



## BMT Trail Town – Tellico Plains, Tennessee

- Rick Harris

Tellico Plains was designated a Benton MacKaye Trail Town in August 2014.

Located in Monroe County at the base of the Unaka Mountains which separate Tennessee from North Carolina along TN68, TN39, TN360 and the Cherohala Skyway, this mountain community has much to offer outdoor enthusiasts.

An hour and a half drive from either Knoxville or Chattanooga, Tellico Plains is known as the 'Gateway to the Cherokee National Forest' and 'The Little Town with the Big Backyard'. The rural community is just a short distance from the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) as the trail follows the state line and crosses the Tellico River – making it a perfect fit for the Trail Town designation.

Opportunities for outdoor recreation abound.

The Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests offer a multitude of hiking and backpacking trails. These forests include the largest conglomeration of Wilderness Areas anywhere in the Eastern United States (Citico Creek Wilderness, Bald River Wilderness, Upper Bald River Wilderness, Gee Creek Wilderness, Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness, Little Frog Wilderness and the Big Frog Wilderness)!

The Tellico River attracts fly fishermen, kayakers and C-1 canoeists.

Motorists and motorcyclists cruise the Cherohala Skyway – a 40-plus-mile high-altitude scenic drive across the mountains between Tellico Plains, TN, and Robbinsville, NC.

The Charles Hall Museum features historical exhibits from the area.

Camping is popular in the front country at Indian Boundary Recreation Area as well as at numerous campsites along the Tellico and Bald rivers and Citico Creek.

Equestrian trails are on Starr Mountain and in or close to the Citico Creek Wilderness.

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Dozens of miles of easy to challenge mountain biking trails are available on Chilhowee Mountain as well as in the Ocoee River Gorge.

The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail crosses the BMT at Unicoi Gap on the route of the old Unicoi Turnpike. In fact, the Trail of Tears goes right through Tellico Plains on its way to points west.

Waterfalls beckon sightseers - the 100-foot Bald River Falls, Conasauga Falls, Coker Creek Falls, Benton Falls, Lowery Falls and Falls Branch Falls.

Mile-high spots (Whigg Meadow, Bob Bald, Buck Bald and the Hangover) are hikers' favorites.

Just 25 miles south of Tellico Plains, the Hiwassee River attracts rafters, kayakers and fly fishermen.

Fifty miles south of Tellico Plains is the Ocoee River Gorge - the most popular kayaking and rafting destination in the USA!

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is within easy driving distance.

Tellico Plains sponsors several festivals each year - including the Cherohala Skyway Festival, the 4th Saturday in October.

This vibrant mountain town has everything a family or a thru hiker might need or want to do - all in the town's 'Big Back Yard'. The town's amenities include cabins, restaurants, a grocery store, two pharmacies, a laundromat and a post office – all in or very near the downtown area. Check out this BMT Trail Town. You won't be disappointed!



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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