



Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area

By the Numbers

Mission:

To preserve and interpret the nationally significant cultural, historic, archaeological, geologic, fish and wildlife, scenic, and recreational value; to preserve the free-flowing Big South Fork and portions of its tributaries; to preserve the natural integrity of the gorge; to provide healthful outdoor recreation for the enjoyment of the public and for the benefit of the regional economy.

Over **125,000** acres in two states, 5 counties and two time zones.

Over **600,000** annual visitors

200 volunteers contributing over **8,000** volunteer hours

585,178 museum objects/artifacts

1898 archaeological sites

25 historic structures
(**18** are National Register-eligible)

17 endangered species

244 miles of rivers and streams

200 miles of horse trails

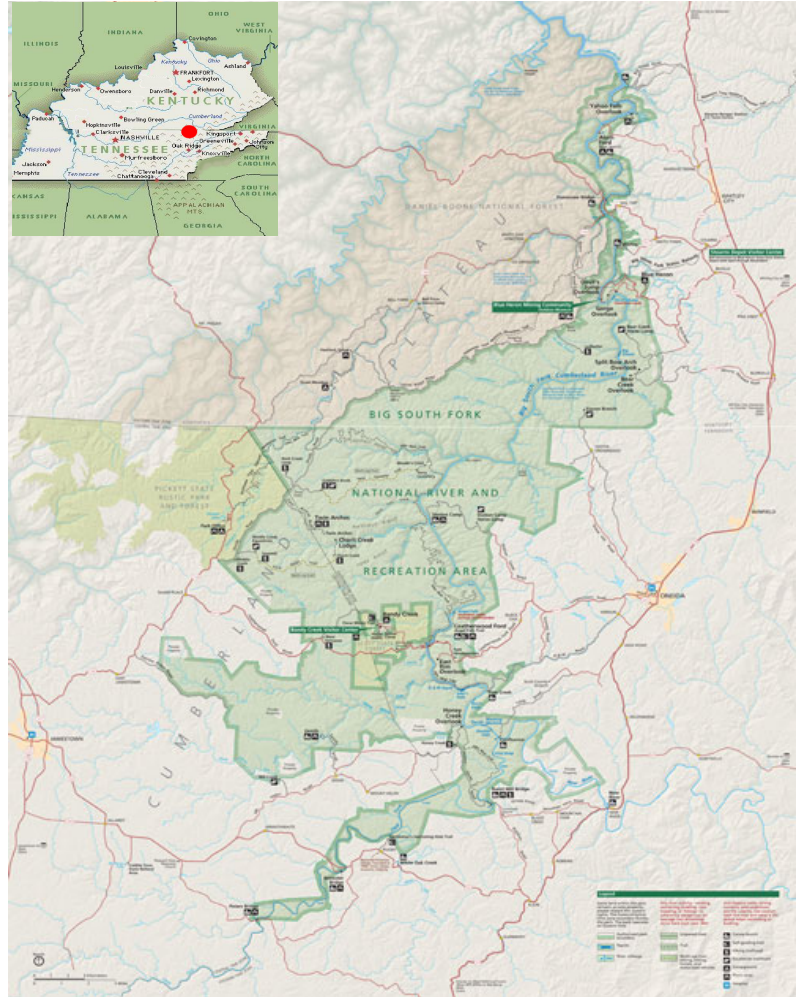
190 miles of hiking trails

57 miles of mountain biking trails

3 general campgrounds with over **233** campsites and **2** equestrian campgrounds with **47** campsites

1 horse/mule stabling operation, with camp store

1 rustic 1830s era backcountry lodge and horse stabling operation



Destination: Recreation

Encompassing 125,000 acres of the Cumberland Plateau, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area protects the free-flowing Big South Fork of the Cumberland River and its tributaries as free flowing streams. The area boasts miles of scenic gorges and sandstone bluffs, which is rich with natural and historic features and has been developed to provide visitors with a wide range of outdoor recreational activities.

Visits to Dollars

Based on current visitation and using the Money Generation Model developed by Michigan State University, Big South Fork contributes over \$10 million dollars yearly to local economies.

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area was formed by an act of Congress on March 7, 1974, and protects the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River and its tributaries as free flowing streams in Tennessee, and Kentucky. Encompassing 125,000 acres, Big South Fork is the fifth largest unit of the National Park System in the Eastern United States. The park is home to hundreds of natural wonders and breath taking views. Over time the river has carved deep gorges and beautiful rock formations throughout the landscape. Because of its biological richness, The Nature Conservancy has designated the area as the eighth most important habitat in the world. The Big South Fork is habitat to more than 80 plant and animal species on the state and/or federal threatened or endangered list. Rare river prairies occur at Big South Fork -- the largest concentration of cobble bar plant communities in existence. Here in the river gorges of the Cumberland Plateau the driving force is water, where floods wash over the habitat scouring out species not adapted to disturbance.

The park abounds in dramatic cliffs, arches, and rock shelters. The region contains more natural arches than any other region in the eastern United States. Natural arches form along gorge edges where resistant sandstone is able to support its own weight when layers below erode away. Twin Arches, an easy 1.5 mile round trip hike from a parking lot, is the largest arch complex in the east. Big South Fork is home to Kentucky's tallest waterfall, Yahoo Falls.

Big South Fork has a number of concessions within its boundaries that offer visitors services and conveniences not often found in many parks.

- Big South Fork Scenic Railway is a heritage railroad that starts in Stearns, Kentucky, and runs for nine miles into the park. The southern terminus is in the park at Blue Heron, a former coal mining community that has been recreated and maintained as an interpretative history center.
- The Charit Creek Lodge is located in the Station Camp Creek drainage and offers a full range of amenities including cabin and dormitory rentals, meals, restrooms and showers. Access to the remote lodge is by foot, bike or horse only.
- The Bandy Creek Stables is a concessions managed stables available for those who wish to board their horse while camping at the adjacent Bandy Creek Campground.
- Station Camp and Bear Creek are both operated by a National Park Service concessionaire. Campsites provide water and electrical hookups, tie outs for four horses, restrooms with showers, and a dump station.

For those who want to experience the park overnight, the park has a wide range of options including developed campgrounds with hookups and hot shower to primitive campgrounds, group camps, horse camp campgrounds, backcountry camping, and a backcountry lodge.

Contact Information

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Visit our website at www.nps.gov/biso for more information such as phone numbers, extensive trip planning materials, student and teacher resources, maps, and brochures.

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Niki Stephanie Nicholas serves as the superintendent for Big South Fork NRRRA. Nicholas, who had been serving as the Chief of Resources Management and Science at Yosemite National Park in California for the previous seven years, officially assumed her new duties on January 17, 2011.

Prior to working at Yosemite, Nicholas worked at the Tennessee Valley Authority. Her last position there was as senior manager for Environmental Impact Reduction Technologies.

