



# **HOOKED ON THE OUTDOORS**

By Mike Johnson

What a whirlwind I have been on as of late, spending more time on planes and in places that require a passport to enter than I can count. The good news is at the end of each one of these journeys, it is so very nice to be coming back to Carolina and being able to enjoy the great weather and abundance of outdoor activities available to us this time of year. Of course stick a fishing pole in my hand, some bait in the bucket, and put me on a body of water and I am totally fine...but sometimes that just doesn't cut it for the rest of the crew. It's at times like this the Johnson crew hits the road and tries out a new area and/or activity, and last summer we stumbled upon a "goodie".

I am not quite sure how the idea of a weekend at Chimney Rock came up...but when I was told there was the possibility I could go fishing there I was "all in" for the new adventure. It was an easy ride; a main highway for most of the 2+ hour trip, but the last 30 minutes was on a winding country type road that took us through lush landscape and scenic small towns. This was almost a symbolic way to ease you into the mindset and tranquility of a weekend away from the normal hustle and bustle of our lives. We ended up renting a small (very rustic) cabin for the weekend. Our cabin was directly across the street from the Rocky Broad River...a ribbon of water than runs the length of Chimney Rock village. The river is a true gem of this village, its clear refreshing waters offered the chance to fish (of course) to swimming, or just dipping in your toes to cool off a bit. We spent a lot of time at the river...and by the looks of things it also captured the attention and time of many others.

Of course THE attraction of the Chimney Rock area is Chimney Rock Park... a 1,000 acre park chock full of hiking trails for people of all ability. The star attraction of the park however is Chimney Rock itself, a large 315 foot vertical granite rock which towers above the park and village. Getting to the top of Chimney Rock is a must for all visitors; the summit of the rock offers just incredible views of the Hickory Nut Gorge and the neighboring Lake Lure. I hear there is an elevator you can take to the top of the rock...when we visited the so called elevator was out of service. We ended up hiking, more like climbing stairs to the top of the rock...it was a slightly strenuous 20 minute endeavor but all worth the effort when we got to the top. Yes, coming down on the stairs was much easier than going up them...thanks for asking.

After a day at the park or hanging around the river, the tiny village of Chimney Rock offers a nice respite. There are some really great local food establishments there to grab a meal, drink, or ice cream cone...had some of the best fried chicken ever there in one of the local restaurants. There no "named" food establishments here, so you can quell your Big Mac or Whopper craving when you return to civilization. There are also a number of unique gifts shops along the main drag in the village which offer a variety of souvenir choices for both young and old alike. And...if you still want to add a bit of excitement to cap off your day...there is a place in the village in that offers gem mining...a great family activity.

As you can tell, Chimney Rock is a place where your family fun meter can get pegged in a variety of ways, and all within a reasonable drive and cost. I know it won't be too long until we return there...by the way did I mention they have fishing there. Until next time all, get outside and enjoy the remaining days of summer...and of course, Tight Lines!!!!

Don't forget to check our more of Mike's outdoor articles on our website [www.OurCommunityPress.com](http://www.OurCommunityPress.com)