

# GRAHAM COUNTY

*Your Natural Destination*

📍 LAKE SANTEETLAH, NC

## TOWNS OF ROBBINSVILLE | FONTANA DAM | LAKE SANTEETLAH

Graham County, North Carolina is one of the last unspoiled places in the Southeast — a true frontier. The majority of the county lies within the Nantahala National Forest, and no other county shares a longer border with the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It is perhaps the least densely populated place in the Smokies providing visitors with a sense of scale that is usually reserved for the West.

## First in the State

Graham County will soon be home to the first land bridge in North Carolina. The project, located at Stecoah Gap where the Appalachian Trail intersects Highway 143, is nearing completion in late 2026. The crossing will allow hikers and wildlife, including black bears, to cross the road without setting foot on the pavement. Dirt, boulders, and native plants will cover the 220-foot span, restoring some of the natural ridgeline while letting traffic flow unobstructed through the tunnels below.

## CHEROHALA SKYWAY AT 30

The Cherokee Skyway celebrates 30 years this fall — it opened October 11, 1996. It runs 43 miles along the ridgelines from Robbinsville to Tellico Plains, Tennessee, connecting the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests — that's how it got its name. The idea began with a wagon train: in 1960 the largest wagon train on record, — 105 wagons and 776 horses — crossed the proposed route.

The road climbs from 2,660 feet at Santeetlah Gap to 5,390 at the Santeetlah Overlook and features 14 overlooks, two waterfalls and trails that lead to grassy balds and historic cabins.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TINDALL CORPORATION

## A THRU-HIKER'S CROSSROADS

Graham County offers thru-hikers access to four of the Southeast's long trail systems. Every spring, thousands of **Appalachian Trail** thru-hikers cross Stecoah Gap on their way to Fontana Dam — the last stop before 70 miles of the Smokies. The **Benton MacKaye** and the **Bartram** also intersect Graham County's 400-mile trail network. North Carolina's own **Mountains-to-Sea Trail** can be reached through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park entrance at Twentymile.

### CABLE GAP SHELTER

*The Adirondack-style shelter at Cable Gap, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1939, is being restored and relocated to the CCC Historical Trail near the Cheoah Ranger Station on NC 143.*

## ONLY IN GRAHAM COUNTY

### 📍 FONTANA DAM

At 480 feet, Fontana Dam is the tallest dam east of the Rockies. The Appalachian Trail crosses it into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

### 📍 JOYCE KILMER MEMORIAL FOREST

3,800 acres of wilderness, with tulip poplars more than 400 years old & hardwoods more than 160 feet tall — one of the largest old-growth stands in the East.

### 📍 CHEROHALA SKYWAY

A 43-mile National Scenic Byway that connects Robbinsville to Tellico Plains, TN, climbing to 5,390 feet along the ridgelines.

### 📍 LAKE SANTEETLAH

Seventy-six miles of shoreline, nearly all of it within the Nantahala National Forest. Named one of the most beautiful lakes in the country by **Travel + Leisure**.

**GrahamCountyTravel.com**

# Three Historic Stays

## SNOWBIRD MOUNTAIN LODGE

Built in 1941 of chestnut logs and native stone overlooking the Snowbird mountains. An all-inclusive luxury experience.

## FONTANA VILLAGE

Built in 1942 to house workers building Fontana Dam. Guests can stay in the lodge or former worker cottages.

## TAPOCO LODGE

Built in 1930 by Alcoa's Tallassee Power Company to house the engineers of Cheoah Dam. Features riverside dining.

📍 SNOWBIRD MOUNTAIN LODGE

**Three historic stays, three bodies of water — Lake Santeetlah, Fontana Lake and the Cheoah River.**

# Three New Stays

## THE GRAHAM

A nine-room roadside motel on US 129; the two-bedroom suite has a mini-kitchen and creekstone fireplace. Renovated by the Roberts Family; Doug Roberts stayed here as a kid and knew the original owners. Walking distance to downtown Robbinsville.

## BLUE BOAR INN

A remodeled hunting lodge with eight suites, each with a private bathroom. Breakfast is included and guests have free access to a private Santeetlah dock with kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards. Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest is 15 minutes away.

## LAKE SANTEETLAH LODGE

Recently restored family lodge. Eight elegant lakeside rooms minutes from downtown. Home to Chef Shea Anderson's Willow Tree Restaurant, breakfast included. Dock your boat for your dinner reservation. Seasonal farm to table.



*a river with two faces*  
the CHEOAH

For most of the year the river runs low — perfect for wading, wildlife viewing, and fishing for trout or bass. On release days it becomes 9 miles of Class IV and V rapids. **Snorkel trail.**



## only in GRAHAM COUNTY ANNUAL EVENTS

### FLAME AZALEA FESTIVAL

Every 3rd weekend in June, celebrating a rare stand of native Flame Azaleas on Hooper Bald, just off the Cherokee Skyway. Robbinsville is one of North Carolina's two Azalea Cities.

### FADING VOICES DEMONSTRATION DAY

Preserving the unique dialect and traditional culture of the Snowbird Cherokee. Traditional music, dance, games and food — a hands-on day of learning for all. Memorial Day weekend.

### AN APPALACHIAN EVENING

The little rock schoolhouse in Stecoah, which turned 100 years old this year, has been a home to musicians since the beginning of bluegrass. Summer concerts every Saturday night.

### DANCING ON THE SQUARE

Every Friday night from May to August we throw cornmeal down on the pavement in front of the courthouse and dance in the streets — a tradition established in 1972.

*Less than a half-day drive from six major cities*

Graham County Welcome Center  
474 Rodney Orr Bypass  
Robbinsville, NC 28771

**GrahamCountyTravel.com**

**GRAHAM  
COUNTY**  
*Your Natural Destination*

- 📍 ASHEVILLE, NC & KNOXVILLE, TN 2 HOURS
  - 📍 GREENVILLE, SC & CHATTANOOGA, TN 2.5 HOURS
  - 📍 ATLANTA, GA & CHARLOTTE, NC 3 & 3.5 HOURS
- Drive times from the Graham County Welcome Center