

# Special Use Permit Guidelines for Weddings, Portrait Photography and Historic Structure Use Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is home to many beautiful and iconic scenic landscapes that make it a popular destination for weddings and wedding activities. These guidelines are intended to facilitate discrete services and 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 consider the Appalachian Clubhouse, Spence Cabin or the Twin Creeks picnic pavilion or a location outside the park.

Please read these guidelines thoroughly and make sure the application is fully completed before submittal.

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## Special Use Permits

- A Special Use Permit (SUP) is required to hold wedding services, vow renewal, or to use a historic structure (such as for a church service) in the park. Permits will not be issued for events in the Park's cemeteries.
  - A SUP is required for portrait photography when conducted at the attached pre-designated locations. For consideration at all other locations, please contact the SUP office listed in the Contacts section.
  - A SUP is required for events at the Appalachian Clubhouse and Spence Cabin, however, the application fee is waived for these locations only. These facilities can be reserved through [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or by calling 877-444-6777.
  - Applicants should not make plans or commitments with vendors based on their proposed location or date and time until they receive a finalized SUP from the park. Applicants should therefore submit their application well in advance of any deadlines for mailing invitations, etc.
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## How to Apply For a SUP

- Applicants **must** make a tentative reservation for a location/date/time before submitting their application. Tentative reservations will be held for up to ten (10) calendar days or until receipt of the application, whichever is sooner.
  - A complete Application for Special Use Permit (attached) and \$50 non-refundable application fee must be submitted to the park. Applications received without the required fee will be returned without action.
  - Standard applications must be received by the park no less than 14 days in advance of the event. If the event will require some variation from the standard guidelines, the application must be received no less than 21 days in advance and will be subject to a \$100 permit fee.
  - Applications may be submitted up to 1 year in advance of the event.
  - Finalized SUPs will be mailed to the applicant and must be signed upon receipt.
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## Fees & Payment

- A \$50 non-refundable application fee is charged for all wedding, wedding photography and vow renewal permits also portrait photography when applicable.
- A \$100 permit fee will be charged for preparing a permit *with requests made outside the standard wedding guidelines (i.e. requesting a location not listed in these guidelines)*.
- Application fees will be waived for historic structure use (i.e. church services).
- Payments may be made by:
  - Check or Money Order made payable to the National Park Service and mailed with the application to the address in the Contacts section.
  - Credit/Debit card or PayPal payments through Pay.gov. The Pay.gov Tracking ID number must be submitted with the application as verification of payment. Applications with electronic payment may be submitted via mail, fax or email. This information is contained in the Contacts section.

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## Event Locations

- Virtually the entire park is open to public use. A SUP does not grant the permit holder exclusive use of a specified area and the holder may not restrict other visitors from using the area in which the event is being held.
- Attachment A is a list of pre-designated locations along with any restrictions for each area.
- Attachment B is a listing of facilities requiring a reservation thru [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or by calling 877-444-6777. A SUP is still required for these facilities but the application fee is waived. See [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov) for restrictions relative to these facilities.
- Locations not listed in the attachments require coordination with park staff and approval is not guaranteed. If approved, these permits will be subject to the \$100 permit fee.
- Outdoor events are limited to 1 hour and services conducted in historic structures are limited to 90 minutes. These timeframes include setup, photography and cleanup.
- Attendance for outdoor events is limited to 20 people and 6 cars unless otherwise noted in the location listings. (See Attachment A)

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## Commercial Services

- A Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) is required for individuals or businesses who conduct commercial wedding or photography services in the park.
- Persons wishing to enlist the services of a commercial wedding planner or photographer should confirm with the vendor that they possess a valid CUA prior to booking them for any service in the park, or hire them with the provision that the vendor will obtain a CUA prior to the event date.
- Businesses that fail to obtain the required CUA are subject to fines under 36 CFR.
- A current list of CUA holders can be found by searching the park website, [www.nps.gov/grsm](http://www.nps.gov/grsm), for “Doing Business with the Park.”
- CUA holders are restricted to the pre-designated locations and the standard guidelines.
- Florists, caterers and limousine services do not require a CUA, but should contact the park in advance to obtain commercial vehicle clearance.
- Ordained ministers of churches and photographers are exempt from the CUA requirement if they perform no more than two weddings per year in the park and do not advertise their services. Contact the Commercial Services office for more information.
- Applicants must make their own arrangements for someone to officiate the event.
- For more information about obtaining a CUA refer to the contacts section.

## Conditions of a Special Use Permit

- The permit must be in the possession of the permittee at the time of the event and must be presented to a park employee upon request. To facilitate monitoring by the park and minimize disruption to events, permits should be displayed on the dashboard of a vehicle associated with the event so that it is visible to an inspecting ranger.
- Permits will not be issued for more than one location and the Park cannot make last minute changes in response to bad weather.
- All vehicles must be parked in designated parking areas. Carpooling is encouraged.
- Acoustical instruments and/or one battery powered device are permitted, providing they are played at a reasonable volume. Sound amplification equipment, including electric musical instruments and keyboards and the use of a generator, is prohibited, unless otherwise noted.
- Discrete floral arrangements are permitted and must be removed immediately after the event.
- Tents, tables, chairs, banners, signs (including directional), and decorations such as balloons, garden arches, carpet runners, etc. are prohibited.
- Up to six chairs will be allowed to accommodate participants with special needs, e.g. elderly or infirm.
- The use or release of live animals, e.g. butterflies or doves, is prohibited.
- Littering is prohibited. The use, throwing or scattering of rice, birdseed, confetti, silly string, bubbles, flower petals (real or artificial), or other materials is prohibited.
- The use of horse-drawn vehicles is prohibited – *no exceptions*.
- The use of facilities not listed in the permit is prohibited for event preparation, e.g. dressing or waiting areas, or rain shelter.
- Historic structures, including churches, are dark inside, are not heated and do not have electricity.
- Historic structures must be used as is, furnishings may not be moved or disturbed nor may nails or similar devices be used to hang items from walls, furniture or other surfaces.
- The Park does not clean these structures for special events. The permittee may clean a structure before using it. Cleaning means sweeping or dusting and/or washing with soapy water. The use of any chemical cleaning agent, other than a sweeping compound, is prohibited.
- Food and alcoholic beverages, including wedding cake, is prohibited in or near historic structures and only permitted at locations listed in Attachment B.
- Unreasonable noise, such as horn honking, dragging tin cans, etc. is prohibited.
- Candles, oil lamps, and other open flames are not permitted.

### Additional Conditions 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 preceding 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.

## Attachment A Pre-Designated Locations

- Applicants should make a tentative reservation for these locations.
- Attendance is limited to 20 people and 6 cars unless otherwise noted.

Permitted locations	Date/time restrictions	Other remarks
<b>Cades Cove: “Wildlife overlook”</b> on the Cades Cove loop road about 0.5 mile beyond the Missionary Baptist Church	October: One event per day, Monday – Friday, start time between 9 AM and noon. No weekend events in October.	
** <b>Cades Cove: LeQuire Cemetery Overlook and adjacent field.</b> This overlook is on the exit side of the loop road, approx. 0.3 mile beyond the Sparks Lane junction.	October: One event per day, Monday – Friday, start time between 9 AM and noon. No weekend events October.	Events are restricted to outside the fenced area.
<b>Cataloochee Overlook</b>	None	None
<b>Cataract Falls</b> (on the Cove Mountain trail near park headquarters)	Events will be scheduled to avoid conflicts with park programs. (One hour walks are scheduled for 11AM and 1 PM, March through October)	No parking or waiting at trailhead from 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM on weekdays. During those times, vehicles must be parked at Sugarlands Visitor Center.
<b>Chimneys Picnic Area</b> (Closes at 8 p.m. from May 1 – August 31 and at sunset from Sep. 1-April 30)	From May 25 thru Sept. 7 and all of October, 8 AM to 10 AM only. No time restrictions on other dates.	None
<b>Clingmans Dome parking area</b> and the immediate vicinity (The observation tower and the trail leading to it are not part of the designated area.)	None	None
<b>Foothills Parkway east.</b> 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.)	None	Maximum of 4 weddings per day total.
<b>Foothills Parkway west.</b> Applications must list the specific overlook. (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!)	None	Maximum of 4 weddings per day total.
<b>Gatlinburg By-pass overlooks and entrance (aka “picture”) sign.</b> Applications must list the specific overlook. The south overlook is south of the Ski Mtn overpass; the north overlook is north of the overpass. The entrance sign is on the north end of the bypass, near the Spur.	None	Maximum of 3 cars at the picture sign.
<b>Greenbrier #1,</b> 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.	
<b>Greenbrier #2,</b> specifically the area at the Old Settlers Trailhead, including the area adjacent to the river.	None	None
<b>Heintooga overlook</b>	None	None
<b>Lakeview Drive:</b> the pullout overlooking the lake	None	Maximum of 15 cars and 30 people.
<b>Maloney Point</b> (just east of Fighting Creek Gap)	None	None

<b>Permitted locations</b>	<b>Date/time restrictions</b>	<b>Other remarks</b>
<b><u>Metcalfe Bottoms Picnic Area</u></b> (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 closed in the off season.)
<b><u>Millsap</u></b> (0.3 mile west of the Elkmont junction on Little River Road.)	None	None
<b><u>Mingus Mill</u></b>	From March through November, no events between 9 AM and 5 PM.	1 event per day.
<b><u>Newfound Gap parking area</u></b> and the immediate vicinity	None	None
<b><u>Noah Bud Ogle cabin</u></b>	From May 25 thru Sept. 7 and all of October, 8 AM to 10 AM only. No time restrictions at other dates.	
<b><u>Oconaluftee overlook</u></b> (mile post 15.3 on the Newfound Gap Road.)	None	None
<b><u>Rock Wall Curve</u></b> parking area and nearby creek (mile post 26.7 on Newfound Gap Road)	None	None
** <b><u>Methodist Church at Cades Cove</u></b>	October: One event per day, Monday – Friday, start time between 9 AM and noon. No weekend events in October.	Maximum of 6 cars and 50 people. Application must identify transportation plans.
** <b><u>Missionary Baptist Church at Cades Cove</u></b>	October: One event per day, Monday – Friday, start time between 9 AM and noon. No weekend events in October.	Maximum of 6 cars and 50 people. Application must identify transportation plans.
<b><u>Palmer Chapel at Cataloochee</u></b>		1 event per day; Maximum of 10 cars and 50 people. Application must identify transportation plans.
** <b><u>Primitive Baptist Church at Cades Cove</u></b>	October: One event per day, Monday – Friday, start time between 9 AM and noon. No weekend events in October.	Maximum of 10 cars and 60 people. Application must identify transportation plans.
<b><u>Smokemont Church</u></b>		Maximum of 6 cars and 40 people. Application must identify transportation plans.
** <b><u>Historic structures not otherwise listed</u></b>	Open to portrait photography by permit; open to privately planned weddings on a case-by-case basis.	

\*\* Permits will not be issued for events in the Park's cemeteries.

## Attachment B – Locations Requiring a Reservation

- These facilities are open to use for weddings, receptions and for portrait photography.
- The permittee is responsible for reserving the facility through [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) (or 877-444-6777)
- The permit fee is waived for the Appalachian Clubhouse and Spence Cabin; however, a SUP is required.
- The Commercial Use Authorization requirement is not waived.
- The conditions contained in the guidelines still apply.

<b>Appalachian Clubhouse</b>	The number of people is limited to 96. See <a href="http://Recreation.gov">Recreation.gov</a> or ask for a Appalachian Clubhouse packet for information about parking and other restrictions.
<b>Spence Cabin</b>	The number of people is limited to 40. See <a href="http://Recreation.gov">Recreation.gov</a> or ask for a Spence Cabin packet for information about parking and other restrictions.
<b>Picnic Pavilions:</b> 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.

### Contact Information

- Park information, including a map and photos of pre-designated locations, may be found at [www.nps.gov/grsm](http://www.nps.gov/grsm)
- For information on Commercial Services, visit <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/getinvolved/dobusinesswithus.htm> or call 865-436-1209
- For more information on Special Use Permits call 828-497-1930 or email [grsm\\_special\\_use\\_permits@nps.gov](mailto:grsm_special_use_permits@nps.gov).

### Applications and associated fee(s) can be submitted by:

- Email: [grsm\\_special\\_use\\_permits@nps.gov](mailto:grsm_special_use_permits@nps.gov) (electronic payment only with confirmation number)
- Fax: 828-497-1933 (electronic payment only with confirmation number)
- Mail:

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
60 Enloe Floyd Bottoms Road  
Cherokee, NC 28734  
ATTN: Special Use Permits