



Wild and scenic are good words to describe the Obed river system. The Obed Wild and Scenic River consists of sections of four streams: Daddys Creek, Clear Creek, Emory River, and the Obed River. These streams have been running their course for thousands of years, cutting into the sandstone of the Cumberland Plateau and creating a rugged landscape of wild land and water found in relatively few places in the southeastern United States. The Obed and its tributaries have carved spectacular gorges with 200-foot cliffs above the streams. Huge sandstone boulders, once part of the cliffs above, now dot the streams, creating large whitewater rapids in the rushing water.

The American Indians who first visited this area may have used the bluffs as shelter during extended hunting trips. They found abundant game here, but the soil was poor and they did not

build permanent settlements within the current park boundaries. The “Longhunters”—white men who hunted for animal skins and furs—came next to the region. They found the same rich hunting grounds as the Indians, but the pioneers and settlers in the Cumberland Plateau found the land in the river and stream canyons inhospitable, difficult to farm, and too far from the centers of commerce. The mainstream of human settlement flowed around and beyond the plateau to the rich farmlands to the west. The result is an undeveloped natural area sculpted by unceasing erosion over millennia.

The Obed river system contains a mixed forest of oak, hickory, poplar, pine, and hemlock. Shrubs such as mountain laurel and rhododendron also are common. During the spring, colorful wildflowers can be found on the forest floor and along the

streams. A variety of wildlife can be found seasonally in the stream gorges, including more than 100 species of birds. Along the banks of the streams you may spot signs of bobcat, beaver, raccoon, mink, deer, or a playful river otter.

Access to much of the Obed Wild and Scenic River is limited. Only a few bridges offer access to the streams for kayakers and canoeists interested in demanding whitewater boating. (The Obed system offers some of the most challenging whitewater in the Southeast, requiring serious whitewater skills and experience. It is not recommended for beginning or novice whitewater boaters.) Anglers also use the streams, going after smallmouth bass, bluegill, catfish, or the muskellunge (better known locally as the “Jack fish”). For those who are not back-country oriented, a short walk from your motor vehicle to the

Lilly Bluff Overlook provides a great view of part of the rugged Obed Wild and Scenic River.

The Obed Wild and Scenic River was added to the National Park System in October 1976. The National Park Service and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) have joined forces to protect and manage this unique area. Through a cooperative agreement, lands within the Obed Wild and Scenic River that are part of the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area will continue to be owned and managed by TWRA. The goal is to preserve the river in a free-flowing condition and to preserve and protect the water quality, wildlife resources, and primitive character of the area for present and future generations. In this way, visitors today and in the future can experience and appreciate this part of wild America.

A Variety of Outdoor Pleasures



At any moment this angler's repose may be interrupted by a fish taking the bait.



Follow Point Trail to this sandstone arch.



A climber works her way up a sandstone bluff.



Boulder climbing is a fast-growing sport at the Obed.



Pink ladyslippers and many other wildflowers bloom in the spring.



Overlooks offer scenic views of Clear Creek.



Ice, snow, and clear, cold water create winter magic.

Things to Do

Paddling
Canoeing and kayaking bring many people to the Obed. This is one of the best and most difficult whitewater regions in the southeastern United States. Civilization seems a long way off here. It is one of the few remaining places in the country where waters run free and where there has been little or no change in the natural sequence of events; that is one of the reasons the area was chosen to be a wild and scenic river. Because the Obed is rough country, any activity must be pursued carefully.

The cold rainy season between December and April is usually the only time the rivers are full enough for paddling trips. At that time, the streams can have nearly continuous rapids and dangerous currents—technical whitewater. Paddling or “running” this kind of water takes training, experience, and the right equipment. It is important to take certain precautions before making a whitewater trip:



- Always paddle with at least two other craft.
- Make sure a family member or friend knows where and when you plan to begin your trip and get off the river.
- Wear adequate clothing of the right type to protect yourself. The water can be extremely cold and therefore extremely hazardous. A wet-suit or drysuit is advised in the winter or early spring.
- Get permission from the landowner if you will be using access points that cross private property.
- The river level, on all sections, can change rapidly. Do not try to paddle when the water level is in the trees.

- Know the conditions in the area where you plan to paddle. There are places where it is difficult to get off the river if trouble arises.
- Portaging difficult rapids may be necessary at certain times of year and in certain places.
- Know what hypothermia is and how to avoid it.
- Be familiar with the International Scale of River Difficulty and recognize your skill level.

Camping
The Obed Wild and Scenic River has one campground, the Rock Creek Campground near Nemo. There is a fee, and the 11 sites are first-come, first-served. Sites have grills, but no electricity or water.

While camping on public lands, please carry out all your litter or dispose of it properly so that you and others can continue to enjoy the beauty of the Obed.

Hiking
Hiking can be fun if you are careful and know what you are doing. Always make sure someone else knows your plans. Know your route, and be wary of the bluffs along the gorge rim.

Portions of the Cumberland Trail lie within the Obed. To find out more, go to www.cumberland-trail.org or www.tnstateparks.com.



Hunting and Fishing
Deer, hog, turkey, and small game may be hunted in season with a permit from the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA). You need a separate permit to hunt hog inside the park; get one at the visitor center in Wartburg. Trapping is prohibited within the park. A Tennessee fishing license is required to fish in the area. For fishing and hunting information in the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area, which has different hunting seasons than elsewhere in the state; contact TWRA at 800-262-7604 or www.tnwildlife.org.

Climbing
The sandstone of the Obed area offers excellent opportunities for rock climbing, providing vertical bluffs and overhangs. Climbers can test their skills on climbs 40–200 feet long, on routes ranging in difficulty from 5.7 to 5.13. As in whitewater boating, rock climbing involves serious risks of injury, so training and experience in climbing are absolutely necessary before attempting any climbs in the Obed.

Information on climbing areas and regulations can be obtained from the National Park Service at 423-346-6294 or www.nps.gov/obed.

Accessibility
We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Regulations and Safety

The Obed is being preserved in ways that let nature continue its work unimpeded. Wind, water, and time have shaped this landscape. Its future depends on you. Being careful of the land and the water will ensure the next person has a similar opportunity.

Nongame animals, plants, and artifacts are protected here. It is illegal to harm or remove them. • For fire-arms regulations check the park website. • Chiggers and ticks are prevalent here. • Know the safety precautions for snake country: rattlesnakes and copperheads live here. • Make sure children realize they are in a natural area containing hazards. • Do not drink stream water without boiling or treating it. • Bluffs and cliffs are dangerous and can result in serious injury. • Slippery, muddy rocks provide uncertain footing and can also result in injury. • Be careful; removing an accident victim to safety and medical facilities is not easy or quick.



Because this is a remote area with few roads and little traffic, protect your vehicle against the possibility of vandalism. Do not leave valuables in your vehicle.

Report vandalism to a park ranger (423-346-6294) or to the Morgan County Sheriff's Office (423-346-6262).

Emergencies call 911
(Limited cell phone service.)

Exploring the Obed Wild and Scenic River

River Chart
Use this chart as you plan your trip on one of the rivers or creeks. Look at the map and determine where you want to put in and take out. By checking the chart you can see the distance you will have to travel and the degree of difficulty of that section. Planning your trip in advance may avoid unforeseen problems and make your trip memorable for the right reasons. The chart is based on the Emory at Oakdale gauge levels.

	Distance	Average Difficulty*	Maximum Difficulty**	Flow (in cubic feet/second)		
				Minimum	Optimum	Maximum
Obed-Emory Adams Bridge to Potters Ford	4 mi/6 km	III	IV	1000	3000	5000
Potters Ford to Obed Junction	12 mi/19 km	II	III	1000	3000	5000
Obed Junction to Clear Creek Junction	4 mi/6 km	III	IV	500	1500	3000
Clear Creek Junction to Nemo	5 mi/8 km	II	III	500	1500	3000
Clear Creek US 127 Bridge to Barnett Bridge	20 mi/32 km	II	III	1500	2500	5000
Barnett Bridge to Jett Bridge	5 mi/8 km	II	II	500	2500	4000
Jett Bridge to Lilly Bridge	2 mi/3 km	II	III	800	2500	4000
Lilly Bridge to Clear Creek Junction	2 mi/3 km	III	IV	1000	2500	3000
Daddys Creek Devils Breakfast Table to Obed Junction	2 mi/3 km	II	II	700	1500	3000

Notes to Chart
*Average difficulty indicates degree of difficulty of a section of river at optimum flow.

**Maximum difficulty indicates the highest rated rapid in that section of river at optimum flow. Flow information is available from the Tennessee Valley Authority. Call 800-238-2264 and listen to the "Emory at Oakdale" recording. Specific stream

information is also available at www.nps.gov/obed/planyourvisit/river-gauge-readings.htm.

Area Closures
Parts of the Obed are within the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Every February and March the WMA is closed to minimize impact on roads, environment, and wildlife. It is also closed to all except hunters during big game hunts in the fall and spring.

Traveling to the Park
The Obed is in central East Tennessee. From Nashville and west, take I-40 to Genesis Road (Route 298). From Knoxville and east, take I-40 to US 27 north. Crosscountry buses and scheduled airlines serve both Knoxville and Nashville, where rental cars are available. No rail passenger service is within easy distance.



More Information
Obed Wild and Scenic River is managed jointly by the National Park Service and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. Contact them for guide books and other information.

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Catoosa Wildlife Management Area
464 Industrial Blvd.
Crossville, TN 38555
800-262-6704
www.tnwildlife.org

Obed Wild and Scenic River is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. Learn about national parks at www.nps.gov.

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