

Special Use Permit Guidelines for Great Smoky Mountains National Park

A Special Use Permit (SUP) is required to hold wedding services, vow renewal, commitment ceremonies or to use a historic structure (such as for a church service) in the park. These guidelines are intended to facilitate discrete services and ceremonies appropriate to the quiet, natural settings found in the park.

How to Apply For a SUP

- Please thoroughly read the guidelines and permit conditions for a special use permit.
- Check availability and make a tentative reservation by contacting the SUP office by email or phone prior to submitting an application. Application and payment must be received at least 14 days after making reservation.
- Events can be scheduled up to 1 year in advance. Application and payment must be received at least 14 days in advance of an event and at least 21 days for special requests. There are no guarantees that a last minute request can be accommodated.
- Submission requirements: Application for Special Use Permit, Service Providers Form and Payment.
- Finalized SUPs will be mailed to the applicant and must be signed upon receipt.

Fees & Payments:

| Type of Event | Non-Refundable Application Fee | Administrative Fee | Total Due |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| All Weddings, Vow Renewals, etc. at pre-designated locations | \$50 | \$0 | \$50 |
| Events held at locations not listed | \$50 | \$100 | \$150 |
| Historic Structure Use (i.e. church services / memorial services) | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Applications submitted less than 14 days from event date | \$50 | \$100 | \$150 |

Payment Methods & Application Submission:

- Check / Money Order: Make check/money order payable to the National Park Service; mail payment along with the Application and Service Provider Form to the Special Use Permit Office.
- Credit/Debit card or PayPal payments: Visit www.pay.gov, search for “Great Smoky Mountains National Park” and select “Special Use Permit Fees”. Click “continue to form”. Complete information and make payment. Please verify the amount due to avoid overpayment of fees. Submit the Application and Service Provider Form to the Special Use Permit Office.

Considerations for locations within the Cades Cove Loop Road

- The Cades Cove Loop Road opens at official sunrise and closes at official sunset. Permits will be scheduled to conclude no less than one hour before sunset to allow time to exit the loop.
- Permits will not be issued for Saturdays and Sundays in Cades Cove during the month of October. Monday thru Friday events are restricted to pre-designated locations during October.
- On bicycle closure days, no events will be permitted before 11 AM on these days to allow for transportation delays. Bicycle closure days run from the Wednesday following the first Saturday in May through the Wednesday proceeding the last Saturday in September.
- Weekend visitation in Cades Cove is very high from April through October. Extra travel time should be allowed for preparation and guest transportation.
- Small parking areas near historic structures are generally not adequate for buses or other large vehicles.
- There is no cell phone service in Cades Cove. Provide clear instructions and a detailed map to everyone involved in your event.

Pre-Designated Locations

| Permitted locations | Site Locations & Restrictions |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wildlife Overlook | This location is approximately 0.5 mile beyond the Missionary Baptist Church on the Cades Cove Loop Road. October Restrictions: Permits will not be issued for Saturdays and Sundays in Cades Cove and only 1 event per day. |
| LeQuire Cemetery Overlook and adjacent field | This location is approximately 0.3 mile beyond the Sparks Lane junction on the Cades Cove Loop Road. Events are restricted to outside the fenced area. October Restrictions: Permits will not be issued for Saturdays and Sundays in Cades Cove and only 1 event per day. |
| Cataloochee Overlook | None |
| Cataract Falls | No parking or waiting at trailhead from 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM on weekdays; vehicles must be parked at Sugarlands Visitor Center. |
| Chimneys Picnic Area | From May 25 thru Sept. 7 and all of October, 8 AM to 10 AM only. No time restrictions on other dates. Closes at 8 p.m. from May 1 – August 31 and at sunset from Sep. 1-April 30. Seasonally Closed |
| Clingmans Dome parking area and the immediate vicinity | Road is seasonally closed. The observation tower and the trail leading to it are not part of the designated area. |
| Foothills Parkway East | Applications must list the specific overlook. Overlooks are numbered from 1 to 4, beginning at the west end, i.e. the overlook closest to Hwy 321 is #1; the one closest to I-40 is #4. Maximum of 4 weddings per day total. |
| Foothills Parkway West | *Walland to Hwy 129: Indicate the specific overlook for event location. Overlooks are numbered from 1 to 14, beginning at the east end. Most overlooks are marked with a sign bearing the overlook number. Note that there is a number 4 ½. *Wears Valley (mile marker 17) to Walland (mile marker 31): To identify the requested overlook, indicate the mile marker numbers on each side of the overlook. Maximum of 4 weddings per day total. No events on the bridges. |
| Gatlinburg By-pass overlooks | The south overlook is closest to the park/Newfound Gap Road. The north overlook is closest to the entrance sign / Campbell Lead. |
| Greenbrier #1 | Specifically the area between U.S. 321 and the Greenbrier Ranger Station. This includes roadside areas and the “beach” area along the Middle Prong of the Little Pigeon River. From May 25 thru Sept. 7, no events between 10 AM and 6 PM. |
| Greenbrier #2, | Specifically the area at the Old Settlers Trailhead, including the area adjacent to the river. |
| Heintooga overlook | Seasonally closed |
| Lakeview Drive pullout overlooking Fontana Lake | Maximum of 15 cars and 30 people. |
| Maloney Point | This location is just east of Fighting Creek Gap on Little River Road. |
| Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (excluding the pavilion) | From May 25 thru Sept. 7 and all of October, 8 AM to 10 AM only. No time restrictions at other dates. The west half of the picnic area is seasonally closed. |
| Millsap | This location is 0.3 mile west of Elkmont junction on Little River Road |
| Mingus Mill | From March through November, no events between 9 AM and 5 PM. 1 event per day. |
| Newfound Gap parking area and the immediate vicinity | None |
| Noah Bud Ogle cabin | From May 25 thru Sept. 7 and all of October, 8 AM to 10 AM only. No time restrictions at other dates. |
| Oconaluftee overlook | This location is at mile post 15.3 on Newfound Gap Road. |
| Methodist Church at Cades Cove | Maximum of 6 cars and 50 people. No permits for events in cemeteries. October Restrictions: Permits will not be issued for Saturdays and Sundays in Cades Cove and only 1 event per day.. |
| Missionary Baptist Church at Cades Cove | Maximum of 6 cars and 50 people. No permits for events in cemeteries. October Restrictions: Permits will not be issued for Saturdays and Sundays in Cades Cove and only 1 event per day. |
| Palmer Chapel at Cataloochee | 1 event per day; Maximum of 10 cars and 50 people. |

| Permitted locations | Site Locations & Restrictions |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Primitive Baptist Church at Cades Cove | Maximum of 10 cars and 60 people. No permits for events in cemeteries. October Restrictions: Permits will not be issued for Saturdays and Sundays in Cades Cove and only 1 event per day. |
| Smokemont Church | Maximum of 6 cars and 40 people. Application must identify transportation plans. |
| Historic structures not otherwise listed | Permits are issued for weddings on a case-by-case basis. Approval is not guaranteed. |
| Appalachian Clubhouse | Seasonally Closed Seating capacity is 110 people. Facility Reservation Required thru www.recreation.gov prior to submitting application for SUP |
| Spence Cabin | Seasonally Closed Seating capacity is 40 people. Facility Reservation Required thru www.recreation.gov prior to submitting application for SUP |
| #Picnic Pavilions: Collins Creek, Cosby, Deep Creek, Greenbrier, Metcalf Bottoms, and Twin Creeks pavilions. | The number of people (and cars) is pavilion-specific. The Cades Cove group camp pavilion is intended for overnight camping and its use for weddings and associated activities is prohibited. Pavilions are seasonally closed. |

Special Use Permit Office (Weddings & Historic Structure Use)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Attn: Special Use Permits

60 Enloe Floyd Bottoms Road

Cherokee, NC 28719

(828) 497-1930

(828) 497-1933 (fax)

grsm_special_use_permits@nps.gov

Attachment A: Service Providers

Applicants are required to provide all vendor information associated with this event; only the activities and vendors listed will be authorized under a Special Use Permit. Permit holders must ensure that vendors understand and adhere to the guidelines to avoid termination of the permit. The permit holder may be held liable for any condition of the permit which is not adhered to by the vendor.

This form is required as part of your application packet. Failure to provide all necessary information may result in denial or delay in issuing a permit.

Check all that apply and provide contact information:

| Type of Service | Business Name | Website (if available) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wedding Planner | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photography | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Officiant | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musician / DJ | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Florist | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Videographer | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Services* | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial wedding services will not be used for this event. | | |

*Transportation Services requires a separate Commercial Use Authorization, information may be found at www.nps.gov/grsm/getinvolved/dobusinesswithus.htm

CONDITIONS OF PERMIT

Failure to comply with any of the terms and conditions of this permit may result in the immediate suspension or revocation of the permit. [36 CFR 1.6(h)]

1. The permittee is prohibited from giving false information; to do so will be considered a breach of conditions and be grounds for revocation: [36 CFR 2.32(a)(3)].
2. This permit may not be transferred or assigned without the prior written consent of the Superintendent.
3. The permittee shall exercise this privilege subject to the supervision of the Superintendent or designee, and shall comply with all applicable Federal, State, county and municipal laws, ordinances, regulations, codes, and the terms and conditions of this permit. Failure to do so may result in the immediate suspension of the permitted activity or the revocation of the permit. All costs associated with clean up or damage repairs in conjunction with a revoked permit will be the responsibility of the permittee.
4. The permittee is responsible for making all necessary contacts and arrangements with other Federal, State, and local agencies to secure required inspections, permits, licenses, etc.
5. The park area associated with this permit will remain open and available to the public during park visiting hours. This permit does not guarantee exclusive use of an area. Permit activities will not unduly interfere with other park visitors' use and enjoyment of the area.
6. This permit may be revoked at the discretion of the Superintendent upon 24 hours' notice.
7. This permit may be revoked without notice if damage to resources or facilities occurs or is threatened, notwithstanding any other term or condition of the permit to the contrary.
8. This permit is made upon the express condition that the United States, its agents and employees shall be free from all liabilities and claims for damages and/or suits for or by reason of any injury, injuries, or death to any person or persons or property of any kind whatsoever, whether to the person or property of the Permittee, its agents or employees, or third parties, from any cause or causes whatsoever while in or upon said premises or any part thereof during the term of this permit or occasioned by any occupancy or use of said premises or any activity carried on by the Permittee in connection herewith, and the Permittee hereby covenants and agrees to indemnify, defend, save and hold harmless the United States, its agents, and employees from all liabilities, charges, expenses and costs on account of or by reason of any such injuries, deaths, liabilities, claims, suits or losses however occurring or damages growing out of the same.
9. Permittee agrees to carry general liability insurance against claims occasioned by the action or omissions of the permittee, its agents and employees in carrying out the activities and operations authorized by this permit. The policy shall be in the amount of \$__ per Occurrence, \$__ Aggregate and underwritten by a United States company naming the United States of America as **additional insured**. The permittee agrees to provide the Superintendent with a Certificate of Insurance with the proper endorsements prior to the effective date of the permit.
10. Permittee agrees to deposit with the park a bond in the amount of \$_ from an authorized bonding company or in the form of cash or cash equivalent, to guarantee that all financial obligations to the park will be met.
11. Costs incurred by the park as a result of accepting and processing the application and managing and monitoring the permitted activity will be reimbursed by the permittee. Administrative costs and estimated costs for activities on site must be paid when the permit is approved. If any additional costs are incurred by the park, the permittee will be billed at the conclusion of the permit. Should the estimated costs paid exceed the actual costs incurred; the difference will be returned to the permittee.
12. The person(s) named on the permit as in charge of the permitted activity on-site must have full authority to make any decisions about the activity and must remain available at all times. He/she shall be responsible for all individuals, groups, vendors, etc. involved with the permit.
13. Nothing herein contained shall be construed as binding the Service to expend in any one fiscal year any sum in excess of appropriations made by Congress or administratively allocated for the purpose of this permit for the fiscal year, or to involve the Service in any contract or other obligation for the further expenditure of money in excess of such appropriations or allocations.
14. If any provision of this permit shall be found to be invalid or unenforceable, the remainder of this permit shall not be affected and the other provisions of this permit shall be valid and be enforced to the fullest extent permitted by law.

PARK SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

The following conditions are intended to authorize *discrete services/ceremonies appropriate to the quiet, natural settings found in the Park*. Persons wishing to have a large wedding and/or utilize formal music or decorations should select a location outside the park.

15. **Fees:** A non-refundable application fee is required, irrespective of the outcome of the approval process.
16. **Service Providers:** The permit holder will provide a list of all commercial service providers hired to render services inside Great Smoky Mountains National Park under the provisions of this permit. The park reserves the right to prohibit the use of specific service providers within the park should it document a history of misconduct or an unwillingness to abide by park regulations. Activities conducted by professional wedding officiants, caterers, photographers, wedding planners, etc., hired by the permit holder will be subject to the conditions of this permit. Permit holders are required to give all service providers a copy of the permit conditions and ensure they understand and adhere to the conditions to avoid termination of the permit. The permit holder may be held liable for any condition of the permit which is not adhered to by any service provider hired for use.
17. **Commercial Transportation Services:** Any commercial transportation services utilized by the permit holder will require a separate Commercial Use Authorization. For more information and to obtain an application please visit our website at <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/getinvolved/dobusinesswithus.htm>
18. **Legal Requirement:** The permit holder, and all its agents, must comply with all of the conditions of this permit including all amendments, application requirements and written or verbal directives from the Superintendent or their designee. Failure to adhere to the conditions of this authorization is a violation, pursuant to 36 CFR 1.6 (g)(2), for which a citation may be issued, and may subject the permittee to additional citations/penalties as prescribed by law or regulation, including revocation of the permit. The permit holder will be held liable for any conditions violated by their invited guests and/or service providers.
19. **Permit Approval:** Proof of permit approval must be in the possession of the permittee at the time of the event. A copy of the complete permit, including all conditions, must be presented to park staff upon request. To facilitate monitoring by the park and minimize disruptions, permittees should display a copy of the permit on the dashboard of a vehicle associated with the event so that it is visible to an inspecting ranger.
20. **Quality Assurance:** Certain conditions contained herein are intended to assure that the activities authorized by the National Park Service are conducted with reasonable quality assurance. However, no judgment is made of the quality of the service by the National Park Service and none should be implied in advertising or other statements made to the public by the permit holder or any service provider.
21. **Permits, Licenses, and Insurance:** Service providers must obtain all permits, proper inspections, or licenses from the state(s) of Tennessee and/or North Carolina or local governments, as applicable to conduct the business activities specified above and must operate in compliance with all pertinent Federal, State, and local laws and regulations. The permit holder is responsible for ensuring that service providers possess the proper inspections, licenses and insurances. It is recommended that vendors hold a minimum General Commercial Liability Policy in the amount of \$500,000 from an insurance provider who holds a minimum rating of A-.
22. **Business Operations:** This authorization does not authorize the holder or hired service provider to advertise, solicit business, collect any fees, or sell any goods or services on *lands owned and controlled by the United States*. The authorization allows for very limited incidental business operations when the commercial activity originates and terminates outside the park, no money exchanges hands on park lands and no commercial solicitation occurs on park lands.
23. **Area Use:** This permit is applicable only for the use of the area, term, and conditions designated herein. The permit holder is allowed access to any of the following locations for *photography purposes only* on the same date of the issued permit: scenic overlooks, open fields, stream banks, historic areas, or within ¼ mile of the trailhead on any designated trail. Photo sessions that take place at one of the pre-designated locations, or that last longer than one day, will require an additional permit. Photographs of the wedding party cannot be taken on paved roads or bridges which are open to motor vehicle use. Park cemeteries are also a prohibited location. The area(s) authorized for use under this authorization must be left in substantially the same condition as it was prior to the activities authorized herein. The permit holder shall pay the United States for any damage resulting from this use which would not reasonably be inherent in the use which the permit holder is authorized to make of the land described in this permit.
24. **Limitations:** Participation in the event is limited to a maximum of 6 cars and 25 people, unless otherwise noted on the locations list. These limits include all invited guests, vendors and their respective employees and their associated vehicles. Up to six chairs will be allowed to accommodate participants with special needs. Events are limited to 1 hour at outdoor locations and 90 minutes in historic structures. This timeframe includes setup, ceremony, photography, and cleanup at the authorized

event location. Photography services may continue, at other locations, beyond these timeframes but must be completed on the day of the event. Rental facilities have designated capacities and reserved timeframes and, as such, all activities and services are subject to the rental facility parameters.

25. **Advertisement:** This permit does not authorize hired service providers to advertise¹ or to solicit for business for commercial services occurring inside the National Park on websites or social media platforms. Businesses are only allowed to advertise if they hold a Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) with the park. Any vendor or service provider who advertises services without a CUA will be barred from providing future services until a CUA is obtained.
26. **Behavior and Conduct:** The permit holder and its agents are required to exercise courtesy and consideration in their relations with the public and with National Park Service (NPS) employees, volunteers or other park agents. The permit holder will review and correct the conduct of any event participant or service provider whose actions or activities are considered by the Service to be inconsistent with the experience, enjoyment, and protection of visitors and stewards of public land.
27. **Public Use:** A Special Use Permit (SUP) does not grant the permit holder exclusive use of any areas of the park and permit holders are prohibited from restricting visitor use. Virtually the entire park is open to the public.
28. **Parking:** All vehicles associated with the permitted activity must park in established parking lots or roadside pull outs. Vehicles may not be parked on road shoulders, may not obstruct or impede traffic flow, and may not be driven off-road or into fields. Parking spaces may not be reserved or blocked off, nor can parked vehicles interfere with normal public use. Carpooling is encouraged. All vehicles are prohibited from idling. Drivers must turn off vehicle engines when parked or when not actively loading or unloading passengers.
29. **Vehicles:** Transportation vehicles longer than 25 feet are prohibited on the following park roads: Chimneys Picnic Area, Elkmont Road above the campground, Balsam Mountain Road, Little Greenbrier, Parson Branch Road, Rich Mountain Road, Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail, Toms Branch Road, Twin Creeks, Wear Gap Road from the park boundary to and including Metcalf Bridge, and Greenbrier Road from the Ranger Station south. Transportation vehicles longer than 25 feet must park in areas designated for oversized parking at park visitor centers. Vehicles under 25 feet are allowed in all locations in which the general public are permitted.
30. **Wildlife:** Willfully approaching within 50 yards of bear or elk, or within any distance that results in their disturbance or displacement, is prohibited. Harassing (e.g. intentional touching, teasing, frightening or disturbing) or feeding wildlife is prohibited pursuant to 36 CFR 2.2(a)(2). The permit holder will ensure that guests are familiar with the park rules and responsibilities of food storage and personal behavior as they relate to all wildlife, particularly bears. The permit holder will report any information about unusual bear activity to the park Dispatch Office at 865-436-1230 as soon as is practical after the activity.
31. **Music:** Acoustical instruments and/or mobile music devices are permitted, provided they are played at a reasonable volume. Sound amplification equipment, including electric musical instruments and keyboards, microphones and the use of a generator, is prohibited, unless otherwise noted.
32. **Floral Arrangements:** Discrete floral arrangements are permitted. All decorations must be removed immediately after the event.
33. **Prohibited Items:** The following items are prohibited for use: Horse-drawn carriages, tents, tables, banners, signs, and decorations such as: carpet runners, balloons, garden arches, fireworks, candles, oil lamps, any item which produces an open flame, fog machines, confetti, bubbles, flower petals, silly string, birdseed, rice or any other such material. The release of live animals is also prohibited. Portable heating or cooling devices (electric or otherwise) is not allowed.
34. **Prohibited Activities:** Unreasonable noise, such as horn honking and dragging tin cans, and littering, including that which could result from tying items to a car, is prohibited. The use of facilities, not listed in the permit, is prohibited (e.g. for use as a dressing room or waiting areas, or using a structure as a rain shelter). Permittees should make alternate plans (outside the park) to accommodate bad weather.
35. **Drones:** The use of an unmanned aircraft (UAS) or drone of any kind is strictly prohibited.

¹ Advertisement is defined as the utilization of any photographic material containing portrait subject(s) that is taken inside the boundary of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, including Foothills Parkway, or any other promotional material which references Great Smoky Mountains National Park posted on a company website or social media platform established to promote said company's services.

36. **Historic Structures:** The permittee may clean a structure before using it. Cleaning means sweeping and dusting and/or washing with light dishwashing solution. The use of any chemical cleaning agents is prohibited. The use of a sweeping compound is permitted, provided it is disposed of outside the Park. Furnishings may not be moved or disturbed nor may nails or similar devices be used to hang items from walls, furniture or other surfaces. Writing or carving on any historic structure is vandalism and violators will be cited for such activity.
37. **Picnicking:** Picnicking is prohibited at any area that would adversely impact the historic scene or interfere with operations of the park. Therefore picnicking (including eating of wedding cake) is prohibited in or near historic structures, with the exception of Appalachian Clubhouse and Spence Cabin which can be reserved through [recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). Picnicking by groups of more than 15 people require the use of a designated picnic area. The "holding" or "reserving" of additional picnic sites and or tables, within designated picnic areas is prohibited. Groups should consider using picnic shelters or facilities available by reservation through www.recreation.gov.
38. **Food Preparation & Storage:** All food preparation, food, and food storage equipment must be stored inside a vehicle or hard sided structure at all times when not in use. The use of portable stoves, including charcoal grills, is prohibited in frontcountry areas except in designated picnic areas. Do not throw food scraps on the ground or in fire rings.
39. **Trash:** The holder will be responsible for promptly collecting trash on site, storing trash in a wildlife proof vehicle during the event if a trash receptacle is not readily available, and properly disposing of trash in a receptacle at the conclusion of the event.
40. **Catering:** Catering services are restricted to picnic pavilions (Metcalf Bottoms, Greenbrier, Collins Creek, Cosby, Deep Creek, Cades Cove, and Twin Creeks), the Appalachian Clubhouse and Spence Cabin with a valid reservation. All rental facilities are available for rent through www.recreation.gov. Catering services are limited to food service establishments which are maintained and operated in accordance with the rules and regulations recommended by the US Public Health service and the substantive requirements of State and local laws and regulations relating to such establishments. Food shall only be prepared by a food service establishment that is accredited by the Health Department. Caterers are not authorized to serve individuals, other than those associated with the permitted event, and may not sell food items to the general public. The permit holder is responsible for facility clean-up and removal of all equipment, food and trash.
41. **Alcohol Use:** Catered alcohol service is restricted to picnic pavilions (Metcalf Bottoms, Greenbrier, Collins Creek, Cosby, Deep Creek, Cades Cove, and Twin Creeks), the Appalachian Clubhouse and to Spence Cabin with a valid reservation. A state approved bartender with a state-issued Alcohol Beverage Commission Server Permit is required for any catering service that serves alcoholic beverages. Licensed caterers prohibited from serving alcohol only in the absence of food at the event. No alcoholic beverages are allowed outside of the Appalachian Clubhouse and Spence Cabin as open containers are illegal in all park areas other than these facilities and at designated campgrounds and picnic areas. Violators will be subject to fine and/or arrest.
42. **Public Health:** The holder will comply with applicable public health and sanitation standards and codes. The permit holder will promptly report information about any human illness, whether employees or guests, to the park at 865-436-1296 for reporting to the NPS Southeast Region's Public Health Consultant. This information, along with other information received, will be evaluated by the Public Health Consultant to help identify outbreaks of illness associated with contaminated water or food sources or caused by other adverse environmental conditions.