

Chickasaw

National Recreation Area
Oklahoma

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



A traditional mecca of outdoor recreation still attracts vacationers each year.



Pastimes and Sundry Pleasures Out of Doors

Tradition touches the present here. You park your car and pursue the same diversions people enjoyed at the turn of the century—after parking their buggy or getting off the train. You no longer see women in full dresses and sunhats sidesaddle on mules, but you can still follow pleasant trails, enjoy a picnic or just people-watch. Surely that's what attracted most of the folks who crowded the old train station and put up at Sulphur's former grand and popular hotel.

Only the styles have changed. Tents have evolved from simple white cottons and poplins to pop-ups, umbrellas, and domes sewn of multi-colored canvas or bright, lightweight nylons. And the campers have traded horse-drawn buggies for automobiles. But the tents are still pitched by families seeking a week of fun and relaxation in shaded

woodlands threaded by clear-running streams and dotted with mineral and freshwater springs. The quaint old pickup shown suggests today's recreational van which might be parked by the Lake of the Arbuckles.

First native Americans and then early settlers of the surrounding plains sought recreation here. Summer weekends still find family reunions picnicking at favorite spots in the Travertine District. Some have returned every year for more than half a century.

Welcome to an outdoor tradition. Enjoy yourself in this protected niche of parkland where styles may change, but where recreation remains a relaxing way of life.



Mineral or Fresh, the Attraction Was Always Water

Chickasaw National Recreation Area draws together old and new and honors the Chickasaw Nation's contributions toward preserving startling natural features in this nearly level landscape. The recreation area was established by Congress in 1976 by combining Platt National Park and Arbuckle Recreation Area. Platt, named a park in 1906, is the scene of the photographs above. Arbuckle was created with construction of the Lake of the Arbuckles in the 1960s.

The attraction was always water, whether mineral or fresh: Many who thronged Sulphur in bygone days sought health or healing from the sulphur and bromide spring waters available here. Medical opinion of that day found mineralized waters curative and restorative. Medical opinion has shifted, but the springs still freely offer their distinctive waters to the curious, both skeptic and believer alike. Rock formations and mineral deposits along the streams add to the interest of the Travertine area.

Early visitors from surrounding prairie areas, like earlier Indians, were attracted by the clear, cool streams and the surrounding shady woods. Early Indians found good hunting here, a result of the unique combination of woodlands, prairies, and year round fresh water. New visitors to Chickasaw continue older traditions of recreation. Walking up from the stream along the trail east of the nature center you pass from an eastern woodland into prairie and back again in just a few steps. Biologists call this the "edge effect," where the life communities meet. The many choices of food and shelter available where woodland meets grassland support an abundance of wildlife. It explains why early Indians found good hunting and today's visitor may have a chance to catch a glimpse of wildlife.

Surprisingly, you can see the Southwest's roadrunner in the same woods as the East's cardinal. Walking from the stream up to the ridgetop you pass through sycamore, pecan, hickory, and eastern redcedar of the eastern woodlands. On the ridge you find grass and prickly pear, representing western prairie. Keep an eye out for the fox squirrel, armadillo, whitetail deer, beaver, gray fox, skunk, bobcat, green snake, birds, and wild turkey. Watch for poison ivy too. If you are not familiar with this irritating plant, ask at the nature center for the description.

Geologically speaking there is more to this ridgetop than may meet the eye. Hills are not uncommon in this immediate region, but this hill is a northeastern foothill of the Arbuckle uplift of mountains. The uplift was dramatic—nearly vertical folds of rock are exposed in the highway cuts of Interstate 35 just south of Davis, Okla. The mountains are so old that they are now worn down to their present levels, literally to their roots. It is believed they were once as massive as today's Rocky Mountains. The uplift trends east and west, too, in contrast to the continent's predominantly north-south mountain trends. Rock in the Arbuckle Mountains may be the oldest you will ever see. The uplift occurred some 300 million years ago.

It is from these foothills that Buffalo and Antelope Springs issue to supply freshwater to Travertine and Rock Creeks. A short, pleasant

woodland walk east of the nature center brings you to these springs. There is something exciting about reaching the "headwaters" of a stream, such as Travertine, and following it to its first major confluence, at Rock Creek near Black Sulphur Spring, and then maybe swimming or boating in a lake it helps fill, Lake of the Arbuckles, all in one day. This you can do here. Waters from Buffalo and Antelope Springs eventually end up in the Washita River on their way to the oceans.

Bromide Hill is a popular place at Chickasaw. Winding your way along the well-developed foot trail on this northern face you traverse sedimentary rock deposits which are 270 million years old. (Don't worry, the walk takes you only a few minutes.) Some layers look like the usual sandstones and shales. Other layers suggest that a concrete truck dumped its payload there. But looking around at the mass of this concrete-like, naturally cemented gravel, sand, and cobble quickly changes your mind. No truck could do it. This conglomerate, as it is called, caps the whole of Bromide Hill. But the view at the top caps your climb. It's a rare treat in this nearly level region and makes those switchbacks worthwhile. Many an Indian and early settler must have detoured by here for one good look around.

Bicycles are allowed except on trails east of the nature center, but they are not recommended on Bromide Hill trails. Gone are the mules, and the passenger train too, so your best bet is to come here by car. Chickasaw lies near Sulphur, Oklahoma on routes U.S. 177 and State 7, accessible from Oklahoma City and Dallas-Fort Worth via Interstate 35.

Public transportation facilities do not serve the recreation area conveniently. Bus service is available to and from Davis, Oklahoma, 16 kilometers (10 miles) away. Amtrak trains stop at Ardmore and Pauls Valley, Oklahoma, 56 kilometers (35 miles) and 47 kilometers (29 miles) away, respectively. The nearest commercial airline service is to Oklahoma City.

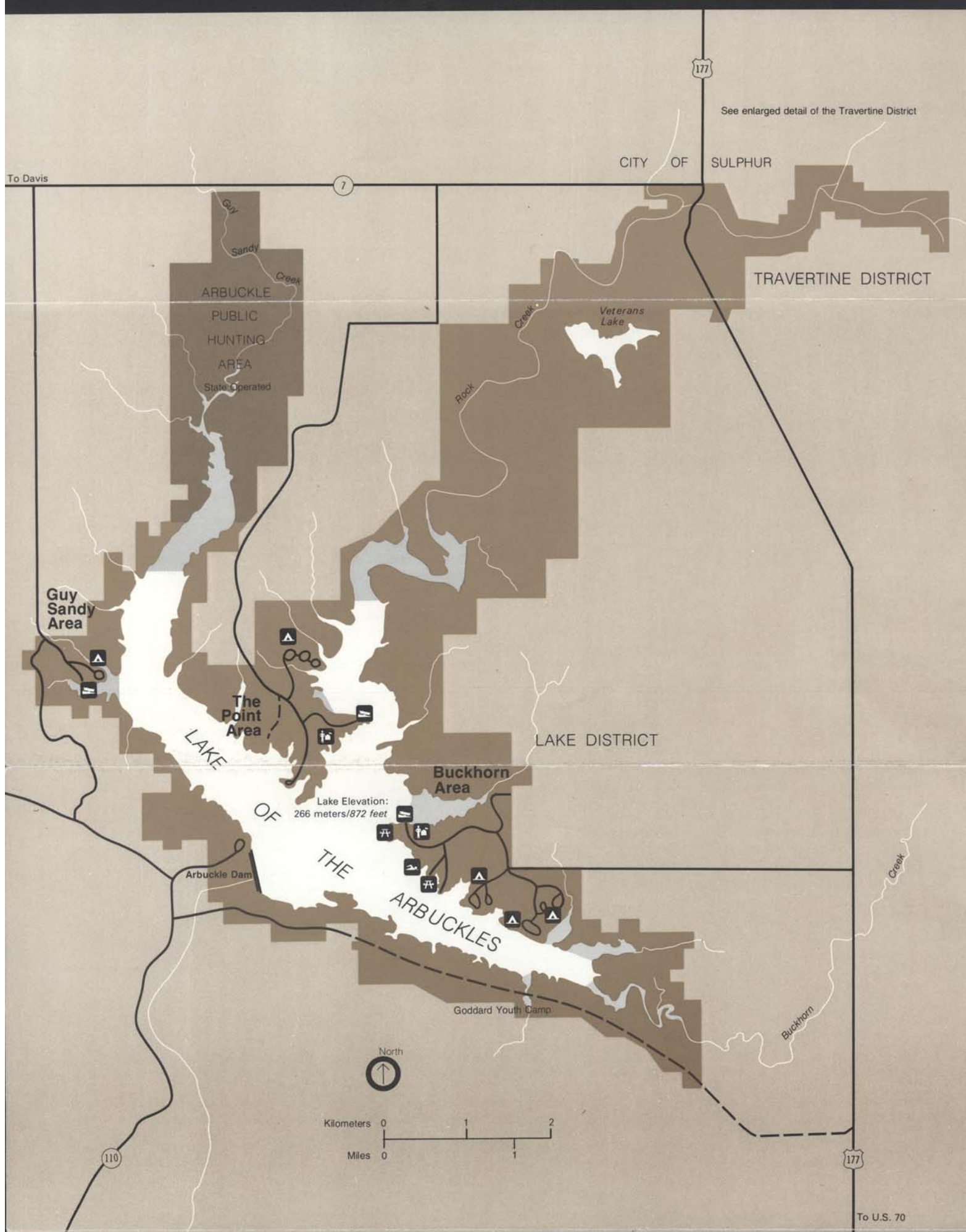
Summers are hot and humid. Temperatures above 37°C (100°F) occur and humidity frequently exceeds 50 percent. Winters are generally mild and rarely subject to prolonged freezing temperatures. Severe thunderstorms are common from May through June.

Little Niagara on lovely Travertine Creek near the Travertine Nature Center. Indians and then settlers were drawn to this restful area by the cool, shaded woodlands and the abundance of game. Freshwater springs supply this creek, but mineralized springs, bromide and sulphur, are also great attractions here.

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Chickasaw



Water Safety

Boating Do not overload your boat. Know the "rules of the road" and the markings of navigational safety. Children and nonswimmers should wear life-jackets at all times in the boat. Keep safety equipment in good work-

ing order and within easy reach.

Be courteous. You can be held legally responsible for damage caused by the wake of your boat. Keep an eye on the weather. Never swim from an unanchored boat. Stop engines

and do not smoke while refueling. Wipe up spilled fuel and ventilate the engine and fuel compartments before starting engine. Stay with your boat if it capsizes. Do not try to swim to shore.

Please note and ob-

serve the reduced speed zone waters shown on the map. Enjoy your visit in a way that lets others enjoy theirs.

Waterskiing As a safety measure, an operator and observer are required in each boat pulling a

skier. Water that is off limits to skiers is posted by signs or markers.

Skin diving A permit may be obtained from any park ranger. It is not required, but let someone know where you are diving.

A Pleasant Interruption to the Plains

To easterners and westerners mountains, or hills, are routine features. In mid-continent they are rare. Clear-running streams and lakes are special too. Chickasaw National Recreation Area offers these physical and spiritual refreshments from the nearly level plains. They're pleasant interruptions. No wonder we enjoy Bromide Hill and Chickasaw's many waters. We always seek to interrupt season-to-season and workaday routines, to balance the business of life with pure enjoyment.

In 1902 the federal government purchased land on Travertine and Rock Creeks from the Chickasaw Nation, which feared exploitation of the mineral springs. Medical practice then valued mineral waters and many springs were developed as popular resorts. Of Chickasaw's mineral water springs, three were bromide, the rest sulphur. Sulphur spring water is dispensed at Pavilion and Black Sulphur Springs. You may use these waters, but take them in quantity *only on advice of a physician*. The National Park Service maintains the springs but makes no claims for medicinal values.

Hot and humid summers here make Lake of the Arbuckles a drawing card. Created by Arbuckle Dam at the confluence of Buckhorn, Guy Sandy and Rock Creeks, the lake is 27 meters (90 feet) deep near the dam. It provides quality fishing, boating, swimming, water skiing, and skin diving. Sport fish are channel catfish, large-mouth bass, sunfish, and crappie. Ask a ranger about licenses and regulations. There is a beach, without lifeguard, at the Buckhorn area. Don't dive before checking for water depth and obstructions. Launch boats only at the three ramps provided. Boat operators must comply with

Federal and State laws. Summer boat safety inspections are available, with free stickers for boats meeting requirements. Check at ramps or with patrol rangers.

See the Travertine Nature Center with its fascinating wildlife exhibits first. Summer nature walks with park naturalists help you enjoy plants and wildlife. Special childrens' programs and movies for the family are daily summer features, along with nightly programs. Check posted schedules for times, or ask at the center. Nature trails lead out from—and back to—the center to unusual combinations of springs, plains, woodlands, streams, birds, and wildlife.

Please keep in mind: Build fires only in fireplaces at designated areas. Pets must be under physical control, kept out of buildings and off the trails east of the nature center. All natural and or historic features are protected. Please leave them as you find them. Poisonous snakes—rattlesnakes, copperheads and cottonmouths—are sometimes seen. They too are protected.

Camping and Picnicking

Reservations for campsites can be made from May to September by calling (405)622-6121 or writing: Superintendent, Chickasaw National Recreation Area, P.O. Box 201, Sulphur, OK 73086. A nightly camping fee is charged.

Vacant unreserved campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Campgrounds have central comfort stations or toilets, water, tables, and grills. A trailer dump station is located near Bromide Pavilion. There are no water, electric,

cal, or sewer hook-ups for trailers, however.

Travertine District campgrounds and their sites and open seasons are Rock Creek (106, summer/winter) and Cold Springs (64, summer). Central Camp-

ground is for group use in summer by reservation.

Lake area campgrounds and their sites and open seasons are The Point (52, summer), Buckhorn (172, summer/winter), and Guy Sandy (39, summer).

- Ranger Station
- Campground
- Protected Swimming
- Reduced Speed Zone
- Surfaced Road
- Improved Road
- Picnic Facilities
- Boat Ramp
- Comfort Station
- Fresh Water Spring
- Mineral Water Spring
- Foot Trail

