

Water Recreation on the Northern Districts

French Broad River ranges from a slow, pastoral float to Class II-III rapids as it runs from North Carolina into Tennessee. A popular commercial section runs from Hot Springs, NC, past Paint Rock at the TN/NC state line, to French Broad Boating Site near Del Rio, TN. Watercraft may be rented from local outfitters for this 13 mile trip.

Nolichucky River flows through one of the deepest gorges in the eastern United States and is the most popular whitewater river in northeast TN. Hearty outdoor enthusiasts can meet the challenge of Class II and V rapids while traveling through remote backcountry in Pisgah and Cherokee National Forests. Between Erwin and Davy Crockett Lake, the river is rate Class I and II.

Doe and Watauga Rivers near Elizabethton, TN also include sections of whitewater. Doe is primarily a wet-weather stream, but some sections can be run up to mid-summer during years with good rainfall. The most challenging course (Class II-V) runs between the towns of Roan Mountain and Hampton, a distance of 14 miles. Downstream, on the 5.5 mile stretch between Hampton and Elizabethton, rapids are classed II-III.

Above Watauga Lake, Watauga River offers a highly challenging 6-mile stretch of Class IV and V rapids through a remote section of boulder gardens. The trip through the Watauga gorge has been called "as great a whitewater challenge as can be found anywhere in Tennessee." Rapids are classed I-II below Wilbur Dam as the Watauga winds past agricultural lands and into the town of Elizabethton. Commercial rafting is available for portions of this 10-mile section.