

The Perfect Place for a Picnic



Hilliard's Knob, Watauga County

Hilliard's Knob in the Forest Grove community of Watauga County is the perfect place for a picnic (see photo above). The knob was named for my great-great-great grandfather, Alf Hilliard, who once owned the land. Hilliard's Knob towers over the community below. One can see distant mountain peaks of North Carolina and ridges stretching into Tennessee.

My family has picnicked here on several occasions. Spring winds sweep over the peak, reminding everyone that the long winter is almost over. Summer brings an abundance of green. You can probably catch a glimpse of a horse or cow grazing contently in a nearby pasture. Autumn is perhaps the best time to be there. Nature's glory abounds as the mountains seem to be afire with

leaves changing colors. When there is no summer haze, you feel like you can see forever in the crisp, clear mountain air.

I'm sure that there are many other places in North Carolina that match the beauty of this place. Still, there is one thing that makes this place more special than all the others. It was on this very spot on a picnic that I proposed to my wife, and she is a beauty that cannot be surpassed.

Steven Hagaman, Zionville / Blue Ridge EMC

Pisgah National Forest

In July 2005, my mom, sister, brother and I went to the Pisgah National Forest, along with another family, who are also our neighbors. We went for a week-long outing in the mountains. Since it was summer vacation—our dads were working—it was a carefree getaway for fun. Even though

it was a six-hour ride, it was worth every minute.

We rented a little cottage on a creek, which is where we spent our mornings catching everything we saw that crawled. Then we'd get in our bathing suits, make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and be on our way. Every day it was a new place. We would hike in the mountains and find waterfalls that were good enough to jump from. We couldn't wait for lunch. Each picnic was more exciting than the last. We would eat our lunch sitting on rocks, with our feet in the water planning where we'd set up our picnic site the next day.

This is now a tradition for both of our families that we will never forget.

*Lindsey May, 13, Waxhaw
Union Power Cooperative*



Thanks to everyone who sent in reports of the perfect place for a picnic. You can see more of the submissions at our Web site. Next month we'll publish your stories of "the ugliest lamp I ever saw." (Deadline was March 15.) For more themes and the rules of this series, see page 18.



The Blue Ridge Parkway

The Blue Ridge Parkway with its scenic views is a wonderful place for a picnic. Through the years my family and I have enjoyed many picnics along this ribbon of road that rides the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Any spot along the parkway that is large enough to accommodate a vehicle and a tablecloth spread on the ground or tailgate is an ideal spot.

There are picnic tables at many of the overlooks, too. Here in the High Country we have access to picnic areas at Doughton Park, Jeffries Park and Price Park. There are tables, grills (furnish your own charcoal) and restrooms available.

When you plan a picnic on the Parkway, be sure to bring a lawn chair or blanket so you can relax after enjoying a hearty picnic in one of the most beautiful places provided by nature.

M. L. Howell, Fleetwood | Blue Ridge EMC

Goat Island

My family, friends and I have had many picnics on Goat Island, which is on beautiful Lake Gaston. This is just one of the great sunsets we have seen from the island.

Cynthia Marie Dawes, Roanoke Rapids | Roanoke Electric Cooperative



The 1940s picnic shelter

It's a beautiful picnic spot. But it's not far off in a secluded wooded area or meadow. It's 20 feet from the road and to the side of our front yard on the edge of a pond. The picnic shelter built circa 1940 by my husband's grandparents has faithfully hosted fish fries, baptisms, farmers meetings, family reunions, birthday parties, Fourth of July picnics and any spontaneous "let's have a cook-out tonight" notion that we have. My husband Johnny will guarantee nothing less than hot dogs and hamburgers cooked on a real charcoal grill. They have come to be known as "daddy burgers" and my kids and their friends will be first in line. I would love to know just how many he has served up over the years.



The shelter has even served as a produce stand where we sell sweet corn in the summer. Re-roofed, re-wired and repaired by my husband and sons, it is truly a family shrine. There is a brick cooker that was used in years past for fish fries. The floor is dirt and sports a new layer of pine straw for special occasions. Each year we have a big Fourth of July picnic followed by fireworks put on by the younger crowd in the field across from the pond. It is safer to be on the opposite side of them. Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, the shelter is lit with red, white and blue lights. At Christmas it is decorated with red and green lights.

My father served three years as a U.S. Army Medic in Europe during WWII. What he experienced influenced him to tell me when I was a child that I lived in the best place in the world. It is true. I haven't found a more perfect picnic spot than my own backyard.

Nancy Mullis Kelly, Sanford | Central EMC

The lake in the woods

About 15 years ago, my family lived in an old white farm house off Highway 87. The six of us brothers and sisters would pack a loaf of bread, a jar of peanut butter, a jar of Mom's homemade peach or blackberry preserves and a jug of Kool-Aid. We'd hike about a mile into the woods behind our house. There was this old hay barn and a lake. We'd catch catfish, swim or just play all day. This was the best picnic place in North Carolina.

There was a tobacco field next to our house. After a few years they started using the lake to water their crops. This made the lake shallow and revealed old lawn mowers and all sorts of old junk that rested at the bottom of our perfect picnic site.

Stephanie Grubb, Cameron | Central EMC

Union Point Park, New Bern

Youngsters run at resting flocks of gulls, laughing as the screeching birds take flight, circle and land again. Union Point Park of New Bern is alive.

"Look! The bridge is opening! It's a blow boat!" Sail and power boats parade by, traveling the Neuse and Trent rivers. Even on cold, blustery days cars park with heaters running while passengers enjoy the scenery.

Wrought iron fences edge the water side of the bricked walkway, insuring protection and a leaning place. Piers outside a gated area provide for fishing and docking. Benches along the walk's grassy side invite people to sit, read, eat, bask or chat. Greetings pass between strollers.

"Come kids. Food's ready!" The large picnic tables are perfectly situated for families and friends having home-cooked picnics. Nearby youngsters enjoy play equipment, climbing bear statues and running in the short grass.

People toss bread and crackers into the air for sea gulls. There is fierce and noisy competition for the tasty morsels. On weekends and evenings, the seagulls make room for young people playing touch football and other games.

Hot dog, soda, sunny bench and a friend. Picnicking is good in Union Park.

Shirley L. Struyk, New Bern | Tideland EMC



Molly Acre Lane, Lincolnton

North Carolina is a very beautiful place and dear to my heart. Almost anywhere in North Carolina could be the perfect site for a picnic. However, I don't want to have to leave home to have a picnic each time. So a few years ago, my husband built us a beautiful pond behind our house. It's not a large pond, but it is stocked with fish and it is clean. We also have a small building for getting out of the rain, just in case. It's peaceful and quiet and you can experience lots of wildlife. But most of all it's in our backyard to enjoy. With or without a pond you can really enjoy a picnic at home. You can share this with your friends and neighbors. My perfect site is on the Tin Min Road in Lincolnton, and it is called Molly Acre Lane.

Sharon Willis, Lincolnton / Rutherford EMC

Out by the still

One summer in the 40s when I was 10 and growing up in Morganton, my older sister, a friend and I decided to have a picnic. We gathered our food and a table cloth and went beyond the pasture by the creek.

We came upon a huge flat rock and spread the cloth and food and sat on the rock to eat our lunch. We covered the food and followed the creek until we saw something strange in the distance. As we came closer, we realized it was a moonshine still, though we'd never seen one. We ran home and told Daddy about the still. The owners sent word to him to be quiet; they were moving the still. Someone had seen us! Before my sister died I asked her if she remembered the picnic. She replied, "I certainly do!"

*Lucille B. Phelps, Windsor /
Roanoke Electric Cooperative*

On the truck after the fair

My daughter and her cousin traditionally go to the Wayne County Fair in Goldsboro every year together. It was in October on a cool afternoon at dusk when my daughter Hannah and her cousin Thomas decided they were hungry. What better place to have a picnic but on top of her Uncle Ray's truck? Thomas and Hannah were not only exhausted from riding all the rides, but they were still so excited and wanted to talk about them to each other.



I laid a towel out on top of the truck for them to sit on. The Ferris wheel was in front of them so they were able to watch the riders and hear their screams of excitement. Sitting there eating hot dogs, cotton candy and drinking Pepsi was the finishing touch to a perfect day. After seeing the picture with the American Flag and the Ferris wheel I realized this is what memories are made of.

Sally Tyndall, Fremont / Tri-County EMC

On the creek

My daughter Jamie and I loved to picnic at the creek on our property. The creek meanders through our horse pasture. This one spot was the very best to sit and have our snacks. A huge, almost flat rock was directly in the middle of the creek. We would sit on the rock in the sun like big lizards, soaking it up. Jamie would play in and around the creek or we would lie back on the rock and listen to the water as it made little waterfalls around us.

My daughter is now married and living away. It's been several years since we've had a picnic on our rock. But it's still there, waiting for us.

Joyce P. Frye, Carthage / Randolph EMC

Under the old tree

I have a favorite picnic place under a 150-year-old tree alone in the middle of the field. Only a small graveyard from the 1800s is close by. I like to sit under it with my sandwich and think about all that tree has seen. I wonder if children used to play there and why it is still there all alone, or if long ago others had picnics there. I end up taking a long nap and dreaming of what may have been right there in my picnic place. 🇺🇸

*Annie Chisenhall, Newport
Carteret-Craven EC*

Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

June 2006
The Best Summer I Ever Had
By kids age 16 and younger.

Deadline: April 15

July 2006
I'll Never Eat That Again
A bad experience with food.

Deadline: May 15

August 2006
How I Almost Flunked
What were you thinking.

Deadline: June 15

September 2006
"My Finest Sports Moment"
Send pictures, too.

Deadline: July 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616
Or by e-mail: finer@carolinacountry.com
Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com