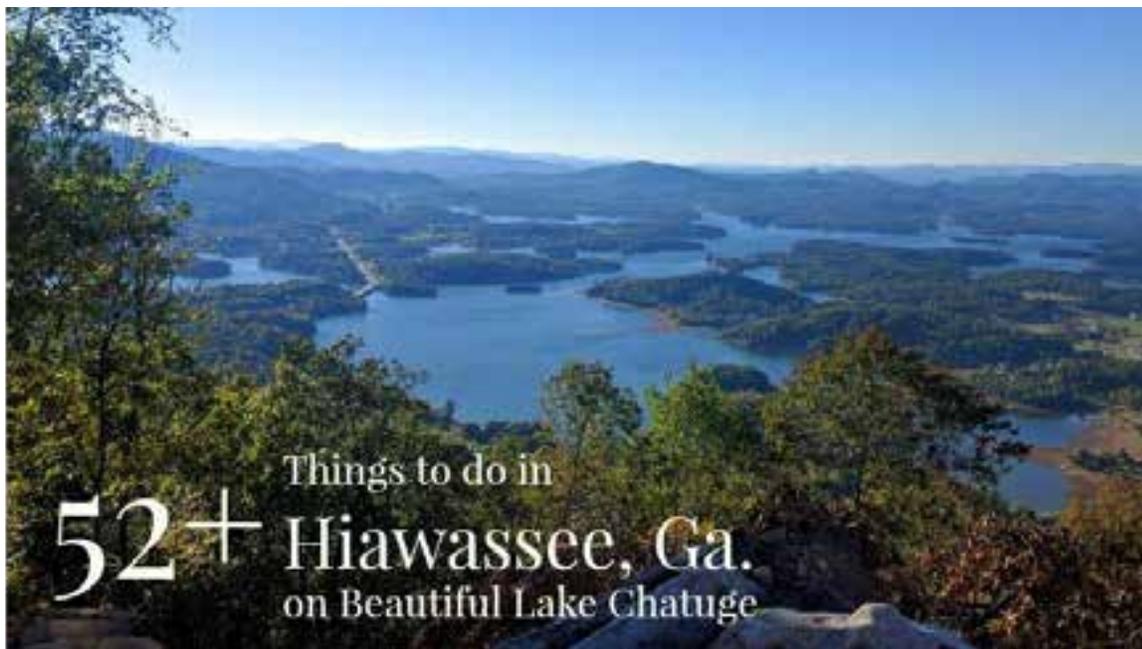


52+ Things to do in Hiawassee, Ga. on Beautiful Lake Chatuge

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As we explored Hiawassee, Ga., we could see the trees getting sleepy. During the three days and two nights my son and I spent at the Ridges Resort in Hiawassee, the leaves began to change from green, to brown, to yellow and red, as the branches, one-by-one, started to doze. Autumn was creeping down the mountains.



Hiawassee, Ga. is located in Towns County Ga. on beautiful Lake Chatuge at the tip of the Blue Ridge Mountains and close to the highest point in the state Brasstown Bald. It's about two hours from Atlanta. Hiawassee's biggest claim to fame is the Georgia Mountain Fair. The North Georgia fair grounds are located in the town.

Hiawassee, Ga.: 52+ Reasons to Head to the Mountains

The pace in Hiawassee is slower. On our trip we woke up a little later, and hung out a bit longer. Although other North Georgia resorts and mountain towns like [Dahlonega](#), [Blue Ridge](#) or [Helen](#), may be more well known, there is a lot to see and do in Hiawassee. We've compiled some of our favorite tips from our trip, as well as some recommendations from locals. If we missed your favorite, let us know and we'll add it.



Resorts in Georgia Near Hiawassee

Stay on Lake Chatuge: We stayed at [The Ridges Resort and Marina](#), which is right on Chatuge Lake along US 76 in Hiawassee, Ga. In addition to standard hotel rooms, they also have suites and villas. We've been to a lot of Georgia resorts, and the Ridges feels like visiting your grandmother's big house in the mountains. It has a rich history, and was originally called The Fieldstone Inn. I remember when I first started working for the Ga. Press Association, our board had meetings there and I always had the sense that it was someplace quite special.

Stay Near the North Georgia Fair Grounds: The [Lake Chatuge Lodge](#) is another great choice in Hiawassee, Ga. This mountain resort is within walking distance to the North Georgia Fair Grounds. Although we did not stay here, or visit, we did see the sign and have heard good things.

Stay in the Blue Ridge Mountains: Brasstown Valley Resort and Spa is located in nearby Young Harris, Ga. During our stay, we rode horses at the [Brasstown Valley Stables](#).

Rent a Cabin: If you are looking for Hiawassee Ga. cabin rentals, try [Cedar Creek Cabins](#). I found them on Twitter and they were very knowledgeable about the Hiawassee and Young Harris Georgia area, and gave me ideas for hiking/biking and fishing spots for this article.

20+ Things to do in Hiawassee, Ga. at the Ridges Resort and Marina

Roast complimentary marshmallows: Each night of our stay at the Ridges Resort we roasted marshmallows over the open fire with other guests. The unlimited s'more fixin's, were brought out by the jack-of-all-trades John, the hardest working guy in the house. In addition to his s'more duties, he was also our front desk man, and greeter. And he did it all with a smile.

Relax with a Glass of Wine: The Moosehead Lounge at the Ridges Resort is really just a small bar area. If you don't see a bartender, check the front desk. Remember John our s'more hook up? He was also our bartender.

Meet a TripAdvisor legend: For Vickie the Ridges Resort in Hiawassee, Ga. is a family affair. Her then

husband did the copper work for the original resort called the Fieldstone Inn. The little boy she held on the red carpet opening day later did the copper work for an addition that was put on for a Clint Eastwood movie filmed at the resort. Vickie has been working at the resort for xx years, as a Jill-of-all-trades, and a favorite with guests. Her name is even one of the tags for the resort on TripAdvisor.



The Ridges Resort is Vickie's house and she treats guests to her famous apple cider each evening. Both the apple cider and Vickie are so well liked, they have their own tag on TripAdvisor!

Get the Apple Cider: Part of the reason guests love Vickie is because she treats The Ridges like her home, and everyone that visits, she refers to as 'her guest'. In fact, her granddaughter even boasts, "Mimi has the biggest home in Hiawassee, Ga." As part of her hospitality, she makes apple cider each afternoon. In addition to her name, her apple cider is also a tag on TripAdvisor. It's pretty delicious too. I'm convinced it's the red hot candies that make it so yummy.

Enjoy Breakfast on the House: A stay at the Ridges resort includes a buffet breakfast each morning including eggs, bacon or sausage, cereals, bagels, a Danish, waffles and yogurt.

Get a Pick Me Up Anytime: Coffee, tea and hot chocolate are always out to enjoy in the lobby at the Ridges.

Grab a Cookie: In the afternoon, fresh baked cookies are available in the lobby of the Ridges Resort. At Christmas time, you may even find Vickie decorating cookies with the kids.

Play Checkers. As soon as you walk through the front door, you'll see a giant game of checkers spread out on the table. Take a seat and play a game in front of the big cozy stone fireplace.

Deal Some Cards: On the second floor of the main building at the Ridges Resort is another seating area with several big card tables. There are even slots for chips. If you forgot the cards, there is a small gift shop downstairs.

Play in the Sand: The Ridges Resort has a playground next to the outdoor swimming pool that is nice, but what I loved was the large covered sandbox with lots of space to push dump trucks build castles or just bury your self in sand, all without the sun beating down on you.

Take a Leaf Tour on Lake Chatgugue: In the fall, the Ridges Resort has a pontoon boat ride around the lake to look at the fall leaves. Unfortunately our tour was cancelled due to weather, but it's an activity that is still on my bucket list. If you don't catch the tour, you can rent your own pontoon boat at the Marina next door.

Get Up Early: Our first morning at The Ridges Resort I looked out to see the lake covered in a thick fog coming off the lake. I expected to see one of the characters from my son's fantasy books to appear on horseback walking through the mist. It was really cool.

Go Wakeboarding: At the Ridges Resort Marina you'll find the Mountain Wake Cable Park. This is what initially drew me to the Ridges. Of course, we visited in the fall, not summer, so we didn't get to try it – another reason to go back

Fly Above the Lake: What could be more thrilling the wakeboarding on Lake Chatuge Ga.? How about flyboarding. Don't know what that is? Well think ski boats with jets on the bottom that let you use the water to propel you up into the air and fly!

Paddle on the Lake: The marina also rents kayaks and canoes.

Motor Around: In addition to pontoon boats, you can also rent ski boats and jet skis. The Ridges recommends Young Harris Watersports for your boat rentals. Bonus, they work out of the marina at the resort.

Tell a Fish Tale: Fishing poles are available for the Ridges guests who want to spend the day fishing. Rent a boat to go out on the lake, or you can try your luck off the dock.

Swim like a Fish: The Ridges Resort has a saltwater/mineral swimming pool, and of course, the lake is right there too.



More Things to do in Hiawassee, Ga.

Go Camping: The [Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds](#) is open for year round camping along Lake Chatuge, but what it's best known for are the big events it hosts every year including the Georgia Mountain Fair, the Superstar Concert Series in the Anderson Music Hall, the Georgia Mountain Fall Festival and Georgia's State Fiddler's Convention. If you aren't visiting during any of these events, check their website, they offer lots of smaller events too.

Spin 'til You Drop: The [Georgia Mountain Fair](#) or just Ga. Fair as many call it, is in July and includes musical performances in the Anderson Music Hall, a parade, arts & crafts and of course the kids favorite a large carnival to keep you spinning in the air, on the ground and just around and around.



A sample general store is part of the Pioneer Village at the Ga Mountain Fair Grounds

Learn the Old Ways: We visited Hiawassee, Ga. in October during the [Georgia Mountain Fall Festival](#). This is a bit different than the summer Georgia Mountain Fair. The Georgia Mountain Festival does not have the carnival. Good thing my son didn't realize that could be an option.

We had a blast perusing the vendors, and even my shopping shy boy was enthralled with the custom made knives. He had the chance to use a corncob machine, walkthrough a one-room schoolhouse, learned how to 'sleep-tight', and talk to craftsman from the old days.

Take in a Show: During the Georgia Mountain Festival, we listened to several acts at the Anderson Music Hall. We heard Dailey & Vincent who were quite funny and The Band Kelley whose youngest member was about my son's age.

I would describe as traditional old school country where songs are about family, faith and lots of fiddles. Sitting in our church pews, I felt like I was being treated to a concert at the Grand Ole Opry. My 12 year-old asked to go back for the evening show. We're more of a classic rock with Southern influences family, so it made me happy to see him appreciating a new kind of music.

If you aren't in Hiawassee, Ga. during the Festival, check out the Georgia Mountain Fair Grounds website, they host acts in the Anderson Music Hall year round.

Meet Royalty: The Georgia Mountain Festival is also home to Georgia's Official State Fiddler's Convention. There are several days of competition that culminate in a 'Fiddle Off' between the junior and senior winner. Whoever comes out on top is crowned "Georgia Mountain Fiddle King or Queen."



Jerry Hamilton is the stable manager at Brasstown Valley Stables. He did a fantastic job calming two scared kids. In the end, they did a great job on the trail.

Become a Cowboy/girl: During our stay we rode horses at Brasstown Valley Stables, which is part of the Brasstown Valley Resort & Spa. You don't have to be a guest at the hotel to book a ride, in fact, I don't think anyone in our group was staying at the resort.

There are 20 horses at the stable that go out on one and two-hour trail rides. The day we went a little girl was there with her family celebrating her birthday. She was all excited until she got up on the full-sized horse and then she, and her little brother, looked terrified. The barn manager, Jerry Hamilton was very calm, walked them around a bit to help them get used to the horses, and joked to try to ease their nerves. In the end, both kids did the entire ride thanks to the his patience (and some parental coaxing).



Rock 'n Roll: If the real horses are a bit too big, or you've got some time to kill before your ride, climb aboard Rockin' Ronnie or Sassy Susan. These fun rocking barrel horses are a great place to take a picture. I love this one of my son.

Become an Art Connoisseur: Although we didn't stay at Brasstown Valley Resort & Spa, we did take a quick walk through the lobby and discovered an art gallery on the first floor. The gallery was established in 2009 and is a partnership with the Mountain Arts Association. See something you love? You can purchase it too.

Interact with the locals: I've found the best way to learn about a destination is to engage with the locals. Our conversations with John Goodwin atop Bell Mountain, Jerry Hamilton at the Brasstown Valley Stables and Vickie at The Ridges Resort really gave us a sense of the community of Hiawassee, Ga. Plus we felt like we discovered a secret in Bell Mountain since the road had just opened up a few days before.

Go Mountain Biking: Just north of Hiawassee along the eastern shoreline of Lake Chatuge is the [Jackrabbit Mountain Recreation area](#). In addition to camping and hiking, they also have 13-mils of mountain bike trails located on a peninsula surrounding Lake Chatuge.

Find Adventure: Go whitewater on the mighty Nantahala. There are several reputable outfitters, but you may want to check out the one that National Geographic Adventure calls one of the best outfitters on earth, the [Nantahala Outdoor Center](#).

Pretend to be a Bear: Wade out into the river and scoop up some fish just like a bear on a fly-fishing expedition. I don't know anything about fly-fishing, but Lesli did a [fly-fishing class from Orvis](#) and LOVED it.

See Stars: The O. Wayne [Rollins Planetarium](#) at Young Harris College has more than 30 Friday-evening public shows. Guests are encouraged to arrive early for best seats. Check the website for specific dates.

Fly through the Trees: There are several [Canopy Tours](#) in North Georgia. The newest one is at Amicalola Falls. If you want something a little closer to Hiawassee, Ga., you might try [Nacoochee Adventures](#) in Helen.

Float Away: The Ridges Resort recommends [Cool River Tubing](#) for a day on the water. Choose a one-hour, two-hour or all-day pass.

Sip some Local Vino: Did you know North Georgia has a winery trail? Yup. [Hightower Creek Vineyards](#) has a tasting room in Hiawassee, and [Crane Creek Vineyards](#) is in nearby Young Harris, Ga. and

Golf: Just over the North Carolina boarder is [The Ridge Country Club](#). The club includes an 18-hole golf course, as well as driving range, putting green and specular views of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Find Treasure: The [Hiawassee Antique Mall](#) is Northeast Georgia's largest with 40 dealers and nearly 10,000 square feet of retail space. You'll be sure to find something here you simply MUST have.

Learn a Trade: About 20 minutes north of Hiawassee, Ga. is the [John C. Campbell Folk School](#). We sent my father here several years ago to take a class in blacksmithing. The school employs artisans from a number of crafts and offers week long and weekend classes.



Hiking in Hiawassee, Georgia

Ring a Bell: As in climbing to the top of Bell Mountain. There is a steep grade paved road that has recently been completed to the top of Bell Mountain and the most spectacular views of Lake Chatuge below.

Take a History Lesson: The exposed rock on top of Bell Mountain was mined for a brief time in the early 60's for car glass. The miners cut a huge gap through the middle of the tip. In the years that followed, it's become a favorite spot for locals to leave their mark with graffiti. At one time hang gliders tried to use it as a launch site, but the crosswind after take off was disastrous. Be careful going down the mountain. Not sure if it was because I was riding the brakes the entire time, but my car started overheating on our way down, and smoking. Not a good feature.

Follow the Gap: We met local John Goodwin at the top of Bell Mountain. He told us if we wanted great views of Bell Mountain from the backside take Bell Gap off Bell Creek Road. He said the road is paved and then goes to dirt, but it's the best view of the backside of the mountain. The best view of the destruction caused by mining the mountain is from Bear Mead Road.

Go Bald: Bald Mountain is the highest point in Georgia and part of the Chattahoochee National Forest. After driving what felt like all the way up the mountain, we reached the Brasstown Bald ranger station. Park your car here and you can take a shuttle, or walk the paved path (so go ahead and bring a stroller if you need to) to the summit. There we watched a movie and explored a small museum.

Play the Lottery: My favorite part of the museum was the land lottery. Spin the barrel, put your hand in and pull out your fate. Then look on the board to see where your lot is located, and what you can expect – good farm country, timber, or rocky ridges.

Get a selfie of you with Atlanta: Depending on the day you can see all the way to the Atlanta skyline from Brasstown Bald, which is really saying something because Atlanta is two hours away!

Remember Your Favorite John Denver Song: Back at the base of Brasstown Bald, where you parked your car, there is a small but interesting gift shop. My favorite item, children's books based on John Denver songs. They are beautifully illustrated and had me singing "Grandma's Feather Bed" for several days.

Catch a Waterfall: High Shoals Falls in Hiawassee, Ga. has a succession of five waterfalls with a vertical drop of 300 feet. The High Shoals hiking trail is 1.2 miles and follows the High Shoals Creek. Along the way are observation decks to view two of the five streams.

Go the Distance: For a list of more great hiking trails near Hiawassee, and detailed information on them, visit this post on [Atlanta Trails](#).



Where to Eat in Hiawassee, Ga.

The Blue Otter Restaurant & Sports Bar: We opted to by-pass this because of meh food reviews, but checked it out on a walk around The Ridges Resort property and I loved the deck that looks out onto the marina, complete with tiki bar, and beach area with corn hole. It looks like a fun place to hang out and I love anywhere that I can walk to vs. having to get into the car. If you've eaten here, let me know what you thought of the food. You never know about online reviews.

Happy Hog: You can't go to a great small town in Georgia without finding out the local BBQ joint. In Hiawassee it's the Happy Hawg. Be sure to check before you go. We were dying for BBQ and the Happy Hawg was closed.

Georgia Mountain Restaurant: Jerry Hamilton the barn manager at Brasstown Valley Stables recommends the open-faced roast beef.



For the Ride up to Hiawassee, Ga. from Atlanta

If you are coming to Hiawassee from Atlanta, plan a little extra time to stop at the [Sleepy Hollow Enterprises](#). The owner is a former Disney imagineer and builds houses like the one you see above. If you are coming in the fall, tack on a little time to visit one of these [North Georgia apple houses](#).