

# **Guide to Horseback Riding on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest 2007**

## **Where Can I Ride My Horse on the National Forest?**

Managers on the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests encourage all horseback riders to ride only on designated open or closed roads on the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forest (about 1,600 miles) or on any designated trail that is open to horseback use (about 200 miles on the national forests).

The Forest Service will begin work in 2008 on a site specific analysis on the Oconee National Forest to define where equestrian use will be allowed on that Forest. Currently, user-created equestrian trails are causing unacceptable resource damage on both the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests. Opportunities for public input to this analysis will be offered in the coming months. Please check the Forest Service website for additional information about these opportunities.

## **What is a Trail?**

The U.S. Forest Service has a designated system of trails stretching across the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forest. There are almost 900 miles of trails on the National Forest for a variety of uses. Some are appropriate for only one type of use such as mountain biking while some trails provide for a mixture of uses such as horseback riding and hiking. There are more than 200 miles of trails on the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forest open to horse use. Following is a listing of the trails open to horses along with the Ranger District that manages the trail.

Pinhoti 63 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
Beech Bottom 4 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
East Cowpen 7 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
Hemptop 5.4 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
Hickory Creek 8.6 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
Hickory Ridge 3.5 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
Horseshoe Bend 3.5 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
Iron Mountain 6.6 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
Penitentiary Branch 3.5 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
Rice Camp 3.9 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
Rough Ridge 7 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
South Fork 2.6 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
Sumac 9 Miles Armuchee/Cohutta  
Bull Mountain 18 Miles Toccoa District  
Turner Creek 4 Miles Toccoa District  
Pear Orchard Loop 2.5 Miles Chattooga District  
Frady Branch Loop 4.2 Miles Chattooga District  
Lady Slipper 6.2 Miles Chattooga District  
Latham Cemetary Loop 2.6 Miles Chattooga District  
Leatherwood Creek Loop 4.1 Miles Chattooga District

Darnell Horse 8 Miles Tallulah District  
Willis Knob 17 Miles Tallulah District  
Falling Creek 5 Miles Oconee District  
Kinnard Creek 5 Miles Oconee District  
Ocmulgee 2.5 Miles Oconee District  
Wise Creek 4.5 Miles Oconee District

### **What is a Road?**

The U.S. Forest Service has a system of roads that stretch across the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forest. These roads vary by level of development. Some are highly developed, wide, well-defined, heavily graveled and frequently used by vehicles. Some Forest Service roads are little more than lightly traveled woods roads. It is sometimes confusing to know which roads are 'designated' Forest Service roads.

One way to tell that a road is designated and on our system is by looking at a Forest map. Most developed roads are identified on the map with a Forest Service number. Another way to tell if a road is appropriate for horseback riding is to look for a number sign at the beginning of the road these signs generally are brown, rectangular and have the letters FS (for Forest Service) and a number following—such as FS602. An alternate method of finding out if a road is appropriate for horseback riding is to call a local Forest Service office. Forest Service personnel will be happy to identify what is on the trail system and what is not.

There are many old skid trails that were used for logging on the National Forest or old abandoned roads that are not on the Forest Service road system. While these may seem like a perfect place to ride, they are not currently open for equestrians. In the future, some of these old paths might be considered for new trails, however surveys and analysis of environmental impacts are required before a proposed trail can be added to the current trail system.

### **When a Road is Closed During the Winter or Gated, Can I Still Ride My Horse on It?**

Yes. It is common for the U.S. Forest Service to close some roads in north Georgia during the winter months to prevent damage from motorized vehicles. These months bring more rainfall and combined with the freezing and thawing that we see in the north Georgia mountains, this can lead to severe damage when vehicles travel on these roads during those months. However, horseback riding will continue to be allowed on these seasonally closed roads or gated roads unless the road is signed specifically as closed to horse use or for foot travel only.