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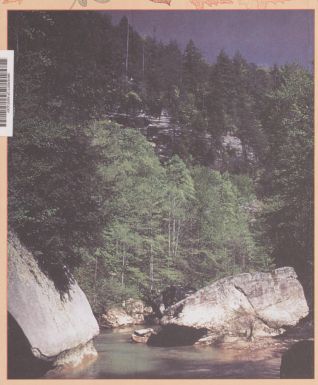
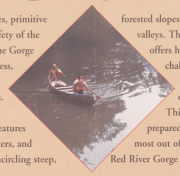


Red River Gorge
GEOLOGICAL AREA

Welcome to the Red River Gorge Geological Area. The Red River Gorge is a unique and scenic natural area designated and managed by the Forest Service. A national natural landmark, the Gorge is a part of the Daniel Boone National Forest. It is managed for year-round public use and enjoyment and to protect its watershed, wildlife, spectacular geological features, primitive character, and safety of the public. Within the Gorge is Clifty Wilderness, a rugged and undeveloped area. This 12,646-acre wilderness area features arches, rock shelters, and towering cliffs encircling steep, forested slopes and narrow stream valleys. The rugged terrain offers hikers physical challenges as well as the quiet solitude of a forest setting. This map has been prepared to help you get the most out of your visit to the Red River Gorge Geological Area.



If you have any questions or want more information, please write, call, or stop by the Supervisor's Office at 1700 Bypass Road in Winchester, KY, or the Stanton District Office at 705 W. College Avenue in Stanton, KY. We also have an Information Station at the Gladie Historic Site, which is open 7 days a week from April through October.

RED RIVER ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

The Red River Gorge has a rich and varied archaeological heritage spanning at least the last 12,000 years. Native Americans made use of all areas, including the tops of ridges, rock shelters, terraces, and rich river bottoms. These prehistoric people took advantage of the abundant fish, game, nuts, acorns, and berries. Recent scientific excavations reveal that prehistoric farming along fertile bottoms and hillsides took place over 3,000 years ago. Although we will never know the names of the great leaders or read of grand ceremonies that punctuated the everyday life, we can gain a sense of their collective history through archaeology.

Hundreds of archaeological sites can be found throughout the Gorge area. Archaeologists have only examined a small percentage of these. Archaeology reveals the secrets of past people who called the Gorge area home.

As you walk through the Red River Gorge, use your imagination to witness the record of an unwritten past and enjoy the silent monuments of a muted history.

Please remember that we are all stewards of our past heritage. These archaeological sites are a fragile resource. If destroyed, the information they hold will be gone forever. We ask you to take a positive stand. Help preserve Kentucky's past by not disturbing or collecting historical or prehistorical artifacts. Report your discovery to the nearest Forest Service office. All artifacts, including broken pottery and other remains, are protected by law.

LEAVE NO TRACE

To preserve the beauty of the forest environment we need to minimize our impact. By leaving no evidence of our visit, the next visitor can enjoy the natural scenery. We challenge you to practice the six principles of Leave No Trace so that nature can endure and replenish.

- **Plan Ahead and Prepare**
  - Plan for a small group of no more than 10-12 people to minimize impact.
  - Design your trip to meet your expectations and outdoor skills level.
  - Avoid popular areas during times of high use.
- **Leave What You Find**
  - Treat our natural heritage with respect. Leave plants, rocks, and artifacts as you find them.
  - Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site should not be necessary.
  - Let nature's sounds prevail. Keep loud voices and noises to a minimum.
  - Control pets at all times.
  - Do not build structures or trenches.
- **Camp and Travel on Durable Surfaces**
  - Stay on designated trails and never short cut trail switchbacks.
  - Walk in single file in the middle of the trail.
  - When traveling cross-country, choose the most durable surfaces available: rock, gravel, grass, etc.
  - Use a map and compass to eliminate the need for marking your trail.
  - Choose an established campsite to concentrate use and spare the forest.
  - Restrict activities to areas where vegetation is compacted or absent.
  - Select a campsite at least 200 feet from water sources, and 300 feet away from any developed trail or road.
- **Pack It In, Pack It Out!**
  - Pack everything you bring into the backcountry back out with you.
  - Protect wildlife and your food by storing food properly.
  - Pick up all spilled food.
- **Properly Dispose of What You Can't Pack Out.**
  - Dispose of human waste in cat holes dug 6-8 inches deep and at least 200 feet from water sources. Cover the cat hole when finished.
  - Use toilet paper or wipes sparingly.
  - Carry water 200 feet from water sources for washing yourself or dishes.
- **Minimize Use and Impact of Fires**
  - Consider using a lightweight stove rather than building a fire.
  - Where fires are permitted, use existing fire rings or fire mounds.
  - Burn only small sticks and use only dead and down material.
  - Put out campfires completely.
  - Remove all unburned trash from fire rings and scatter the cool ashes over a large area well away from camp.

TRAIL & CAMP SAFETY

The most effective way to prevent mishaps is to adequately prepare for the trip. Knowledge of the area, weather, terrain, limitations of your body, plus a little common sense can help to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip.

- **Travel with a companion.** You don't want to be by yourself in case of an emergency. Tell someone where and when you are going and how many individuals are in the party.
- **Be in good physical condition.** Set a comfortable pace as you hike. Fatigue leads to exhaustion and exhaustion leads to accidents. A group trip should be designed for the weakest member of the group.
- **Alcohol and cliffs don't mix!** If you drink, avoid getting close to cliffs. Don't camp near the edge of cliffs.
- **Make camp before dark.** Traveling after dark has resulted in numerous accidents from falls, so travel only during daylight.
- **Think about your footing** while traveling near cliffs. Trees and bushes can's always be trusted to hold you.
- **Check your equipment.** Rock climbers should always safety check their equipment. Inexperienced climbers should have experienced members in their party. Using a helmet will lessen the chance of a head injury in the event of an accident.
- **Be weather wise.** Know the signs for approaching storms or changing weather conditions. Avoid summits, exposed places, lone trees, streams, and rocks during lightning storms. Find shelter in a densely forested area at a lower elevation.
- **Know how to identify** and be wary of ticks, stinging insects, poisonous snakes, and plants.
- **Learn basic first aid** so you will know how to identify and treat on-the-trail injuries and illnesses. Carry a first aid kit with you.
- **Be alert to symptoms of hypothermia,** a condition that occurs when the body temperature is reduced below normal because of exposure to cold and wet conditions. It can and does occur at temperatures well above freezing. Look for:
  - Uncontrolled shivering
  - Incoherence
  - Fumbling hands
  - Stumbling
  - Drowsiness

  Treat hypothermia by providing immediate shelter from wind and rain. Quickly dry and warm the victim. By wearing proper clothing and avoiding exposure and fatigue, hypothermia can be prevented.

- **Think before you drink!** A stream or spring may look clear and pure, but it can harbor microscopic organisms that can make you sick. The simplest safeguard against disease is to never drink untreated water.
- **Dehydration** occurs when there is an excessive loss of body water. Adults require 2 quarts of water daily and up to 4 quarts during strenuous activity. Dehydration is not always accompanied by thirst, so make it a practice to carry and drink plenty of water. Dehydration is a contributing factor in heat exhaustion and the more serious heat stroke.
- **Heat exhaustion** is the body's response to water fluid losses exceeding intake during hot weather. Usual symptoms are:
  - Pale, clammy face
  - Profuse sweating
  - Weakness
  - Nausea

  To treat heat exhaustion, have the victim lie down with the feet elevated. Cool with a wet cloth and fan the victim. If conscious, give 1/2 teaspoon of salt mixed with 4 ounces of water every 15 minutes. Repeat this treatment three times.
- **Heat stroke** occurs when the body temperature increases rapidly and the skin becomes hot, red, and dry as the body's sweating mechanism is blocked. The pulse will be rapid and unconsciousness may occur. Cool the victim with wet cloths to lower body temperature and seek medical help at once. Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency requiring quick medical attention.
- **If you get lost, stay calm.** Panic is your greatest enemy. Try to remember how you got to your present location. Trust your map and compass and do not walk aimlessly. If you are on a trail, don't leave it. Use landmarks to keep constant track of where you are and where you are going. Stay put if it is nightfall, if you are injured, or near exhaustion. As a last resort, follow a drainage or stream downhill. This can be hard going but will often lead to a trail or road.
- **Reduce the opportunities for thieves.** Locked vehicles are not always safe. Leave valuables and unnecessary equipment at home, or store them out of view.

RED RIVER GORGE ATTRACTIONS

The one element that gives the Red River Gorge Geological Area its uniqueness is the number, size, and variety of natural stone arches found inside its approximately 28,000 acres. Sculpted by 70 million years of wind and water, the Gorge offers eye-filling topography with spectacular views of heavily forested land, ridges, and cliffs, in addition to the more than 100 natural arches. The area is believed to contain the greatest concentration of natural arches east of the Rocky Mountains.

Many arches in the Red River Gorge can be found or viewed from the 60 miles of hiking trails. One of the best known and most accessible arches is Sky Bridge. The top of the bridge can be reached via a short paved walkway from the parking lot. This arch is 75 feet long and 23 feet high. Visitors to this arch are treated to a magnificent view of the Gorge and Clifty Wilderness Area.

Within the Gorge is the Red River, a portion of which is part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This unique stream features both gentle ripples and exciting whitewater.

The Red River Gorge supports an unusual array of plant and animal life. The diversity may be attributed to geographic location, topography, and glacial history. A significant number of endangered, threatened, sensitive, and rare species of plants and animals exist in this area. The Forest Service and other interested agencies and individuals are working to protect these species and their habitat.

An interesting way to enter the Red River Gorge is through the 900-foot Nada Tunnel, located along Kentucky Highway 77. This one-lane tunnel was built for use by a logging railroad during the early 1900's. Built of stone, this tunnel is listed on the National Register of Historical Places.

The Visitor Information Station at the Gladie Historic Site is situated on a gently sloping terrace overlooking the confluence of Gladie Creek and the North Fork of the Red River. Surrounded by the vistas of some of the most spectacular Gorge features is the Gladie Cabin. This reconstructed historic log house is the only remaining structure in the Gorge dating back to the early logging period of the late 19th-early 20th century. The site also features a small herd of bison, reminders of the huge herds that once roamed Kentucky.

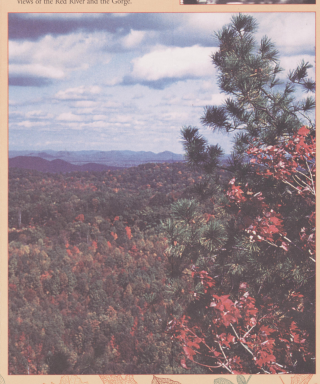
A developed campground at Koomer Ridge is open from mid-April through the fall foliage season. All 54 camping sites in this area are suitable for tents, and 19 are also suitable for camper trailers. Some sites remain open year round with reduced service (no water or electricity) in the off season. Fees are charged when full service is available.

TRAIL AND HIKING INFORMATION

About 60 miles of hiking trails wind through the Red River Gorge Geological Area. The Sheltowee Trace National Recreation Trail, which runs the entire length of the Daniel Boone National Forest, passes through this area. Some of these trails lead to specific features, such as arches. Others are connected, providing opportunities for longer hikes. Not all routes are suitable for novices.

- **Double Arch Trail #201: 1.0 mile.** From the parking area at the end of Tunnel Ridge Road, the trail descends below a high cliff of sandstone conglomerate, then up to a scenic overlook at Double Arch.
- **Courthouse Rock Trail #202: 2.1 miles.** This trail leaves Auxier Ridge and descends below the cliff, then eventually rejoins Auxier Ridge Trail at Courthouse Rock.
- **Auxier Branch Trail #203: 0.8 mile.** Auxier Branch Trail extends from Double Arch Trail through a wooded valley along a clear, rocky branch to Courthouse Rock Trail.
- **Auxier Ridge Trail #204: 2.1 miles.** The trail follows a high narrow ridge that offers panoramic views of the Red River Gorge, sheer sandstone cliffs, and unusual rock formations, such as Double Arch, Haystack Rock, and Ravens Rock.
- **Gray's Arch Trail #205: 1.1 miles.** From the trailhead at Gray's Arch Picnic Area, this trail passes through an upland pine-hardwood forest, then descends into a moist cove, following a portion of Rough Trail to the base of Gray's Arch.
- **Cliff Trail #206: 0.8 mile.** Cliff Trail is set along the edge of a high cliff near Koomer Ridge Campground. Its main attractions are the scenic overlooks.
- **Rock Bridge Trail #207: 1.3 miles.** From Rock Bridge Picnic Area, this paved loop trail descends into a deep, cool cove with large hemlock trees, past a waterfall, to Swift Camp Creek and Rock Bridge. Rock Bridge is the only natural arch in this area that spans a stream.
- **Hidden Arch Trail #208: 1.2 miles.** From the trailhead parking area west of Koomer Ridge Campground, Hidden Arch Trail follows a dry ridgetop to a small buttress-type arch of sandstone conglomerate, then joins Koomer Ridge Trail.
- **Daniel Boone Hut Trail #209: 0.7 mile.** This trail leads to a large rock shelter that contains the remains of an old "saltpetre" mine and a hut that may have been a winter residence of pioneer Daniel Boone.
- **Bison Way Trail #210: 0.8 mile.** This connector trail leads from Gladie Creek Historic Site to the Sheltowee Trace National Recreation Trail.
- **Sky Bridge Trail #214: 0.6 mile.** This blacktop loop trail leads to Sky Bridge, then loops below the arch and back up to the ridge on a long flight of stairs. Picnic areas and scenic overlooks are located nearby.
- **Whittleton Branch Trail #216: 1.8 miles.** Known for its spring wildflower display, Whittleton Branch Trail meanders along a rocky branch from Highway 15 at Tunnel Ridge Road to Whittleton Campground in Natural Bridge State Park. Whittleton Arch is located on a short spur off the main trail.
- **Angel Windows Trail #218: 0.3 mile.** This short trail leads under the cliff to Angel Windows, which are small arches or openings through the rock.
- **Koomer Ridge Trail #220: 2.6 miles.** Koomer Ridge Trail extends from the trailhead parking area west of Koomer Ridge Campground for about 2 miles along the ridge, then descends to Chimney Top Creek where it joins Rough Trail.
- **Rough Trail #221: 8.3 miles.** The longest trail in the Red River Gorge, Rough Trail extends from the Martins Fork parking area on Highway 77 to the Swift Camp Creek parking area on Highway 715. The trail passes through a variety of habitats as it climbs from streamside to ridgetop and back down again several times.
- **Pinch 'em Tight Trail #223: 1.6 miles.** This trail passes through a mixed pine-oak forest on the ridgetop, and offers occasional views of the Gorge from the clifftop.

- **Silvermine Arch Trail #225: 1 mile.** Silvermine Arch Trail follows a dry wooded ridge from Koomer Ridge Campground down two flights of stairs to Silvermine Arch, a large arch with a waterfall behind it.
- **Buck Trail #226: 1.5 miles.** Buck Trail connects Koomer Ridge Trail and Pinch 'em Tight trail. The trail leads from one ridge to the other across the Right Fork of Chimney Top Creek.
- **Rush Ridge Trail #227: 1 mile.** This trail extends from Pinch 'em Tight Trail to Rough Trail along a narrow, winding ridge with several scenic overlooks into the Gorge area.
- **Princess Arch Trail #233: 0.3 mile.** This short trail follows a ridge spur at the end of Chimney Top Road to a slender, graceful arch.
- **Whistling Arch Trail #234: 0.3 mile.** Whistling Arch Trail leads to a large, dry rock shelter, a scenic overlook, and a buttress-type arch formation.
- **Chimney Top Trail #235: 0.4 mile.** This paved trail passes through pine-hardwoods and finally out to an overlook on the cliff above Chimney Top Rock, providing breathtaking views of the Red River and the Gorge.



- **Clifty Wilderness Trails: About 20 miles.** The trails in the Clifty Wilderness are for the more experienced backcountry enthusiasts. These rugged trails are maintained at a primitive experience level. Map and compass reading skills are recommended.

The Daniel Boone National Forest

The USDA Forest Service manages the natural resources found in the Daniel Boone National Forest to provide the greatest long-term benefit to the public. The Forest Service is required by law to manage forest lands for outdoor recreation, timber, water, and wildlife. By using careful management practices, the Forest Service ensures that all of the natural resources are protected and used wisely.

The Daniel Boone National Forest is the largest area of public land in Kentucky, containing nearly 689,000 acres in portions of 21 eastern Kentucky counties, all within a 6-hour drive of 23 million people.

The forest contains many unique features, including:

- The largest trail system in Kentucky, including the 269-mile Sheltowee Trace National Recreation Trail.
- The only two wilderness areas in Kentucky, encompassing 18,000 acres.
- Two large lakes and part of a third, which are renowned for their outstanding boating, fishing, and other waterbased activities.
- The largest concentration of caves of any forest in the South.
- The highest concentration of rock shelters in the East.
- Over 1,800 potentially significant historical and archaeological sites that may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historical Places.
- Habitat for over 200 endangered, threatened, or sensitive species of plants and animals, some of which are listed as Federally threatened or endangered.

Cliffline Caution

The clifflines of the Red River Gorge are beautiful, but they are also very dangerous. **Every year, visitors are seriously injured or killed by a fall from a cliff.** By exercising caution and good sense, accidents can be avoided. For a safe and enjoyable trip, follow these safety tips.

- **Avoid camping near the edge of cliffs.** After dark, distance perception is impaired.
- **Alcohol and cliffs don't mix!** If you drink, avoid getting close to cliffs. Judgment, agility, and balance are all reduced by alcohol consumption.
- **Avoid traveling on foot after dark.** If you must travel after dark, stay in familiar areas and use a good flashlight.
- **Plan to arrive at your destination before dark.** If you're not familiar with your route or destination, allow extra time.
- **Pay attention to your footing** when walking near cliffs. Trees and bushes can't be trusted to hold you if you slip. Fallen leaves often disguise wet and slippery areas underneath.
- **When rock-climbing, use adequate and safe equipment.** Know how to use it, or climb with a more experienced climber. A helmet will lessen the chance of head injury in the event of an accident.
- **Watch your children carefully** and keep them close to you at all times when near a dangerous cliffline. Caution them against running.

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Government Docs/Non-J/Sci
Remote Storage

Where to Contact Us

We have four recreation operations on the Daniel Boone National Forest. We'll be happy to help you find Boone National Forest Service director contact:

STANTON DISTRICT OFFICE
705 W. College Avenue
Stanton, KY 40380
606-663-2852

FOREST SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE
Daniel Boone National Forest
1700 Bypass Road
Winchester, KY 40391
606-745-3100

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Red River Gorge
GEOLOGICAL AREA

DANIEL BOONE NATIONAL FOREST

United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service Southern Region

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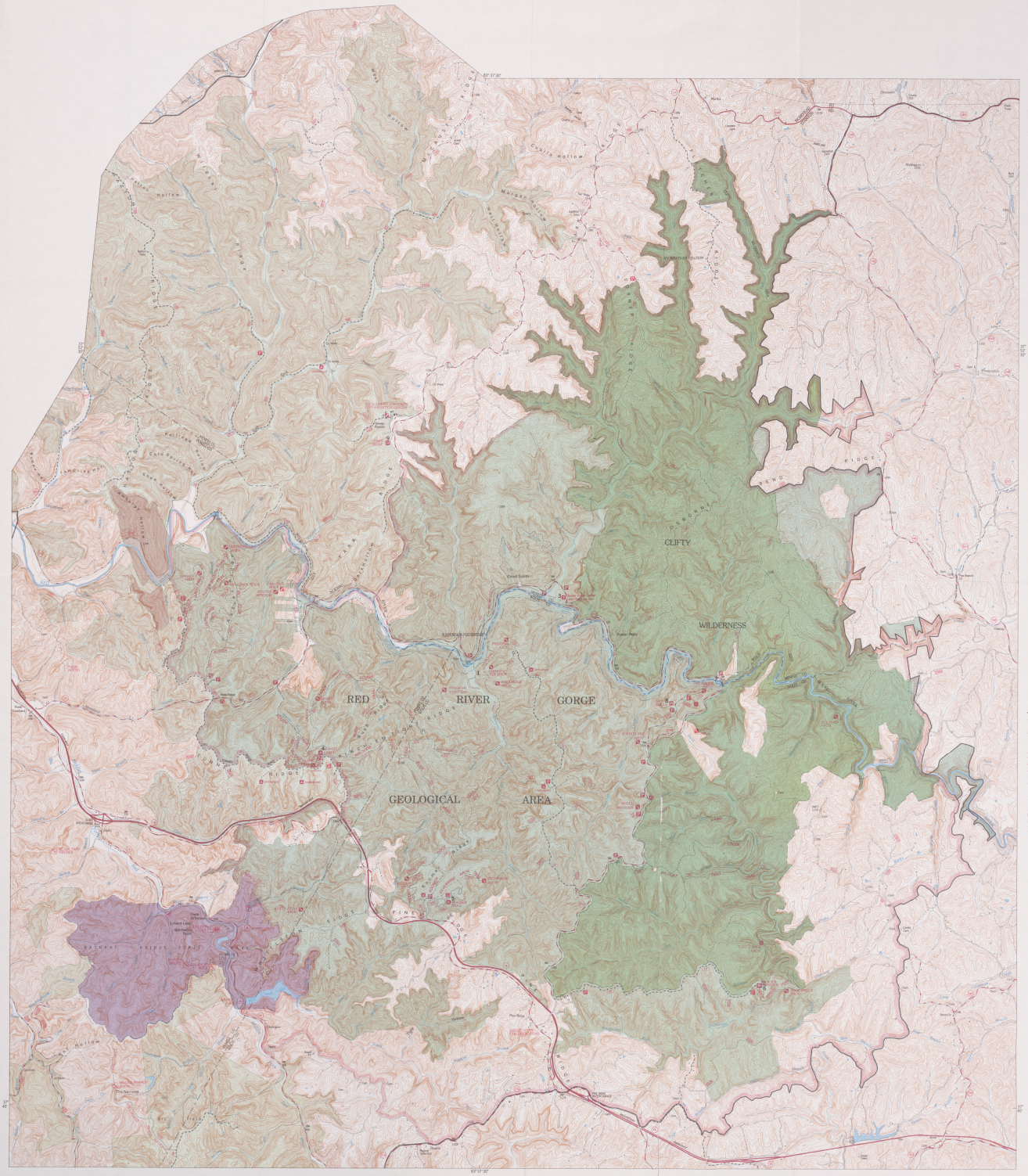
RED RIVER GORGE
GEOLOGICAL AREA
CLIFTY
WILDERNESS
Natural Bridge State Park
Lower Lake
Bermuda Dam
Pine Narrows
Sky Bridge
Rock Bridge
Chimney Top Creek
Gladie Historic Site
Sewers Mill
Nomer Ridge Campground
Rock Bridge
School House Branch
Sky Bridge
Twin Ridge
Pine Narrows
Red Hollow
Pine Ridge
Pine Ridge
Pine Ridge