

OUR FAVORITE



CAMPGROUNDS

BEAR DEN

By Caroline Eubanks

A FAVORITE GIRL CAMPER CAMPGROUND

The Spacious Skies Bear Den Campground has made an incredible comeback after enduring the wrath of Hurricane Helene last September. The storm struck Western North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee with a vengeance washing away bridges, homes and roads. Business shuttered and tragically many lives were lost.

Among the damaged businesses were campgrounds operated by Spacious Skies, including Bear Den in Spruce Pine and Hidden Creek in Marion. Bear Den was hit the hardest and Spacious Skies co-founder and CEO Ali Rasmussen was anxious to check on her team.

"It was about a week after the storm when we finally saw that there was a route that we could go," she says. "I hopped in my truck, picked people up along the way, and visited all the Carolina properties that we had including Sandy Run south of Fayetteville on the east side of the state."

Unsure of what she would find, she and her team picked up as many supplies as possible.

"We knew the team at Bear Den had been trapped on the mountain because they were right off the Blue

Ridge Parkway. FEMA and the National Guard were bringing as many supplies as they could," she recalls.

After Sandy Run, we traveled to Peach Haven in Gaffney, SC and Hidden Creek in Marion, NC, both had been impacted by storm, yet the worst was yet to come at Bear Den. By the time we made our way up the scariest drive of our lives up washed out mountain roads, we got to the campground and saw the scale of the damage—hundreds of trees had come down across the entire property, making much of the campground inaccessible. The campground buildings, bath houses, and, shockingly, almost all personal property survived. All humans were safe, all pets were safe, and structural damage could have been worse. Ultimately, we felt grateful because many of our peer campgrounds did not survive."

Rasmussen credits the Bear Den team for the campground's successful comeback. "I have so much gratitude for our manager, Brandy, and the onsite team who has been down there. They are the ones putting their hands on the property to bring it back to life. What they have done is nothing short of remarkable."

OPEN FOR CAMPING

An important part of the recovery process centers around bringing back guests.

"Most of the sites are back up. We are eager to welcome our guests back. October is our biggest month, and we lost it completely. It's been a hard hit. We're also fighting a misperception of what is going on in the region itself," shares Rasmussen. "Many people believe they need to wait until everything is restored before visiting, but the businesses that have reopened need tourism and are grateful for those who have returned to the region."

As travelers return to the beloved campgrounds in Western North Carolina, Rasmussen was reminded of how the name Spacious Skies came to be:

"There is a village just up north from the campground and a lot of the residents of these little cabins were also trapped. Our manager, Brandy, shared a story about when residents were volunteering to help clear debris. A child with his dad saw the damage with all the trees down at Bear Den and said: 'Well, you know, now we do have spacious skies here.'"

LOCATION:

The Bear Den is located near Spruce Pine, North Carolina, not far from the famed Blue Ridge Parkway and Mt. Mitchell, the highest peak in the state. It's an hour-long drive to Asheville and its landmarks like the Biltmore Estate and the North Carolina Arboretum.

NUMBER OF SITES:

Spacious Skies Bear Den has several fully equipped RV sites with water, electric, and sewer hookups and access for 30-amp and 50-amp needs. There are both pull-thru and back-in sites, available for nightly and long-term stays.

Tent campsites include some for two families in a wooded area convenient to the bathhouse. All sites, both tent and RV, come with a fire pit and picnic table. A range of cabins accommodate between two and eight people. Some cabins also include fireplaces and full kitchens.





WHY I LOVE THIS CAMPGROUND:

Bear Den is set within the Pisgah National Forest, a hardwood paradise covering over 500,000 acres. Guests can enjoy hikes to waterfalls and scenic drives along the Blue Ridge Parkway. The campground is also set near charming communities like Spruce Pine, Burnsville, and Little Switzerland. Asheville and its abundant restaurants and shops are only an hour's drive away.

TIPS FOR FIRST-TIME VISITORS

- Check road conditions before you make the drive to be aware of any closures.
- Support small local businesses during your trip, including shops and restaurants.
- Consider a donation to the recovery efforts or a day of volunteering in the community.

AMENITIES:

- Playgrounds
- Camp store
- Hiking trails
- Natural swimming pool

- Private stocked fishing lake
- Swimming lake
- Basketball court
- Golf cart rental

COST

Basic tent sites start at around \$40 per night and \$46 for sites with water and electricity. Cozy Campin' Cabins start at \$66 and the largest cabins start at \$276. Additional discounts are available for Spacious Skies loyalty program members.

HOW TO RESERVE:

Book your stay by calling (828) 765-2888 or by visiting the Spacious Skies website.

www.spaciousskiescampgrounds.com/bear-den/

The Girl Campers are heading to the town of Spruce Pine to help the recovery efforts along Main St and the river front which was badly damaged. We will be camping at Bear Den and working with the local authorities to do whatever we can to help bring the tiny town back to life. Please join us August 8-11 by signing up at GirlCamper.com/events.

BEAR DEN



SPACIOUS SKIES

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