

Decade of dedication

Jocassee Lake Tours celebrates 10 years

BY LAUREN PIERCE
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SALEM — Jocassee Lake Tours is celebrating 10 years of providing the only naturalist-led tours of Lake Jocassee and expanding its business into education.

Owners
Brooks and Kay Wade have come a long way from starting out in 2011 with just one pontoon tour boat and one guide.

"Today they have four boats with a need for a fifth, 20 kayaks, eight naturalist-trained guides and a nonprofit arm focused on

childhood outdoor education, Jocassee naturalist studies and winter loon research," Visit Oconee SC president and CEO Ken Sloan said. "They have essentially become more of an institution than a business."

'I've got water in my veins.'

Brooks Wade
Jocassee Lake Tours owner

Getting through a decade of service has been "just so fulfilling," according to Brooks.

"It's pretty overwhelming when you just take a deep breath and realize we are 10 years into it," he said. "We started with a boat. Kay and I are just so pleased with and excited about it."





"It's phenomenal to us that we've made it 10 years. We made it through COVID and started from nothing. We're still standing."

The Wades, having moved from Florida, lived in and were the park hosts for Devils Fork State Park campgrounds for two years. They bought a house and started the tours a year after they moved to Lake Jocassee.

"The fact that Lake Jocassee is this huge endless sea and it's surrounded by mountains, that allowed me to make the move, I think," Brooks said. "I've got water

in my veins and needed some big water around me. I looked at Jocassee and I said, 'I could do this.' This was the most beautiful place I've ever seen."

His wife later joined him in the business.

"I came from a life as a professional gardener," Kay said. "It was kind of an easy transition going from a

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From top: Jocassee Lake Tours owners Kay and Brooks Wade frequently spend time on Lake Jocassee with their dog, Mica. • Annabelle Ganzero joined Jocassee Adventure Camp, which is a day of adventure and discovery around Lake Jocassee giving children and parents hands-on experience out on the water. • The Wades' nonprofit, Jocassee Wild Outdoor Education, sponsors Jocassee Wild Child, which is a program that brings children into the Jocassee Gorges to experience classroom curriculum in a real-world setting. • Kayak tours are a popular way of experiencing Lake Jocassee and its gorges, wildlife and geology with certified instructors.

PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL