Printed from the Charlotte Observer - www.CharlotteObserver.com
Posted: Friday, Nov. 23, 2012

Keowee-Toxaway is a gem of an Upstate park

By Mark Alan Hudson
PUBLISHED IN: SOUTHEAST EXCURSIONS

The 1,000-acre Keowee-Toxaway State Park is right in the midst of several large state parks along the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway – S.C. 11 – in South Carolina's Upstate. Don't let its relatively small size fool you: This is a great place for a peaceful excursion for a hike, a picnic or an extended stay.

Distance

From Charlotte, it's about 130 miles (21/2 hours), one way.

To see and do

The park, nestled alongside 18,372-acre Lake Keowee, is popular with fishermen who angle for catfish, crappie, bass and bream. It is increasingly popular with canoeists and kayakers; the park recently added an outstanding put-in for boats, along with parking.

The park's primitive camping spots can be accessed through its trail system, behind the park's visitor and education center. For RV and "car camping," there is a small 24-site campground that's nicely laid out for maximum privacy between sites (10 for RVs, 14 for tents). Amenities include tent pads, fire rings, picnic tables, hot-water bathroom and shower facilities. The park has one three-bedroom, fully furnished cabin, complete with a private boat dock, you might want to consider.

- Details

Keowee-Toxaway State Park, near Sunset, S.C., has free admission; day-use activities like hiking, fishing and kayaking have no fee. Day-use hours through March: 9 a.m.-6 p.m. daily (to 8 p.m. Fridays). Camping fees range from $8-$20 per night; details: www.southcarolinaparks.com. Shelter reservation info: 866-345-7275 or check the website. Park info: 864-868-2605; www.southcarolinaparks.com.

Related Stories

Related Images



Three interesting trails are within the park; two of which are accessed from the visitor center. The Natural Bridge Trail is a moderate 1.5-mile or so loop that meanders through beautiful terrain that offers unexpected vistas (especially in cooler months), rock outcroppings and beautiful Poe Creek, complete with a small waterfall. More adventuresome hikers can connect with the Raven Rock Trail

and add four miles to the excursion. It is also the route to the primitive camping sites. A short trail leads from the main campsite to the lake.

There are several picnic tables in day-use areas of the park, and five large shelters that can be rented. Other activities in the park include swimming (at your own risk), geocaching and bird watching; seasonal wildflowers include some rare species. Biking is allowed on the park's roadways.


Subscribe to The Charlotte Observer.