

# Chattahoochee River

National Recreation Area  
Georgia

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## A River, a City, a Park

The river is the Chattahoochee; the city is Atlanta. The park is a series of parklands along a 48-mile stretch of the river. This park is a place rich in natural and human history, each influenced by the river's pervasive force. Usually clear, cold, and slow-moving, the river sometimes plunges as a muddy torrent through its rockbound shoals. For centuries people have been drawn to the river for food and transportation and for power to sustain the mills, factories, and homes built along its banks.

Today the river attracts us for different reasons. People come to float down the river, hike the trails along its banks, play touch football in the meadows, and simply relax. In its role as an outdoor classroom, the park promises to expand your horizons through nature walks exploring its plants and birds and the river. Here beaver and muskrats live in burrows along the river's bank, fox and raccoons make their

homes in the hardwood forests, and chipmunks, squirrels, and rabbits seem to be everywhere. Turtles, snakes, salamanders, lizards, frogs, and toads live in all the natural habitats along the river. Venture into the forest and you set off a noisy reaction as grasshoppers, dragonflies, and butterflies leap and fly to escape the foot you so innocently placed.

In any season, the Chattahoochee's banks are a tangle of color. Dogwoods, redbuds, and trout lilies in early spring are followed by flame azaleas, asters, and wild violets. In fall, cardinal flowers and the showy scarlet sumacs turn brilliant shades of red. A solitary walk enjoying nature's display, rafting leisurely with friends, fishing on the misty waters as the sun comes up, picnicking on a Sunday afternoon—this is the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.

## On the River

The Chattahoochee River is rated a Class I and II waterway, excellent for canoeing, kayaking, and rafting. Some sections can be Class III because of narrow passages, high water levels with erratic waves, and cold water. Currents can be strong around submerged rocks and jagged tree snags that crowd the river. Rubber-soled shoes are a must for tackling broken glass and slippery rocks. Be sure to check river conditions before you put in. The river can rise rapidly when water is released from upstream dams.

The Chattahoochee can be paddled any time of the year if you have your own watercraft. You can rent from the park concessioner from May through Labor Day at Johnson Ferry and at Powers Island. The concessioner also provides a shuttle bus service, for a nominal fee, to Johnson Ferry, Powers Island, and Paces Mill, the most southerly take-out point. Catering services and fishing guides are also offered through the concessioner. Glass containers are not permitted on the river from Buford Dam to Paces Mill. Do not forget to carry a plastic bag for litter.

## Fishing

Fishing this year-round trout stream for its trout, bass, catfish, and other species can be a great experience. Anglers need to follow Georgia fishing regulations. A valid Georgia fishing license with trout stamp is required for anglers 16 and older. All boats propelled by mechanical means must be registered with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

## Use of PFDs/Life Preservers

Water temperatures range from 44 to 58°F, and the river can rise rapidly from six to 11 feet when water is released from dam powerhouses. For your safety, U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) are **REQUIRED TO BE WORN** if you are boating, tube floating, or wading in river areas between (1) Buford Dam and the Ga. 20 bridge, or (2) downstream of Morgan Falls Dam and the Morgan Falls boat ramp. On all other river sections in the national recreation area, you must have a PFD aboard for each person in the craft.

## Guard Against Hypothermia

Hypothermia—lowering of the body's core temperature—can occur when you are

exposed to wet, cold conditions and/or wind. The river water is very cold, ranging from 44 to 58°F. If you capsized, get out as quickly as possible and warm yourself.

## River Safety Tips

- Know your put-in and take-out points and tell others your plans.
- Check water-release schedules before entering the water directly below dams.
- Watch weather and water conditions and head for shore if bad weather threatens. If lightning occurs, get out of the water, stay away from trees, and seek low shelter. Lightweight, quick-drying clothing is adequate in summer. During cooler seasons wear clothes of natural and synthetic fiber blends. For cold weather wear wool—it retains heat even when wet. Wear appropriate footwear.
- Drinking alcohol impairs coordination and judgment.
- Never dive or jump into the river. There are dangers in the form of submerged rocks, murky water, and fluctuating water levels. Swimming is not recommended.

**Use caution below dams. The river rises rapidly during water releases.**

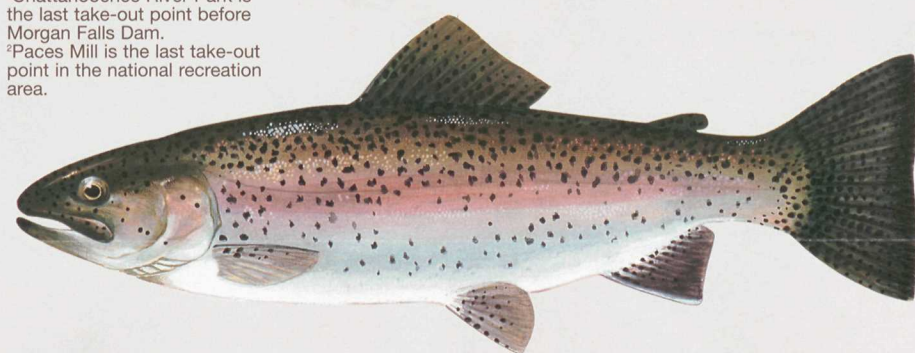


Opportunities abound for a wide range of activities on land and water. Fish, such as the brook rainbow (right), and brown trout, thrive in the cold waters of the Chattahoochee.

## River Access Points

From	To	Distance (Approx.)	Approximate Float Time in Hours (Depending on water level)	
Buford Dam	Abbotts Bridge	13 mi	Canoe 6-8	Raft 9-10
Abbotts Bridge	Medlock Bridge	4 mi	1-2	3-4
Medlock Bridge	Jones Bridge	3 mi	1-1½	1½-2
Jones Bridge	Chattahoochee River Park <sup>1</sup>	12 mi	6-8	9-12
Morgan Falls Dam	Johnson Ferry	2 mi	½-1	1-2
Johnson Ferry	Powers Island	3.5 mi	1-3	2-4
Powers Island	Paces Mill <sup>2</sup>	3 mi	1-2	1-3

<sup>1</sup>Chattahoochee River Park is the last take-out point before Morgan Falls Dam.  
<sup>2</sup>Paces Mill is the last take-out point in the national recreation area.



## On Land

There are many things to do on land, too. Most park areas offer hiking and walking trails and open meadows for recreation. Picnic tables, grills, and trash containers are conveniently located. Delightful pockets of natural and cultural history offer outstanding classroom experiences throughout the Chattahoochee River corridor.

Visitors parking in any park area must purchase and display an annual or daily parking pass on their vehicles.

Upland ridge trails in Palisades lead to panoramas of the river gorge and down through wooded forests to floodplain trails from which you can see rock outcroppings, sandy beaches, expanses of shoalwater, and evidences of human activity.

At Sope Creek (in Cochran Shoals) and in Vickery Creek, trails lead through moderately steep to rolling hills and to lush ravines and wooded areas, old homesites, and historic mill ruins.

Trails in Cochran Shoals, Johnson Ferry, and Gold Branch reveal marshy environments and open fields that once were rich farmlands.

The Cochran Fitness Trail, approximately three miles long with optional loops, is a fully accessible activity path enjoyed by exercise enthusiasts and nature lovers.

Island Ford and Jones Bridge have trails that lead to the river's edge for scenic views of islands and whitewater shoals. Island Ford is also the site of the visitor contact station, which is open daily except December 25.

## Land Safety Tips

- Don't leave your vehicle or personal belongings unprotected. Be aware. Choose not to be a target for crime.
- Take a friend with you. More fun; more safe.
- Do not overexert.
- Respect the rights of others.
- Stay on designated trails. Shortcutting causes soil erosion, damages plant life, and can lead to accidents.
- Learn to identify poison ivy.
- Learn to identify the most prevalent poisonous snake, the copperhead.
- Insect repellent is a must, especially near wetlands.
- Climbing cliffs can be dangerous; their soils and rock readily crumble.
- Extinguish fires in grills before leaving your picnic site.
- Buckle up, be alert, and drive safely.



## Where You Are

The 540-mile Chattahoochee River flows southwesterly from the north Georgia mountains to its Flint River confluence at Lake Seminole. Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, at center, is north of Atlanta. National forests, a national wildlife refuge, and National Park System areas are within easy drives of Atlanta.

## Regulations

- Pets must be physically restrained—on a hand-held leash—at all times.
- Use picnic grills or a portable stove for cooking. Open campfires are not permitted.
- Camping is not allowed.
- Firearms and hunting are prohibited.
- Glass containers are prohibited on the river from Buford Dam to Paces Mill (U.S. 41). For your safety the National Park Service recommends that no glass containers be used in the river corridor.
- To protect historic ruins for future public enjoyment, climbing and/or defacing them is prohibited.
- Metal detectors and panning for gold are prohibited.

- Respect the rights of private property owners. Be alert to boundary trespass.
- Help protect the park and take pride in it. Do not pick plants or disturb animals. Put litter in its proper place—recycle.

**For More Information**  
Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area  
1978 Island Ford Parkway  
Atlanta, GA 30350-3400  
770-399-8070  
www.nps.gov/chat

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is part of the National Park System, one of more than 380 parks that are important examples of our nation's natural and cultural heritage. Visit the National Park Service website at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov). For park concessioner information call 770-395-6851. For park emergencies call 770-952-0370 or dial 911.

**For more conditions at Buford Dam call 770-945-1466; at Morgan Falls Dam call 404-329-1455.**

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|---|----------------|-------------|----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| National Recreation Area                | River milepost | Shoal area  | Parking        | Restrooms                    | Hiking trail                |
| Other public area                       | Hiking trail   | Exit number | Ranger station | Boat, canoe, and raft launch | Wheelchair accessible trail |
| Private land within authorized boundary | Unpaved road   | Hospital    | Picnic area    | Canoe and raft launch        | Horseback riding trail      |

