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Summer Visitors Cool Off with Water Adventures

Fly Fishing, Water Parks and Rafting Adventures Offer Cool Summer Treats

JOHNSON CITY, TN— As summer temperatures soar, the thought of cooling off in cool, mountain water is enough to send anyone headed for the hills. With fly-fishing, an ever-growing outdoor sport, along with white water rafting, boating and a water park, visitors in Johnson City can escape the heat, enjoy the striking scenery and experience a variety of water adventures.

“From lakeside resorts and a water park to white water rafting and fly-fishing, Northeast Tennessee has a variety of water-related adventures for locals and visitors,” said Brenda Whitson, executive director of the Johnson City Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Fly-Fishing:

For experienced fly-fishers or beginners wanting to conquer the sport, Johnson City offers a large variety of fish species, lakes and rivers for fly-fishers to experience the area’s diverse selection of fly-fishing opportunities.

“Fly-fishing is not only a great way to enjoy the great outdoors, it’s a challenging sport that many love once they get the hang of it,” said Whitson.

Johnson City has an abundance of fly fishing spots, ranging from lakes to rivers, as well as a diverse selection of species filling the area water. Popular rivers for fly fishing destinations include the South Holston River, located in Bluff City, and Watauga Lake, located in

Elizabethton; both are tail water rivers, created by dams, and according to fly fishing expert Ben Walters, are two of the best fly fishing rivers in the East. For fly fishers wanting to conquer small mouth bass, the North fork of the Holston River, the Lower Holston and the Nolichucky River offer a large amount of the species. Other species in the area include stripers and a variety of bass.

“Not only does the area have many kinds of habitats and diversity, but we also have the world-class fishing for trophy and rainbow trout,” said Walters, manager of the Fly Shop of Tennessee.

For beginners wanting to learn to fly fish, Johnson City offers Mahoney’s Sports and the Fly Shop of Tennessee, along with other outfitters, providing fly fishers with high quality equipment, as well as instructional classes and schools. Both stores also host guided trips on the local Johnson City lakes.

“Instructional classes are great opportunities, because many of the rivers are technical and can be challenging until you know them well and learn how to use the fishing equipment properly,” said Walters.

Mahoney’s Sports offers full service guided trips for trophy trout and small mouth bass, and is a customer’s one stop shop, carrying a large selection of rods and reels, waders and boots, vests and packs, fishing accessories and tying materials. While most of their products are geared for the cold-water areas, Mahoney’s also carries products for warm and saltwater areas. Mahoney’s offers instructional classes in beginning fly-fishing, casting, stream tactics and fly tying.

“Mahoney’s is East Tennessee’s premier fly fishing dealer, with a full-service shop, guides and a large inventory of equipment,” said Dan Mahoney, owner of Mahoney’s Sports. “If you want to know where the fish are biting, everyone calls Mahoney’s.”

For information on Mahoney’s Sports, instructional classes, and guide trips, call (800) 835-5152 or visit www.mahoneysports.com.

The Fly Shop of Tennessee, a full service shop that provides supplies for freshwater and saltwater fishing, it also specializes in high quality rigging for both saltwater and freshwater. With more than 40 years of experience, the Fly Shop guides customers in selecting gear that meets

every need. The Fly Shop, conveniently located near local rivers such as the Holston and Watauga, offers fishing classes, fly tying classes and guided trips.

“Fly Shop of Tennessee offers the customer everything they need to have a successful day on our local rivers,” said Walters.

For more information about the Fly Shop of Tennessee call (423) 928-2007, or visit www.flyshopoftn.com.

“Within the immediate area, there are 100 to 200, and probably more, water choices within a one hour drive that have native trout for fly fishing,” said Walters.

Wetlands Water Park:

Only 15 minutes away from Johnson City, in the quaint town of Jonesborough, guests can cool off at Wetlands Water Park. Wetlands Water Park includes water slides, kids’ pools, nature trails and picnic areas.

“Wetlands offers something for everyone—whether it’s a heart-stopping rampage down the 200-foot drop, or a leisurely stroll on the boardwalk through the natural wetlands area,” said Whitson.

Providing a unique water adventure experience, the Wetlands features a rain tree, three different flume slides ranging from 80 to 200 feet long, water bubblers and tumble buckets. Visitors can travel down the relaxing lazy river that wraps around the park or enjoy pavilions for shade and a full service café. The park features an area specifically for children, along with an otter slide.

The Wetlands season begins May 26 to September 3 and is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, call (423) 753-1550 or visit www.wetlandsjonesborough.com.

Boone Lake

Named for Daniel Boone, Boone Lake, a Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) reservoir, stems off the South Fork Holston River. Above the dam, Boone Lake features a swimming area, as well as a boat ramp and pier. Boone Lake also offers boating, water skiing and fishing for any of the lake’s species, including striped bass, black bass, white crappie and largemouth bass.

Sitting on Boone Lake in Boone's Creek, is Sonny's Marina, one of the original docks on Boone Lake, established in 1953. Sonny's has evolved into a local hot spot for residents and guests of Johnson City, along with the Runabout Café.

"We like to tell people that they have never been so close to a getaway, because our restaurant actually sits in the water, so it's like going to the beach without having to leave the area," said Mickii Carter, owner of Sonny's Marina. "Guests can feed the fish from their tables."

Sonny's offers guests to the marina the Topside Gift Shop and the Runabout Café. They also host local bands and have special events throughout the summer. For more information on Sonny's Marina, please call (423) 282-9440 or visit www.sonnysmarina.com.

Watauga Lake

Johnson City visitors and locals have been cooling off in Watauga Lake since 1942, when TVA began the construction of the Watauga Dam. It is now the highest reservoir in the state at more than 1,900 feet above sea level, and it is the third cleanest lake in the nation. Watauga Lake offers swimmers, boaters and fishers scenic mountain views of the Cherokee National Forest and Appalachian Mountains, as well as access to the Appalachian Trail.

"Watauga Lake astounds guests with breathtaking views of one of the most scenic lakes in the area with the striking background of the Cherokee National Forest and the Appalachian Mountains," said Whitson.

Watauga Lake is available for a variety of water activities, including swimming, fishing, canoeing, boating, water or jet skiing, or the opportunity to relax and enjoy the scenery at a water's edge picnic. Fishers have a variety of species to choose from, including trout, Muskie and bass. Below Watauga Dam, visitors have the opportunity to use the wildlife observation deck to view the area wildlife, including the chance to see a unique species of waterfowl.

While on Watauga Lake, Watauga Lakeshore Resort and Marina offers a full service marina, boat rentals, cottage and cabin rentals, motel units and the unique Captain's Table Restaurant.

"We are family owned and operated, opening in 1961, and we are the only resort on Watauga Lake," said Kathy Taylor, manager of Watauga Lakeshore Resort and Marina.

After a long day on the lake, guests should take advantage of the Captain's Table Restaurant. The Captain's Table specializes in seafood, steaks, chicken, and other items of the day, such as crab cakes and fried oysters.

"The view is beautiful and guests will enjoy glass front dining with tables by the windows," said Taylor. "Everything is homemade and we also offer wine and cocktails."

For information on Lakeshore Resort, please call (423) 725-2201 or visit www.lakeshore-resort.com.

White-water Rafting:

For visitors wanting an adventure filled water experience, the Northeast Tennessee Mountains offer white-water rafting opportunities along the Nolichucky River, which streams directly through Johnson City.

The Nolichucky River, streaming directly from the Blue Ridge Mountains, offers rafters the Upper Nolichucky, filled with class III and IV rapids, or the Lower Nolichucky, containing class I and II rapids and one class III rapid, as well as 700 foot cliffs and forested woodlands. Nolichucky rafters can also experience the Nolichucky River Gorge, the south's deepest river gorge at 3,000 feet, exhibiting steep cliffs and wildflowers.

Rafters can conquer the many rapids facing them on the Nolichucky experience, including Canyon Entrance, a class III rapid with a three-foot ledge drop, immediately followed by a series of waves as rafters exit the left channel. The Quarter Mile, one of the longest rapids in the south, challenges rafters with a series of seven drops, filled with boulders and hydraulics, while On the Rocks drops over a four-foot ledge, pushing rafters into a river section that designated the name.

Nolichucky rafters can also experience Tennessee history while navigating the rapids of the river. The Nolichucky River, running through historic sections that were the site of the first extensive settlement, allows rafters to travel through the area of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. The Nolichucky River also has ties with the first governor, John Sevier, who went by the nickname, "Nolichucky Jack."

The Watauga and Holston Rivers also run through Johnson City. The Watauga River, a dam-controlled river, consists of class I and II rapids, while the Holston River consists of class II

and III rapids. The Holston River connects with the French Broad River, ending in Knoxville to form the Tennessee River.

There are three companies in the area that offer rafting adventures: USA Raft, Nantahala Outdoor Center, and Cherokee Adventure, Inc. Rafters also have a variety of rafting crafts available to choose from, including inflatable ducks, rafts and Funyaks, depending on the season and weather conditions.

“Each white water company that visitors have to choose from offer a variety of unique and exciting packages that provide rafters with an adrenaline pumping rafting trips, rafting along the most majestic scenery in the area,” said Whitson.

Johnson City is located in Northeast Tennessee and is the fourth largest metropolitan city in the state. Set in a region known as America's First Frontier, Johnson City is “Where the Pioneer Spirit Began”—a historically significant and culturally rich community surrounded by an abundance of unspoiled natural beauty. Johnson City has a history, which dates back more than 200 years, and its culture embraces individual creativity and encourages innovation through expression. The area is world-renowned for its modern and traditional Appalachian and bluegrass music, art and cuisine, and outdoor recreation for the whole family throughout all four seasons.

For more information on Johnson City, please visit www.visitjohnsoncitytn.com or call (423) 461-8000 or (800) 852-3392.

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