility features 60,000 square feet of gaming space with slots and traditional table games, a 300-room full service hotel, and a variety of dining options. The casino is located about two hours from Knoxville, Chattanooga and downtown Atlanta and serves the growing adult population living within that radius. In 2011, 7.4 million people age 21 or older lived within 2.5 hours of the casino site; now, more than 7.6 million live in that same area.

The casino created an estimated 900 on-site jobs and will inject up to \$39 million in wages into the surrounding area.

### **Cherokee Attractions**

#### ***Museum of the Cherokee Indian***

Tracing the rich 11,000-year history of the Cherokee people, this acclaimed museum features dozens of exhibits, interactive video and displays to tell the Tribe's vivid story through the centuries.

Web address: <http://visitcherokeenc.com/play/attractions/museum-of-the-chokeee-indian/>

Contact: Museum Director Bo Taylor: [botaylor@cherokeemuseum.org](mailto:botaylor@cherokeemuseum.org), 828-497-3481

#### ***Oconaluftee Indian Village***

This living, breathing village re-creation takes visitors back more than 250 years to an 18<sup>th</sup> century Cherokee civilization. The journey is led by Native guides and is highlighted by dancing, music, art, and traditional dwellings.

Web address: <http://visitcherokeenc.com/play/attractions/oconaluftee-indian-village/>

Contact: Laura Blythe, [lblythe@nc-chokeee.com](mailto:lblythe@nc-chokeee.com), 828-497-1126.

#### ***Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual, Inc.***



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Founded almost 70 years ago, this is the most extensive collection of Cherokee arts and crafts in the United States. From traditional Native weaponry, to intricate baskets to exquisite wood carvings, the QACM offers visitors the chance to see and purchase some of the finest, authentic, locally-made work available.

Web address: <http://visitchokeenc.com/play/attractions/qualla-arts-and-crafts-mutual-inc/> Contact: 828-497-3103

***Unto These Hills outdoor drama***

A critically-acclaimed theatrical production in the newly renovated Mountainside Theatre, “Unto these Hills” draws thousands each year to witness the spellbinding story of the Cherokee people through the centuries.

Web address: <http://visitchokeenc.com/play/attractions/unto-these-hills-outdoor-drama/>

Contact: Laura Blythe, [lblythe@nc-chokeenc.com](mailto:lblythe@nc-chokeenc.com), 828-497-1126.

***Sequoyah National Golf Course***

Cited by *Golf Magazine* as the #2 “Best New Course You Can Play,” this 6,057-yard, Robert Trent Jones-designed course offers both challenging golf and sweeping mountain views. Its bent grass greens and rolling bluegrass fairways serve up a golfing experience unlike any on the U.S. East Coast.

Web address: <http://visitchokeenc.com/play/attractions/sequoyah-national-golf-course>

***Harrah’s Cherokee Casino Resort***

The sparkling crown jewel of Cherokee, the 21-story casino resort features a four-star luxury hotel with 1,108 spacious rooms with generous amenities, a 15,000-square-foot conference center, a new 3,000-seat event center offering world-class entertainment, the acclaimed Mandara Spa, shopping arcades, fine dining and, of course, 150,000 square feet of popular gaming.

Web address: <http://visitchokeenc.com/play/attractions/harrahs-chokeenc-casino-resort/>

Contact: Ahniwake Littledave 828-497-8817 or [alittledave@harrahs.com](mailto:alittledave@harrahs.com)



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***Cherokee River Valley Casino***

Just down the road in Murphy, N.C., is the new \$110 million Cherokee River Valley Casino and Hotel. The new resort features a 108,000 square foot gaming facility with traditional favorite table games and slots.

Web address: <https://www.caesars.com/harrahs-chokeee/things-to-do/valley-river-casino-hotel/>

Contact: Ahniwake Littledave 828-497-8817 or [alittledave@harrahs.com](mailto:alittledave@harrahs.com)

**CHEROKEE OUTDOOR ADVENTURES**

**Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

On Cherokee's doorstep is the entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, a 522,000-acre wilderness area with a vast offering of outdoor activities. With more than 9 million visitors each year, the park features auto touring, biking, hiking, fishing, horseback riding, picnicking, Ranger-led programs and special events.

Web address: <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/index.htm>

Contact: 828-497-1904 or U.S. National Park Service 865-436-1200

**Oconaluftee Islands Park**

In the heart of Cherokee, the Oconaluftee Islands Park is a popular family vacation destination. Situated on the banks of the rushing Oconaluftee River, the park offers ample opportunities for picnicking, wading, or walks along its beautiful nature trail.

Web address: <http://visitcherokeenc.com/itinerary-builder/poi/oconalufteeislands-park/>

Contact: 800-438-1601

**Fish Cherokee**

With 30 miles of freestone streams constituting the longest stretch of managed private fishery in the Eastern U.S., the Cherokee stream system is stocked with rainbow, brook,



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golden, and brown trout. The system -- which offers a variety of angling settings, from primeval forests to the Cherokee town center – hosts a number of major fishing events each year. There are also a number of trout ponds throughout the area.

Web address: <http://www.fishcherokee.com>; <https://cherokeeenaturalresources.com/>

Contact: Paula Price, [paprice@nc-cherokee.com](mailto:paprice@nc-cherokee.com), 828-359-6110

### **Blue Ridge Parkway**

The Blue Ridge Parkway, easily accessible from Cherokee, offers views of magnificent mountain peaks and valleys, hiking trails, overlooks, and picnic spots. The Parkway

stretches almost 470 miles from the edge of Shenandoah National Park in Virginia along the Blue Ridge Mountains to its southern terminus near Cherokee.

Web address: <http://visitcherokeenc.com/play/outdoor-adventure/blue-ridge-parkway/> or <http://visitcherokeenc.com/itinerary-builder/poi/river-trail/http://www.blueridgeparkway.org/>

Contact: Tom Hardy, 828-670-1924

### **Oconaluftee River Trail**

The Oconaluftee River Trail, maintained by the U.S. National Park Service, travels 1.5 miles one-way from the Oconaluftee Visitor Center to the outskirts of the Cherokee. The trail runs through the forest alongside the Oconaluftee River and offers beautiful views of the river.

Web address: <http://visitcherokeenc.com/itinerary-builder/poi/rivertrail/> or <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/ocon-river-trail.htm>

### **Handicapped Accessible Fishing Piers**

To make fishing more accessible for visitors with disabilities, there is handicapped fishing access at several locations in Cherokee: On the Oconaluftee River and Big Cove Ponds.

Web address: <http://visitcherokeenc.com/play/outdoor-adventure/fishing/>

Contact: Paula Price, [paprice@nc-cherokee.com](mailto:paprice@nc-cherokee.com), 828-359-6110



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### **Elk Viewing**

Elk were reintroduced 14 years ago into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park after a 200-year absence and now the herd numbers about 400. Elk are now frequently spotted throughout the Qualla Boundary and the surrounding area.

Web address: <http://visitchokeenc.com/play/outdoor-adventure/elk/>

### **Tubing and Kayaking**

Tubing and kayaking opportunities in and around Cherokee abound on the Tuckasegee and the Oconaluftee rivers. Numerous launch spots are available.

Web address: <http://visitchokeenc.com/play/outdoor-adventure/tubing/>

### **Mingus Mill**

Mingus Mill near the Mountain Farm Museum is one of the most popular tourist stops around Cherokee. It is also near a number of hiking trails and historic landmarks.

Web address: <http://visitchokeenc.com/itinerary-builder/poi/mingus-mill/>

### **Smokemont Riding Stables**

A leading Cherokee attraction, The Smokemont Riding Stables offers a variety of horseback riding including short hourly rides, guided rides to natural attractions, and wagon rides.

Web address: <http://visitchokeenc.com/itinerary-builder/poi/smokemont-riding-stables/>

### **Mingo Falls and Soco Falls**

With Cherokee's abundant waters and steep terrain, waterfalls are a big part of landscape. Two of the most popular and beautiful falls are Mingo and Soco. Both offer unmatched secluded scenic beauty, and places to picnic and unwind.

Web address: <http://visitchokeenc.com/itinerary-builder/poi/mingo-falls/>





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**Judaculla Rock**

One of the most baffling mysteries in the Cherokee region is the ancient Judaculla Rock near Sylva, N.C. The soapstone rock, said to date back almost 3,000 years, is covered with hieroglyphic drawings. The site is considered sacred by the Cherokee people.

Web address: <http://www.judacullarock.com/>

**EVENTS**

Cherokee hosts a variety of annual and special events throughout the year. Follow this link to view our events: <http://visitcherokeenc.com/events/>

This information is subject to change.