



HIPCAMP

Updated January 2025

TLDR:

- 8094 Upper Craig's Creek Rd., Catawba, VA
- Check in at the house and we'll show you to your site
- Leave No Trace: pack out your own trash, don't chop/cut standing trees, and be respectful!
- Questions? Concerns? Call/text Ned at 540-520-4154

Welcome! We're so glad you've decided to camp here with us! This place is very special to us, and we hope that you will find yourself as enamored of this land as we are, and treat it with the same respect. The following is a bit of information we've put together that we think might help you to get oriented and have a pleasant stay.

Our address here is **8094 Upper Craig Creek Rd., Catawba, Virginia 24070.**

Most GPS services will bring you right to us, but they're not entirely reliable, and cell service is spotty at best for most providers, so please have an idea where you're going before blindly trusting your phone to navigate. Our mailbox is 1.7 miles up Rte. 621 from its end at US-311. Our Lat./Long. coordinates at the house: 37°24'26.1"N 80°10'48.0"W. We're along the banks of upper Craig's Creek, on Upper Craig Creek Road/[state route] "621" as it's known locally, in the upper Craig Valley, Craig County, Virginia.

DIRECTIONS:

From Interstate 81 (from the Northeast, East, South, or Southwest):

From I-81, take exit 141 for Salem and New Castle, and follow the signs for 419 North to Catawba/New Castle via 311 North (left if exiting 81 South, right if exiting 81 North). From the off-ramp, go straight through the light for Loch Haven Drive, continue down the hill, around a left-hand curve, over until a small bridge until you get to the traffic circle. Stay hard right onto 311 North/Craig Valley Drive toward Catawba (Hospital) and New Castle. From the turn, follow 311 for 11.2 miles – over Catawba Mountain, through the little crossroads of Catawba, over another mountain pass, into Craig County and the Jefferson National Forest, and start looking for signs for Route 621, which will be on your left. There will be a big yellow sign on the right just

before the turn warning you not to use GPS, or for tractor trailers to use the road. Take the hard left turn onto Upper Craig's Creek Road/621. If you see Bertie's Bottom Rd. or the creek on your left, you've just passed the turn.

From the (sharp!) turn onto 621/Upper Craig's Creek Rd, our driveway is 1.75 miles. At about 1.5 miles, cross a bridge over the creek, then maybe 200 yards of woods with a couple little shacks, then the woods will open up on the left into a big field, with a steep mountain looming behind. You made it! When you first arrive, go past the field and pull into our fenced driveway on the left, marked by a mailbox 8094 directly opposite. If you pass the huge greenhouse on your left, you just passed us.

From the North (Lewisburg, WV):

Follow 311 South into VA, and about 7 miles beyond New Castle, just past Bertie's Bottom Rd., look for Route 621 on the right. Big yellow sign just before the turn will warn against tractor trailers or GPS routing on 621. From the turn onto 621, follow above directions to the house, about 1.75 miles from the turn.

From the West (New River Valley/southern WV) via US-460:

From US-460, about 5 miles West of Blacksburg, look for the turn onto 621/Craig Creek Rd. If coming eastbound from WV, it's a left, or if coming westbound from Blacksburg it's on the right. Look for signs for Pandapas Pond Day Use Area – 621 is directly across 460 from the turn into Pandapas. You can also follow signs to the shooting range or Camp Tuk-A-Way.

From the turn onto 621, we're 18.8 miles. When you pass a big gravel lot and turn for Rte. 620/Miller's Cove on your right, you're 1.4 miles from our house. You'll see a huge greenhouse on your right just before the turn into our driveway. House number is 8094.

When you first arrive, please pull in the driveway directly across from our mailbox, down the fenced lane until you see the house. Please keep dogs in the car, as our dog Abita will likely come to greet you, and can get a little bit defensive with other dogs near the house. If you don't immediately see us, feel free to honk or walk around and give a shout - we're likely close by.

If we're not around, you can pull ahead and to the left, through the gap in the fence just before the stone chimney and woodpile, and follow the tire tracks straight out into the field. The main drive through the middle of field will be about 100 feet out ahead of you as you leave the yard and enter the field; pull forward out into the field and turn right into the established tire tracks that head away from the road and back toward the mountain. You can come and go via this path out to the road. **Please drive very slowly**. Please do your best to stay in the established path. It can get quite muddy after rain, but just maintain steady speed through any soggy spots, or you can always stop and check if you're unsure of your vehicle's capabilities given the state of the terrain.

Maybe 100 yards or so after you turn right into the main drive down the center of the field, **Maple Knoll** guests will veer to the right as field doglegs to the right and you see the huge maple tree out in the middle of the field, the campsite is around behind it. Try to stay in the most established tire tracks you see.

For the **Walnut Bottom** and Creekside Woods campsites, stay straight past the Maple Knoll site on your right, and the path will take you down over the crest of the slight hill, down and to the left, toward the bottom left corner of the field. For the Walnut Bottom site, look for the sign and stay along the bottom edge of the field to the site in the far corner, under the huge walnut tree in the very corner of the field.

For the **Creekside Woods** site, just before/to the right of the Walnut Bottom signpost, stay straight ahead through the clearing in the tree line. As you pass out of the field and through the tree line, you'll drop down onto an old logging road bed, and then down once again into a dry rock creek bed. You should see a sign on a tree in front of you, a bit off to the right, directing you to turn right into the creek bed. If we've had rain, there may be some standing water or mud, but it's likely not very deep. Follow this washout for 100 yards or so, and the campsite will be obvious on your left, on the rise between the dry creek bed and the Creek. If you pull just beyond the site, there are few options for places to turn around and park.



CAMPGROUND RULES and other THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- **Be a good neighbor:** We intentionally don't have "quiet hours" and want you to feel comfortable to be yourself, but we do insist that everyone is respectful of other campers, hosts, neighbors, friends, and the land itself. Please don't play music at volumes and times that will disrupt others' camping experience. We encourage everyone to try to first try addressing any issues directly with neighboring campers, but we're always happy to mediate or step in if need be.
- **No cutting any standing trees!:** You're more than welcome to have a **campfire**, but please **DO NOT CUT OR CHOP AT ANY STANDING TREES!** We reserve the right to issue a fine of up to \$500 for anyone found to have cut any standing wood, dead or alive. You're welcome to pick up and burn any wood that is dead and laying on the ground. If you need to borrow a hatchet/ax/saw, just let us know. If you want to run your own chainsaw, please advise us in advance. Please **do not bring firewood from elsewhere** unless you can confirm with 100% confidence that it doesn't harbor any invasive species, like the spotted lanternfly and emerald ash borer. Store-bought, kiln-dried wood is a safe bet; otherwise, we have split and seasoned firewood available here for a suggested donation of \$5 per milk crate-size bundle, 1 cubic foot, about 7-10 pieces. We also insist that you make absolutely sure that your fire is 100% extinguished before you leave (would you stick your hand into the ashes? If not, it's not out). We have buckets available if you need to get creek water to extinguish your coals. Please note the statewide burn ban: from Feb 15 til April 30, no fires are permitted before 4pm.
- **Leave No Trace:** Please honor the Leave No Trace outdoor ethic (sometimes summarized as "take only pictures, leave only footprints".) Before you decide to alter or improve the landscape in any way, please talk to us first. Please don't stack rocks, build rock dams, cut standing trees, blaze new trails, etc.
- **Trash:** In the same spirit, please pack it in, pack it out! Craig County does not offer trash pickup, and we're not equipped to haul your trash for you. Options for where to dump your garbage include the dumpsters out back of the Catawba Grocery, the closest gas station just over the Roanoke County line as you head back toward I-81/Roanoke. Or, the Solid Waste Transfer Station for Craig County is located on Landfill Road on the other side of New Castle (closed Sundays; check their hours or call ahead). Recycle (ONLY cardboard, paper, aluminum and bi-metal cans, #1 and #2 plastics, and glass) can be dropped in light blue bins within the City of Roanoke (single-stream), or there is a recycle drop off for the City of Salem at 1271 Indiana St., Salem (all recycle must be sorted). If you have the option, we encourage folks to bring aluminum cans instead of glass or plastic; if you sort your aluminum cans and set those aside, we will gladly collect them from you when you leave and make sure they get recycled. If you'd prefer not to bother with your own waste disposal, talk to us before your arrival about hauling off your refuse for an additional charge of \$5/person/day, provided that it's sorted and neatly bagged in the proper receptacles, which we can provide.
- **Bathroom:** We've got an old fiberglass port-a-john at the edge of the field. It's certainly not glamorous, but it's better than digging a hole, and the view's not bad. We try to

maintain it regularly, but let us know if it's getting nasty. Please provide your own toilet paper.

- **Water:** We can provide a jug of the cleanest, clearest mountain spring water anywhere, from our neighbors' spring just up the road, for a suggested donation of \$1/gallon (we usually have one- and five-gallon jugs available, but doesn't hurt to check with us first just to be sure). Otherwise please plan to provide your own water. For washing dishes or bathing, feel free to use water from the creek (if you need a bucket or solar shower or anything, just ask), but be aware there are plenty of cow pastures upstream. Please use only biodegradable soap (i.e. camp soap or Dr. Bronner's, which we have available if you need it) while on the property.
- **Food:** We have a few small portable charcoal grills that float between the sites – if you need one and don't see one, let us know and we'll track one down. Same goes for grill grates that you can set up over your campfire coals. If you'd like to connect with this land in an even more profound way, we'd love to share the bounty of our efforts to grow, forage, and prepare delicious farm-fresh food. Depending on the season, we'll likely be harvesting a variety of fresh herbs and veggies, and have a stock of stuff we've put up (maple syrup, pickles, jams, dried stuff, frozen stuff...). We'd love to provide you with the ingredients for a special campfire meal – just talk to us about what you'd like! We also love to cook and have lots of experience preparing delicious meals for groups of all sizes, and depending on our availability, we would love to plate up a home-cooked meal for you! Just talk to us about what you want, and we'll see what we're able to do and what it'd be worth.
- **Pets:** Four-legged friends are welcome, provided they're well-behaved and stay with you near your campsite. Please let us know if you plan to bring your animals. We have a dog, Abita, who generally stays around the house, but does follow us around the yard or down to the creek, so there's a good chance she might drop by your campsite to say hi. She's an older pit bull/Catahoula cur/mutt, full of energy, and generally very sweet, but has been known to get a little defensive/protective/territorial around some other dogs, especially near the house or one of us, or if she gets too worked up playing. Please don't let your dogs out of your vehicle until you're at your campsite, and keep your windows up when you first arrive, so that she doesn't try to jump in with you. Please **don't throw rocks or sticks** for Abita, especially down at the swimming hole – it might seem like fun for a few seconds, but trust us: she gets overly worked up very quickly.
- **Land use:** If you'd like to use a chainsaw or any other power equipment, please come and talk to us first. Generators are fine, but be respectful of other campers, especially at night. Please talk to us first if you'd like to shoot any firearms or fireworks. We may be able to accommodate, but we need to be know and be prepared for that, and show you some good safe areas to shoot. If you plan to fish, please have all relevant licenses with you. No hunting. Don't be tempted to climb the cliff faces; the rock is shale and dislodges easily. Likewise if you'd like to tour the property on any motorized vehicles (dirt bikes, ATVs, trucks): please talk to us first.
- **Phone:** Verizon customers don't get cell service here, while US Cellular gets decent service, and we've been told T Mobile and Sprint typically get enough bars to send/receive a text message. Let us know if your provider not listed here also gets

service, so we can pass that along to future campers. If you should absolutely need a phone for anything, you can come find us to borrow a phone, or we'll show you inside to use the land line rotary phone (number is 540-864-5775). If you must check in at work or otherwise need internet access, we do have WiFi available up at the house, and ask for a small donation in exchange for the password.

- **Precautions:** We do have certain species to be wary of. First and foremost, look out for **poison ivy!** We've worked hard to eliminate it, but there's unfortunately still plenty creeping around the edges of the fields (see picture below for help with ID). If you do come into contact with it, wash the area thoroughly with biodegradable soap and cold water as soon as possible. **Ticks** are the other real species of concern, as they can transmit a whole host of nasty diseases. Please check regularly and thoroughly; if you find one has attached itself, we have tweezers inside so you can be sure to remove the entire head. There are also a lot of **hornets**, wasps, yellow jackets, bees, etc. around during the summer months – if you're having an allergic reaction to a sting, we keep antihistamines and other first aid supplies at the house, and we also keep an (expired) epi pen as a precaution.



Mosquitos are a presence to contend with, especially around sundown. We have two venomous **snakes** in the area: timber rattlesnakes, which are rare, seldom aggressive, and a protected species, and copperheads, which are more common and aggressive, though thankfully less venomous. Most snakes you'll encounter, though, are harmless (including the brown water snakes in the creek, which are pretty common). There are some bears in the area; we haven't had any real problems with them, but best not to leave food out as an open invitation. If you see signs of one, please let us know! There are plenty of other critters that would love to pick through your food, so please keep it secure, especially at night and while you're away. Any first aid need: no need to rough it if your health is at stake, we'd much prefer you come inside to clean/disinfect/treat/ice/rest/etc. any injuries you might sustain rather than suffer through it. Ned is certified in Wilderness First Aid and always happy to help. The closest Emergency Room is at Lewis-Gale Hospital in Salem, about a half-hour drive.

Area services, info, and highlights:

We're within easy striking distance of a lot of stuff. Major population/cultural centers are:
Roanoke – about 35 minutes driving to downtown. Right out of the driveway, right on 311 and

follow the signs to I-81 N to 581.

Blacksburg – maybe 40 minutes. Left out of the driveway, follow this road for almost 20 miles, left at US-460 and go about 3 miles before turning left onto North Main street or a little further to Price's Fork exit.

You can find other services without having to make the trip all the way into town, though:

New Castle is our county seat, and has a grocery store, a couple eateries (Bibo's has solid pizza/pasta/sandwiches etc., Lemon & Vale is a wonderful bakery/coffee shop, and Pine Top is great for Southern-style country cookin'), a fantastic little general store (the Emporium, which stocks some organic food, camping gear, local interest books and stuff), a hardware store, a library (also serves as our county visitor center), a Saturday morning Farmers Market, and a few other basic services; take a right out of here, left on 311 North and it's about 7 miles.

The closest **gas station** is the Catawba Grocery – right out of here, right on 311 South and go maybe 3 miles, just past Dragon's Tooth trailhead. They have a limited menu of sandwiches and stuff, and close at 9 most nights. Most people get cell service right around there, or a little further south on 311 into the crossroads of Catawba. If you're here on Thursday, check out the farmers market at the Catawba Community Center (Thursdays, 3-6:30, May-Oct).

We do have one pretty decent eatery nearby, Carper's Bar & Grill (right out the driveway, left on 311 North, and it will be 3 miles on your right). We also have a really nice brewery in Catawba, Solstice Farm Brewery (right onto 621, right on 311 South, go 4.8 miles and turn right on Blacksburg Road/VA-785, and it's 3.5 miles on the right).

As for **outdoor recreation**, we're blessed with a plethora of options right out our door. Roanoke Outside is a great resource to scope out some of what's out there. A few highlights:

There's really no shortage of beautiful areas to explore; just tell us what you're looking for, and we'll do our best to point you in the right direction, and send you with a map if we have one.

The most iconic **hikes** in this region are **Dragon's Tooth** and **McAfee's Knob** ("MACK-uh-fees"), trailheads for which are about 6 and 10 minutes driving South on 311, respectively. They're both somewhat strenuous, and well-trafficked, especially on weekends, but for good reason - the views from the top of each are really spectacular. If the trailheads seem too busy for your taste, you can take the Appalachian Trail in the opposite direction: at McAfee's, instead of crossing the road, just follow the trail out of the parking lot to climb **Sawtooth Ridge**, which has great views of the valley. At Dragon's Tooth, cross the road to access The **North Mountain Trail** system, which gets into some really rugged backcountry, and can also be accessed via the Forest Service **Wildlife Road**, which is an unmarked dirt road on the left, not even half a mile south/right on 311 from the end of this road. The **Appalachian Trail** also passes very close. From here, you can turn left out of the driveway and go 1.4 miles, left again on 620 (rugged road –doable in 2wd but take it very slow) and go another mile until you see the footbridge on the left and signs for the trail. Left across the bridge is a somewhat gradual climb up Cove Mountain through some cool sinkholes, passing a shelter before some great overlooks at the top, then continues along the ridgeline to Dragon's Tooth. To the right is a very steep but short climb to the ridgeline, which has some decent views of the valley and a small grove of huge old-growth forest. Or, you can turn left out of the driveway and go straight for about 4 miles to another AT trailhead, parking on the right. To the left is through bottom land

along the creek for a bit (bridge is currently out, be careful if you choose to cross) before climbing up Brush Mountain, or to the right is a long, steady climb up Sinking Creek Mountain.

This area boasts tons of top-quality **mountain biking** right out the backdoor. We have some decent, if not super well-maintained or -marked trails here on the property. The North Fork Trail system (“Dragon’s Back”) has some really challenging single-track, or **Carvin’s Cove** and **Pandapas Pond** (each about a half-hour drive) each have extensive networks of trails for all experience levels. Our road is a very popular **road biking** route – about 20 miles one-way, with no major climbs. 311 can get a little hairy, but otherwise this area is chock-full of great two-lane road and gravel riding. Happy to help you map out a scenic route suited to what you’re looking for.

If you’re interesting in **boating**, let us know we’ll gladly tell you some of our favorite floats depending on your circumstances, and even loan you boats and gear and/or run shuttle if we’re able (for a few extra bucks). Craig’s Creek is not really big enough to float from here, but you can almost always put in a few miles downstream, and access miles and miles of remote wilderness, great fishing and wildlife viewing, all with no major rapids to worry about. Don’t park or access the creek where you aren’t sure about the ownership status of the land, or get out on the sides, though, as landowners around here can be very touchy about private property. Other floats within an easy drive are the Roanoke, James, and New Rivers, which are runnable even at drought stage, and Carvin’s Cove offers good flatwater paddling and fishing.

For other specialized activities, talk to us and we can recommend some destinations or resources to help you plan an outing. There’s some good bouldering and **climbing** nearby, most notably at McAfee’s Knob, but let us know and we’ll get you in touch with some folks who know the routes better than we do. NO CLIMBING on our property! This area is a hotbed for **caving**, though many of the best caves are on private property and only accessed with landowner permission, so best to get in touch with the local chapter of the National Speleological Society, Blue Ridge Grotto. Blue Ridge Soaring Society operates a fantastic glider port in New Castle – their rates are pretty reasonable to get you up in the sky. We have some neighbors who offer **horseback riding**, and there are great National Forest areas suited to **off-roading, ATVs, hunting, shooting**, and lots more. Whatever your adventure of choice, just talk to us and we’ll gladly share all the best local intel.

Again, thank you so much for choosing to share this special place with us! Anything you need, don’t hesitate to let us know. And of course, any and all feedback about how we could improve your experience is greatly appreciated. Enjoy your time here!

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