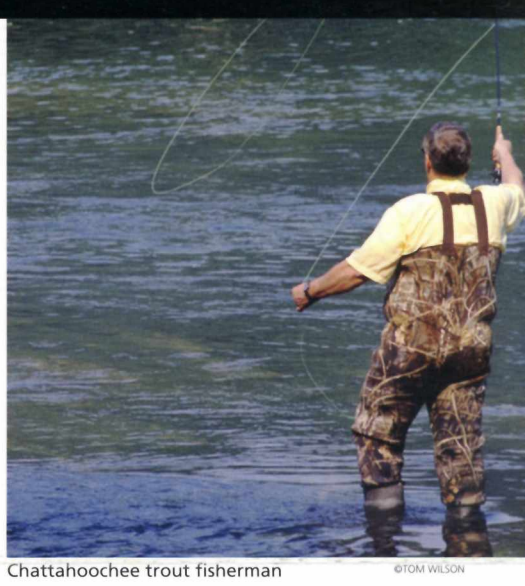
Chattahoochee River

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Recreation Area
Georgia

Rafters at Devils Race Course Shoals ©TOM WILSON



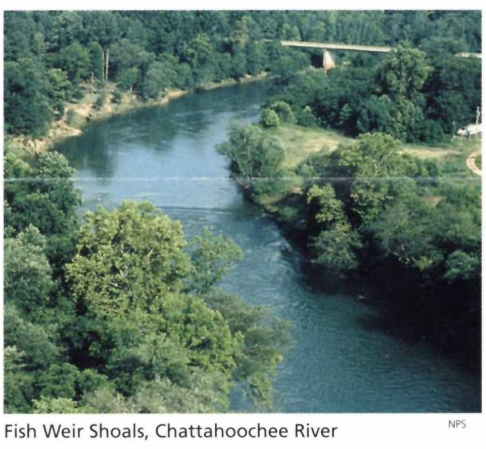
Chattahoochee trout fisherman ©TOM WILSON

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—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. Beaver and muskrats live in burrows along the river's bank, foxes 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 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 the 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.



Fish Weir Shoals, Chattahoochee River NPS

Bloodroot ©TOM WILSON

Great blue heron with fish ©TOM WILSON

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. 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. Rafts and canoes may be rented May through Labor Day from commercial businesses outside the park. Check the park website for a listing (www.nps.gov/chat). Glass containers are not permitted on the river from Buford Dam to Peachtree Creek. Remember to carry a plastic bag for litter.

Fishing Fishing for trout, bass, catfish, and other species can be a great experience. Anglers must follow fishing regulations. A Georgia fishing license with a 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.

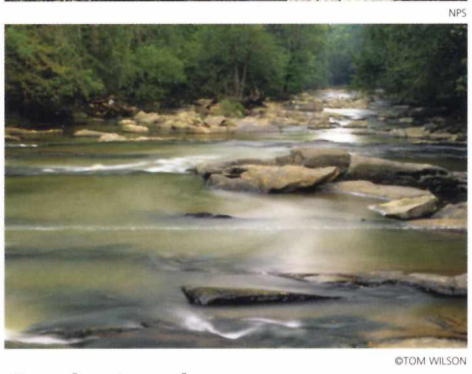
Use of PFDs/Life Preservers Water temperatures range from 44 to 58°F, and the river can rise rapidly from six to 11 feet when water is released from dam powerhouses. U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) are REQUIRED TO BE WORN if you are boating, tube floating, or wading in areas between Buford Dam and the Ga. 20 bridge, or downstream of Morgan Falls Dam and the Morgan Falls boat launch. On other 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. If you capsize, 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. In cold weather wear wool—it retains heat even when wet. Wear appropriate footgear.
- 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.

NPS



©TOM WILSON

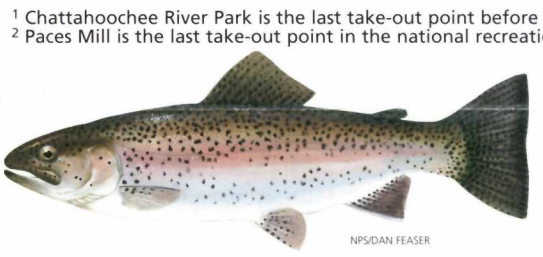
Left: Ruins of Marietta Paper Mill, and a view down Sope Creek.

Brook, rainbow *(right)*, and brown trout thrive in the Chattahoochee.

River Access Points

From	To	Distance (approx.)	Approx. Float Time in Hours (Depending on water level)	
			Canoe	Raft
Buford Dam	Abbotts Bridge	13 mi	6–8	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[1]	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[2]	3 mi	1–2	1–3

[1] Chattahoochee River Park is the last take-out point before Morgan Falls Dam.
[2] Paces Mill is the last take-out point in the national recreation area.



NPS/DAN FEASER

On the Land

Most park areas offer hiking and walking trails and 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 park areas must 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. You can see rock outcroppings, 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 Shoals Trail, approximately three miles long with optional loops, is a fully accessible path enjoyed by outdoor 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.
- For extra safety enjoy the park with a friend.
- Do not overexert.
- Respect the rights of others.
- Stay on designated trails. Shortcutting erodes soil and damages plants, and it can lead to accidents.
- Learn to identify poison ivy and 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 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 handheld leash at all times. Dispose of pet waste in a trash receptacle.
- Use picnic grills or a portable stove for cooking. Open campfires are not permitted.
- Camping is not allowed.
- Hunting is prohibited.
- Glass containers are prohibited on the river from Buford Dam to Peachtree Creek. For your safety the National Park Service recommends that no glass containers be used in the river corridor.
- Protect historic ruins for future public enjoyment; climbing or defacing them is prohibited.
- Metal detectors and panning for gold are not allowed.
- Respect the rights of private property owners. Be alert to boundary trespass.
- Take pride in your park and help protect it for future generations. Do not pick plants or disturb animals. Put litter in its proper place. Please recycle.

More Information
Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area
1978 Island Ford Parkway
Atlanta, GA 30350-3400
678-538-1200
www.nps.gov/chat

Emergencies call: 911 or 770-952-0370.

For River Conditions
Buford Dam call: 770-945-1466.
Morgan Falls Dam call: 404-329-1455.

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. Visit www.nps.gov to learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in communities.

GPO:2023—423-201/83098 Last updated 2012

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

- National Recreation Area (includes 48 miles of the Chattahoochee River)
- Private land within authorized boundary
- Other public area
- River milepost
- Hiking trail
- Unpaved road
- Shoal area
- Exit number
- Hospital
- Parking
- Ranger station
- Boat, canoe, and raft launch
- Canoe and raft launch
- Picnic area
- Restrooms
- Horseback riding trail
- Bicycle trail
- Hiking trail
- Wheelchair-accessible trail

North

0 1 2 Kilometers
0 1 2 Miles

Federal laws and National Park Service regulations apply to national recreation lands and 48 miles of the Chattahoochee River.

LAKE SIDNEY LANIER
Buford Dam
Lake Sidney Lanier (Army Corps of Engineers)
CUMMING
BUFORD
BOWMANS ISLAND
Bowmans Island Shoals
River Club Dr
Trout Place Rd
Buford Trout Hatchery
SUGAR HILL
Fish Weir Shoals
ORRS FERRY
(Georgia Department of Natural Resources)
Chattahoochee River
Bridge closed
SETTLES BRIDGE
McGINNIS FERRY
Shake Rag
SUWANEE CREEK
Rogers Bridge (closed)
ABBOTTS BRIDGE
Abbotts Bridge
DULUTH
McClure Bridge
ALPHARETTA
JOHNS CREEK
Berkeley Lake
MEDLOCK BRIDGE
Bridge closed
Jones Bridge Shoals
JONES BRIDGE
Jones Bridge Park (Gwinnett County)
CREEC
Chattahoochee River Environmental Education Center
NORCROSS
ROSWELL
Garrard Landing (City of Roswell)
Holcomb Bridge
HOLCOMB BRIDGE
Don White Memorial Park (City of Roswell)
Waller Park (City of Roswell)
VICKERY CREEK
Allenbrook
Riverside Park (City of Roswell)
Island Ford Shoals
ISLAND FORD
Park Headquarters
Information
Chattahoochee Nature Center
Chattahoochee River Park (Fulton County and City of Roswell)
Bull Sluice Lake
GOLD BRANCH
Morgan Falls Park (Fulton County)
Morgan Falls Dam
JOHNSON FERRY
SANDY SPRINGS
Paper Mill Ruins
Sope Creek
COCHRAN SHOALS
Powers Island
PALISADES
Devils Race Course Shoals
Overlook
Thornton Shoals
Long Island Shoals
Paces Mill
Dunwoody Nature Center
DORAVILLE
CHAMBLEE
Toll
ATLANTA