

# Little River Canyon

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

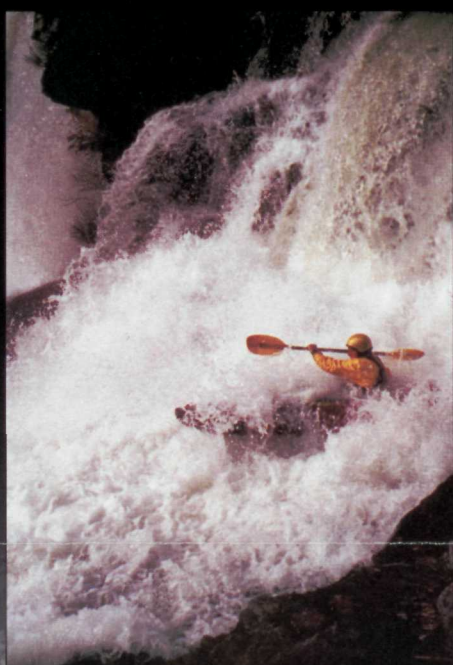


National Preserve  
Alabama



Beth M. Young

Canyon Rim Drive is breathtaking any time of year. Stop at the overlooks (see map) for stunning views of the canyon and river.



Sara Springer

Winter rains can make the Little River a raging torrent. Whitewater paddlers—experts only—test their skills in the rapids.



Robert P. Falls, Sr.

Graces High Falls plunges past river-carved sandstone. Some rocks and fossils exposed here are more than 300 million years old.

## A Mountain-top River Plunges into a Surprising Nature Sanctuary

It is one of the nation's longest rivers that forms and flows for most of its length atop a mountain. Then it plunges off the Cumberland Plateau at the head of Little River Canyon. Beginning at 1,900 feet above sea level up on Lookout Mountain, the Little River ends up at 650 feet above sea level at Weiss Lake. The result is one of the most extensive canyon and gorge systems in the eastern United States and one of the South's clearest, wildest waterways. No more than a trickle in the dry summer months, the river surges with the rainfall in cooler months.

Congress added Little River Canyon National Preserve to the National Park System in 1992. It protects 14,000 acres of the 199-square-mile Little River watershed and many rare, threatened, and endangered species of plants and animals. Alabama's DeSoto State Park, a long-established vacation area with resort lodge and other accommodations, lies within the Preserve boundary and is a partner in its operation.

Carving the region's sandstone over vast time, the Little River has created habitat for carnivorous green pitcher plants (see photo on other side); Kral's water plantains, an aquatic herb found nowhere else in the world; green salamanders; and endangered blue shiner fish.



Little River flows through rugged, beautiful, forested landscapes into the 12-mile-long and 600-foot-deep Little River Canyon. There is so much to see and lots to do here.

Background photo: Robert P. Falls, Sr.

Canyon Rim Drive (Ala. 176) follows the west rim of Little River Canyon for 11 scenic miles and eight overlooks (see map on other side). From the overlooks you may see not only river and canyon scenery but rock climbers, kayakers, soaring birds, and creeks flowing into the river.

This Preserve is one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System saved by the American people to provide authentic and meaningful connections to our nation's heritage of nature, culture, history, and outdoor recreation. The National Park Service and our partners work to guarantee that these places will always be here for people to enjoy.

### Things To See and Do in the Preserve

Sightseers enjoy the spectacular overlooks, several trails, and picnicking along Canyon Rim Drive (see the map on the other side). Worldclass white water and outstanding rock climbing challenge visitors prepared for such adventures—be sure to read the safety tips below the map.

The Preserve's Canyon Mouth Park, a day-use area, features picnicking and hiking trails threading through the lower canyon and overlooking rapids and boulder fields. This is

also a popular take-out point for whitewater enthusiasts. The Preserve's backcountry accommodates fishing, horseback riding, and hunting. You can also find quiet and solitude, far from developed areas, that promise great opportunities for peaceful reflection.

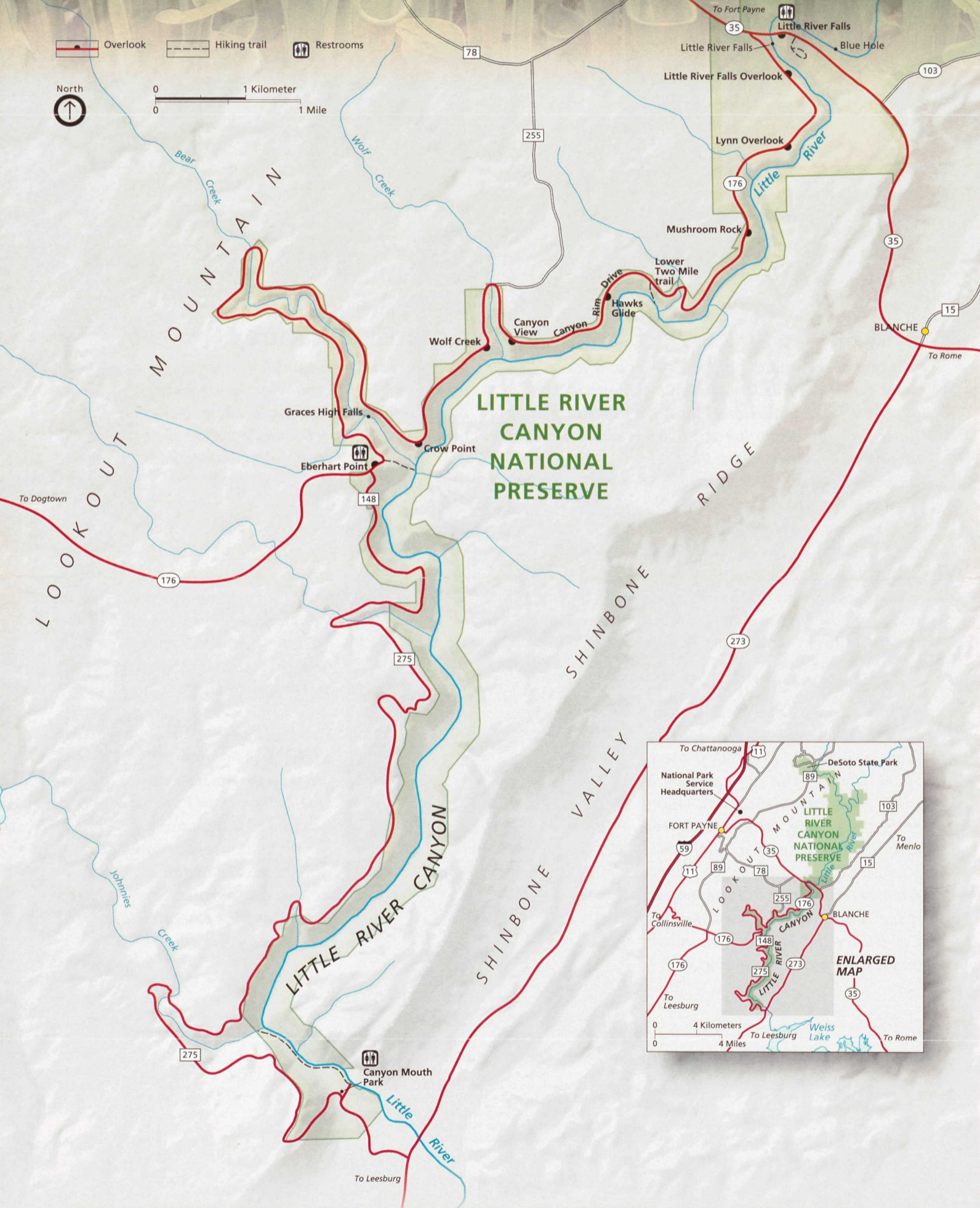
DeSoto State Park, a National Park Service partner, has a lodge, restaurant, cabins, camping, camp store, nature center, pool, playground, tennis court, trails, and picnic areas.

**For more information** contact:  
Little River Canyon National Preserve  
2141 Gault Avenue North  
Fort Payne, AL 35967  
256-845-9605  
[www.nps.gov/liri](http://www.nps.gov/liri)

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. Visit our website at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

# Little River Canyon

Green pitcher plant: Robert P. Falls, Sr.



## How To Get Here and Have a Safe Visit

The Preserve is in northeastern Alabama near I-59 southwest of Chattanooga, Tenn. DeSoto State Park is at its north end, and Canyon Mouth Park is at its south end. Make Preserve headquarters in Ft. Payne, Ala., your first stop. Camping is permitted at three designated sites in the Preserve from February 1 to September 30; elsewhere by permit only. Call 256-845-9605 for permit information. For DeSoto State Park camping information, call 256-845-5075.

Your safety is important. Watch children closely. High bluffs, fast water, and waterfalls can be dangerous. Canyon trails are steep and strenuous. Take plenty of water. Stay on trails. Watch for poisonous snakes and poisonous ivy. Be aware of hunting seasons and regulations if you go into the Preserve's backcountry. Lock valuables in your trunk or out of sight. Do not disturb any plants, rocks, relics, artifacts, or animals. These are protected by federal law for the benefit of all.

Be sure to see the 45-foot-high Little River Falls. Then take in the splendid views of Little River Canyon available from the overlooks along Canyon Rim Drive (Ala. 176).

Little River Canyon National Preserve is an extraordinary place that is rich in history and promises a future of conservation education, and recreation for all.

♻️GPO:2002-491-282/40257  
Printed on recycled paper