Western Carolina University is a whitewater epicenter. Within an hour and a half of the WCU Campus in Cullowhee, whitewater paddlers can find the entire gambit of runs. With local resources ranging from Class I – Class VI, from park and play to park and huck and everything in between, WCU has easy access to it all. The focus of this brochure is to provide vital beta to beginning and intermediate paddlers.

A Little Note on Leave No Trace (LNT)

When visiting a river it is important to practice Leave No Trace ethics. Please don’t litter or damage any of the beautiful surroundings. Remember to plan ahead and prepare, travel and camp on durable surfaces, leave what you find, properly dispose of waste, minimize campfire impact, and respect wildlife and other visitors. Respect landowners and other river locals. Research regulations are for each area you visit as they may be different.

Gear

All paddlers will need a kayak, skirt, helmet, paddle, personal flotation device, appropriate layers, and safety equipment prior to a trip.

Additional Resources:

American Whitewater: americanwhitewater.org
Boating Beta: boatingbeta.com
Boatertalk: boatertalk.com
Carolina Canoe Club: carolinacanoeclub.org
North Carolina Rivers and Creeks, by Leland Davis

Guide to 7 Local Whitewater Rivers

Info on Gear

Want to Learn How to Paddle?

• Base Camp Cullowhee (BCC) offers weekly rolling clinics and trips. Check them out: http://www.wcu.edu/8984.asp
• PRM offers classes each year, look for PRM 254: Introduction to Outdoor Pursuits, PRM 352: Beginner-Intermediate Kayak and PRM 426: Water Based Outdoor Pursuits Education.

Want to try whitewater with a group? BCC offers whitewater rafting trips for students.

Author Bios:

Justin Kleberg – Extreme whitewater enthusiast and advocate, Kleberg splits his time between the rivers of western NC and WV.
Ben David Jacob – Climbing rock and kayaking whitewater since 2008, he has found these brochures as well as locals to be a wealth of whitewater knowledge.
Paul Killian – NOC Trip Leader and Ropes Course Facilitator who relocated to NC for the abundance of whitewater resources.
Kim Miller – Kim is a raft guide for the NOC. She is studying Parks and Recreation here at WCU.
Katie Mosier – Climber, hiker, paddler, snowboarder and PRM major.

Parks & Recreation Management

Students in the Parks is Recreation Management major have produced this guide. For more information about the PRM program contact us at: 828.227.7510 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 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/8984.asp

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**Tuckasegee**

The Tuckasegee is our local river here in Cullowhee. With headwaters beginning in the Pigeon River Valley, the Tuck flows through several different sections. With the Tuck Gorge and the Eternity Hole being the two closest whitewater resources to WCU, this is a premier location to begin paddling. Commercial rafting is also available.

**Gorge**
- **Class:** Class II
- **Length:** 4.4 Miles
- **Level:** 800 cfs min
- **Put-in:** Dillsboro
- **Take-out:** Buckers Creek Rd., Tuckasegee Outfitters
- **Distance from WCU:** 8 miles, 15 minutes

**Eternity Hole**
- **Class:** Class II
- **Length:** Park and play
- **Level:** Duke Energy schedules releases duke-energy.com/lakes/nantahala/nanoscheduled-flow-releases.asp 866.332.5253
- **Parking:** 1 mile up Shook Cove Rd.
- **Distance from WCU:** 11 miles, 15 minutes

**Cullowhee Canoe Slalom**
Test your paddling skills at the annual canoe slalom held on the Tuckasegee River in Cullowhee each September. The course is beginner friendly and you can paddle a canoe, kayak, or paddle board. Contact the PBM program for more information.

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**Little Tennessee**

This run, flowing into Fontana Lake, is best done during the winter months while the lake is low. The float trip is mostly class I-II and is perfect for anyone worried about getting in over their heads. This stretch is great to learn surfing and getting familiar with a kayak. No commercial rafting is available.

**Class:** Class I-II
- **Length:** 6.5 Miles
- **Level:** 300-2000 cfs
- **Put-in:** Nissequoia Road
- **Take-out:** Fontana Lake
- **Distance from WCU:** 30 miles, 40 minutes

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**Nantahala**

The Nantahala River is a step above the Tuck. With several different sections, the Nanty is another local resource on which aspiring paddlers can hone their skills. With park and play, river running, and meat hucking all available within the gorge, the Nanty is a must boat river. Scheduled releases throughout the warmer months make this run a southeastern classic. Commercial rafting is also available.

**Gorge**
- **Class:** Class II-III
- **Length:** 7.8 Miles
- **Level:** Duke Energy schedules releases duke-energy.com/lakes/nantahala/nanoscheduled-flow-releases.asp 866.332.5253
- **Put-in:** Beechertown
- **Take-out:** Watersett
- **Distance from WCU:** 44 miles, 53 minutes

**Upper**
- **Class:** Class III-III+
- **Length:** 3.3 Miles
- **Level:** 230-500 cfs
- **Put-in:** nr 3130 bridge below Cascades
- **Take-out:** Beechertown
- **Distance from WCU:** 48 miles, 60 minutes

**NOC Store Wave**
- **Class:** Class III
- **Length:** Park and Play
- **Level:** Duke Energy Schedules Releases duke-energy.com/lakes/nantahala/nanoscheduled-flow-releases.asp 866.332.5253
- **Parking:** NOC
- **Distance from WCU:** 36 miles, 43 minutes

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**Ocoee**

Perhaps the most iconic river in the southeast, the Chattooga is a staple run for southeast paddlers. Located on the Georgia/South Carolina border, this natural flow river ranges from mild to wild, all dependent upon rain and water levels. Difficulty increases as paddlers work their way toward Lake Tugaloo, with the Five Falls of Section 4 before the 2 mile lake paddle to the take-out. Commercial rafting is also available.

**Section 2**
- **Class:** III-III+
- **Length:** 5.7 miles
- **Level:** +1 on US 76 Bridge Gauge
- **Put-in:** Long Bottom Ford
- **Take-out:** Earl’s Ford
- **Distance from WCU:** 86 miles, 120 minutes

**Section 3**
- **Class:** III-IV
- **Length:** 12 Miles
- **Level:** 1.5 – 3 on US 76 Bridge Gauge
- **Put-in:** Earl’s Ford
- **Take-out:** US 76 Bridge
- **Distance from WCU:** 56 miles, 80 minutes

**Section 4**
- **Class:** IV (1.5-1.8)
- **Length:** IV (1.7-2.5)
- **Level:** 6.3 Miles
- **Level:** 1.5 on US 76 Bridge Gauge
- **Put-in:** US 76
- **Take-out:** Tugaloo Lake Boat Ramp
- **Distance from WCU:** 50 miles, 70 minutes

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**Chattahoochee**

Located outside of Asheville, this class III run is always runnable. With higher water translating to bigger waves and a cowier ride it is a run best tackled with flow. This unusually wide river provides for a variety of lines. Commercial rafting is also available.

**Section 2**
- **Class:** III-IV
- **Length:** 8.2 miles
- **Level:** Any
- **Put-in:** Barnard
- **Take-out:** Hot Springs
- **Distance from WCU:** 64 miles, 90 minutes

**The Ledges**
- **Class:** II
- **Length:** Park and Play
- **Level:** 1300 cfs
- **Parking:** Riverbend Drive, Asheville
- **Distance from WCU:** 69 miles, 80 minutes

**Alexander Wave**
- **Class:** II
- **Length:** Park and Play
- **Level:** 2000 cfs – 4000 cfs
- **Parking:** Alexander Bridge
- **Distance from WCU:** 140 miles, 150 minutes

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**French Broad**

Located outside of Asheville, this class III run is always runnable. With higher water translating to bigger waves and a cowier ride it is a run best tackled with flow. This unusually wide river provides for a variety of lines. Commercial rafting is also available.

**Upper**
- **Class:** Class II-IV
- **Length:** 3 miles
- **Level:** 900 cfs – 6000 cfs
- **Put-in:** Ocoee #3 Dam
- **Take-out:** Ocoee #2 Dam
- **Distance from WCU:** 102 Miles, 115 minutes

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**Pigeon**

This roadrun, skirting I-40, is a staple summer run in the southeast. This class III run and quick shuttle makes for an easy afternoon run.

**Class:** Class III
- **Length:** 4.4 Miles
- **Level:** 400 cfs
- **Put-in:** Watercolor Power Plant
- **Take-out:** Hartford
- **Distance from WCU:** 62 miles, 70 minutes

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**Tugaloo**

The Tugaloo River is a continuous class III located just across the border into Tennessee. With roadside access, scheduled summer releases, and an open community of core paddlers, the Tugaloo is a rip-roaring good time. Commercial rafting is also available, and all hard boaters should be warned about the floating undertow.

**Upper**
- **Class:** Class III-IV
- **Length:** 5 miles
- **Level:** 1000 cfs – 5000 cfs
- **Put-in:** Tugaloo #2 Dam
- **Take-out:** Tugaloo #1 Dam
- **Distance from WCU:** 48 miles, 70 minutes