



# Rabun County, Georgia

## Where spring spends the summer

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**by Lyn Freeman**

It's by no means any exaggeration to say that Rabun County, Georgia, is one of the most beautiful places in America. The Blue Ridge Mountains, green in the summer months and bursting with color in the fall, climb around a fairyland of forests and lakes and streams where trophy-sized brown trout rest in the eddies, and orchids and mountain laurel speckle the landscape with color. The Appalachian Trail cuts through Rabun County, as does the meandering Chattooga River. More than 60% of the area is set aside in national and state parks. On a still morning when the sun is just rising to light the mist in the lowlands, everything in the world feels right.

Part of that feeling is the idyllic climate. Rabun County residents describe their area as the place "where spring spends the summer." That's because temperatures in August typically stay in the 70s, and the mercury in winter months averages about 58 degrees. Rabun County shows up on a number of lists as one of the best places in the country to live.



### Rabun County 411

Rabun County Chamber  
of Commerce  
GAMountains.com  
706.782.4812

Heaven's Landing  
HeavensLanding.com  
800.HEAVEN2

Winegrowers Association  
of Georgia  
GeorgiaWine.com  
706.878.9463

Foxfire Museum  
Foxfire.org  
706.746.5828

Rabun County boasts thousands of acres to explore, with wildlife, friendly folks and a multitude of natural wonders.

For pilots, Rabun County in northern Georgia is a quick 100-mile flight from Atlanta. Heaven's Landing, created by former NASCAR driver Mike Ciochetti, is a gated community with a 5,000-foot runway smack dab in the middle of the county. All in all, it couldn't be any easier to visit for those of us with airplanes.

And there's no shortage of reasons to visit. Some come for the fishing. Five lakes in Rabun County have produced some record bass and trout catches. Wild rainbow and brown trout also draw anglers from around the country. You can arrange for a guide or take your rod and reel into the 165,000 acres of undisturbed national forest on your own. Much effort has gone into the region to ensure both fish and fisherman have everything they need.

Fishing is also fantastic in a number of places along the Chattooga, a pristine, fast-flowing river made famous from the scenery in the film *Deliverance*, but many visit the river to take on its power in nothing more than a bathing suit and a life jacket. Whitewater rafting down a river that the U.S. Congress set aside as a Wild and Scenic Area is the kind of thing that makes lifelong memories. The Chattooga is more technical than the Colorado River, plunging downward a total of 600 feet in less than a mile.

Three state parks — Moccasin Creek, Black Rock Mountain and Tallulah Gorge — are on most visitors' Do Not Miss list. The Tallulah Gorge is two miles long and nearly 1,000 feet deep, exposing more than a millennia of nature's work and creating one of the most

breathtaking locations in the eastern United States. Hike the rim trails to several overlooks, or get a free permit to go down to the gorge floor. A suspension bridge sways 80 feet above the rocky bottom, providing spectacular views of the river and waterfalls. Moccasin Creek State Park sits on the shores of 2,800-acre Lake Burton, a divine place to explore with a canoe. The 1,700-plus acres that make up Black Rock Mountain State Park are packed with colorful wildflowers, cascading streams, gentle waterfalls and lush forests, — the perfect mountain getaway. You can rent a cabin, bring your dog and stroll down to the park's trading post to share a cup of coffee or look at the trail map to plan your day's hike.

As heavenly as north Georgia is outdoors, there also are a lot of great reasons to

come inside. Like wine tasting. European immigrants began planting grapes in this area of Georgia more than 100 years ago because the elevation and the soil composition is very much like that of Italy's Piedmont region, which produces some of the most prestigious wines in the world. A dozen new wineries opened in last several years, and a dozen more have announced their intentions to begin making wine. Given the number of international awards the area's wineries have already brought home, it's fair to say that no wine lover should miss an opportunity to "taste" Rabun County.

There's also the Foxfire Museum, the result of an effort now known the world over. In 1966, a Rabun County high-school English class began producing a magazine they named

Foxfire. It contained stories and interviews gathered from elders in their rural Southern Appalachian community, a compendium of materials that championed the skills and values of the often dismissed mountain culture. A series of Foxfire books followed, anthologies of the information in the students' original magazine. The students elected to donate the royalty monies from their book series to purchase property and build a home for their work, the Foxfire Museum. This October, you can meet some of those original students and visit with some of their "contacts," where the information on wood carving and making musical instruments, baskets, cornshuck dolls and even log cabins was gathered originally.

The area is a Mecca for music, not surprisingly, with bluegrass ubiquitous at

watering holes and picking parlors across the region. Rabun County sponsors an average of eight concerts in the summer and fall. The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra also visits the county regularly. If you play an instrument, bring it along. There's always a chance to join the fun.

If you need some pavement under your feet, Clayton, Georgia, is an interesting place to explore. You can find gourmet food, antiques, golf courses and most of the amenities you'd expect when you're ready to reenter civilization. Clayton is just three miles from Heaven's Landing, where they're happy to show you where you and your airplane can set up permanent living quarters. All in all, Rabun County, Georgia, could be your next great Flying Adventure! Arrivals: Heaven's Landing (GE99). 