Long Creek: Rapids, hiking, food

Long Creek. Just the name itself stimulates thoughts of the wilderness or images of a wild and scenic river somewhere out west in the Rockies.

But the fact of the matter is Long Creek exists right here in Oconee County. The river is the nationally designated Wild and Scenic Chattooga River. The wilderness is 85,000 acres of the Sumter National Forest.

The national designation means that the river is protected from any form of development for at least a quarter mile from its banks. As a result, rafting or hiking down this magnificent natural resource is a true wilderness experience.

But Long Creek has much more to offer than the river and the forest, from you-pick farms, to wedding venues, disc golf, music festivals and some of the best dining in the entire region. Here is a list of things to do in Long Creek:

• Chattooga Belle Farm includes an event barn with breath-taking panoramic views of the mountains, a you-pick farm with a variety of berries and fruits, an 18-hole disc golf course, a country store with farm-raised products, juices and wines and every once in a while they host a "throw down" festival with live music. Owners Ed and Kitty Land invite you to bring a picnic, pick some berries, relax on the back porch and enjoy the views.



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• The Chattooga River Resort is brand new, kind of. It was once the Sock 'Em Dog that was closed several years ago. It has reopened under new ownership and offers a full service restaurant with great food, live music, hotel rooms, riverside camping and RV sites. Keep posted for their first annual Memorial Day music festival.

• Humble Pie is a very unique pizza experience located on Hwy. 76. Pizzas include the Squeal, the Humble Pie and others, including my favorite, the Bull Sluice. Next door is the Chattooga Whitewater Outfitters that offers raft rentals, shuttles and a wide selection of outdoor apparel and water toys.

• Brasstown Barbecue is only open on Friday and Saturday evenings and you have to get there early because they sell out quick. Their offerings include pulled pork, beef brisket, ribs, chicken and all the fixins.

• Chattooga Sound Camp Ground is another new development. This is a very unique camping experience near the river with hiking trails, low ropes course, hatchet throwing, and some really cool camping sites and picnic shelter.

• Wildwater and Nantahala Outdoor Center both offer world class rafting on the Chattooga River with half day, full day and overnight trips that includes a gourmet deli lunch on the river. Wildwater also has one of the best zip line canopy tours in the country.

If that is not enough, there are the waterfalls – Brasstown, Long Creek, Opossum Creek and Reedy Branch – all in the Long Creek zip code.

Long Creek is more than just a day trip. It is truly a "destination of a lifetime."

For more information, visit www.SCMountainLakes.com.

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