The Western Carolina University adventure travel class has put together this mountain biking brochure to inform you about local riding destinations, some of which are recognized as the best in the country. The trails that were selected for this brochure are close to WCU and provide a wide variety of challenges for novices and pros alike. Along with trail description and directions to each location, we have provided websites via the square QR codes to allow fast access with your smartphone to the individual trail maps and more detailed information. These QR codes can be scanned by any smartphone and will link you directly to the sites. Use the skill level gauges along with the detailed trail reviews to choose the trail that best suits your needs. Remember to always use good judgment and enjoy the ride!

Reminders and Recommendations

- Mountain biking can be dangerous, always wear a helmet and eye protection.
- Stay on the designated trail. Shortcuts and side tracks damage fragile plant life and create erosion problems that will negatively effect the trail.
- Be courteous when coming across other trail users, especially horses (they frighten easily).
- Respect the trail and other users, if you pack it in, pack it out. Leave the trail nicer than you found it so everyone else can enjoy it as you have.
- Pay attention to the weather and dress appropriately.
- Take a friend or be sure to tell someone where you are going and how long you will be gone.
- Don’t forget to bring water with you!
- Know what you know and know what you don’t know so USE GOOD JUDGEMENT!

Additional Resources

- The Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association | sorba.org
- Mountain Bike Review | mtbr.com
- Gone Riding | gonering.com
- Mountain Bike WNC | mtbwnc.com
- International Mountain Bicycling Assn. | imba.com
- Romantic Asheville | romanticasheville.com/biking

Parks & Recreation Management

Students in the Parks & Recreation Management major have produced this guide. For more information about the PRM program contact us at: 828.227.7310 or visit our website at: wcu.edu/9094.asp

Base Camp Cullowhee

Not ready to explore on your own? Or would like to try a new outdoor adventure? Need to rent outdoor gear for your next adventure? WCU’s Base Camp Cullowhee (BCC) provides an array of outdoor program services, which include recreation trips, outdoor gear rental, and experiential education services. Contact BCC at 828.227.3635 or visit their website: www.wcu.edu/9894.asp

Author Bios:

- Troy Adams – WCU PRM major with concentration in Outdoor Leadership. Avid cyclist for over 10 years and has ridden and competed in both national and international events at the professional level.
- Ty Fehrenbacher – WCU PRM major focusing in Resource Management. Has always enjoyed riding but was just recently introduced to trail.
- Nate Christiansen – New to mountain biking, Nate says he has found a new favorite pastime! Nate is also a WCU PRM major and is studying Community Recreation.
- Phillip Farborough – WCU PRM major focusing in Outdoor Leadership and works with several outdoor agencies guiding adventure recreational trips. Phillip is an intermediate level rider who has experience leading mountain bike and other adventure recreational trips.
This trail system is primarily used for ATV and other off road vehicles but offers some fun challenging trail to those brave enough to give it a shot. The 10 mile outer loop is the easiest to follow and the most used of the system. The trail can be ridden clockwise or counter clockwise but either way be prepared to climb. Of the 10 miles you will be looking at climbing the first 3 and descending the last 5. Yep, it’s pretty much straight up and down. It’s a hard push for the most advanced riders to ride to the top but the descent is well worth it. Make sure you have good brakes and be careful! The trail is fast and steep with long banked turns, rock drops, blind turns, large whoops, long rock gardens and other trail users.

Directions From Cullowhee: (20 min) Take US 107 North to Sylva then US 74 West 24 miles. Turn right onto NC 28 north just before entering the Nantahala Gorge. Follow 28 approx 3.5 miles then turn right on Tsali Rd. Stay on this main road until you come to a large intersection with the capermandon on your left. Bike parking will be directly in front of you in a large paved parking lot. There is a day use fee of $2 per person and collection bins are in the parking lot.

This system is very popular with cyclists but also a hot spot for runners and hikers, so be aware and cautious. These trails have a good mix of fire road, smooth double track, and fast flowing single track. You can keep it simple with relatively little climbing or push it on some of the steep and technical climbs. There is a little bit of everything in here and the network of trails is extensive so make sure you have a trail map and make your own route.

Directions From Cullowhee: (60 min) Take US 107 North to Sylva then 74 East to 140 East toward Asheville. Just before Asheville take a 1/2 block and get off on exit 33, NC 191. Turn left, pass the Chimney Square Mall, and head south on NC 191 for 2 miles. Turn right at the stoplight onto Bent Creek Ranch Road. Following the brown signs to the Lake Powhatan Recreation Area (bear left at fork after 0.2 miles or this road). The paved, gated heartline trailhead parking area is just over 2 miles down this road on the left. Other popular starting points are beyond Heartline further into the valley.

These trails are primo! Well maintained and beautifully designed, the outer loop clockwise (approx 11 miles) is a great route that showcases the best of the system (River View, Thunder Express). This is such a good route that it’s used several times a year for nationally recognized competitions. Expect mostly single track with fast, rocky, and tight sections that will make you smile or cry! The climbs and the descents will challenge your technical ability as well as your fitness so be prepared to work a little. Look to see lots of wildlife including deer, turkey, and the occasional bear. Want a more beginner friendly trail? Try Brush Creek Trail or Old Copper Road. Both are part of the system and can be accessed from the same parking area. Old Copper Rd parallels the Ocoee River up stream for about 3 miles to the upper Ocoee put in put in. Brush Creek can be run, an out and back or point to point if you want to use a shuttle. It is a 7 mile one way single track trail that send’s way up above the Ocoee lake. The trail is smooth, twisty, and has very little climbing. It’s a great trail for beginners, children and is a favorite to many.

Side note: The Ocoee Whitewater Center commemorates and details the events of the 1996 Olympic whitewater competition that occurred at this very spot. The trails are extensive and a map can be picked up at the center or downloaded online. There is a parking fee of $3 per vehicle that helps to maintain the area so don’t skimp. This trail system is a bit farther away, but well worth the extra time in the car. If possible, make it a weekend trip and make sure to check out in a series of loops that extend off a main loop and allow plenty of options to make your ride as long or short as desired. The Jackrabbit trail system is a work in progress so look for additional trails to be added in the future.

Directions From Cullowhee: (85 min) Take 107 North to Sylva then take 74 East to 140 East toward Asheville. Just before Asheville take a 1/2 block and get off on exit 33, NC 191. Turn left, pass the Chimney Square Mall, and head south on NC 191 for 2 miles. Turn right at the stoplight onto Bent Creek Ranch Road. Following the brown signs to the Lake Powhatan Recreation Area (bear left at fork after 0.2 miles or this road). The paved, gated heartline trailhead parking area is just over 2 miles down this road on the left. Other popular starting points are beyond Heartline further into the valley.

A slightly newer trail system but quickly becoming a favorite among recreational cyclists. These trails (approx 13 total) are very beginner friendly and offer smooth, well-marked, graded, wide trail with very little elevation gain. One exception would be “High Point” trail which was designed to be slightly more challenging and takes you over the highest point on the peninsula. The trail system is laid out in a series of loops that extend off a main loop and allow plenty of options to make your ride as long or short as desired. The Jackrabbit trail system is a work in progress so look for additional trails to be added in the future.

Directions From Cullowhee: (75 min) Take 107 North to Sylva then take 74 East to 140 East toward Asheville. Just before Asheville take a 1/2 block and get off on exit 33, NC 191. Turn left, pass the Chimney Square Mall, and head south on NC 191 for 2 miles. Turn right at the stoplight onto Bent Creek Ranch Road. Following the brown signs to the Lake Powhatan Recreation Area (bear left at fork after 0.2 miles or this road). The paved, gated heartline trailhead parking area is just over 2 miles down this road on the left. Other popular starting points are beyond Heartline further into the valley.

Directions From Cullowhee: (60 min) Take US 107 North to Sylva then 74 East to 140 East toward Asheville. Just before Asheville take a 1/2 block and get off on exit 33, NC 191. Turn left, pass the Chimney Square Mall, and head south on NC 191 for 2 miles. Turn right at the stoplight onto Bent Creek Ranch Road. Following the brown signs to the Lake Powhatan Recreation Area (bear left at fork after 0.2 miles or this road). The paved, gated heartline trailhead parking area is just over 2 miles down this road on the left. Other popular starting points are beyond Heartline further into the valley.

Directions From Cullowhee: (45 min) Take 107 North to Sylva then take 74 East to 140 East toward Asheville. Just before Asheville take a 1/2 block and get off on exit 33, NC 191. Turn left, pass the Chimney Square Mall, and head south on NC 191 for 2 miles. Turn right at the stoplight onto Bent Creek Ranch Road. Following the brown signs to the Lake Powhatan Recreation Area (bear left at fork after 0.2 miles or this road). The paved, gated heartline trailhead parking area is just over 2 miles down this road on the left. Other popular starting points are beyond Heartline further into the valley.

Directions From Cullowhee: (60 min) Take US 107 North to Sylva then take 74 East to 140 East toward Asheville. Just before Asheville take a 1/2 block and get off on exit 33, NC 191. Turn left, pass the Chimney Square Mall, and head south on NC 191 for 2 miles. Turn right at the stoplight onto Bent Creek Ranch Road. Following the brown signs to the Lake Powhatan Recreation Area (bear left at fork after 0.2 miles or this road). The paved, gated heartline trailhead parking area is just over 2 miles down this road on the left. Other popular starting points are beyond Heartline further into the valley.

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