

FEATURES

Splash

Tubing: rapid approach to enjoying a summer

Splish, bump, swoosh and my glasses were gone, in the rapids. Twenty-twenty vision lost in a swirl of white water.

I had been holed up in my apartment during three days of rain, reading Hunter S. Thompson's *The Great Shark Hunt*, so my first reaction to Wilson's Creek was tainted: Fear and Loathing In Mount Pisgah National Forest. Some friends had talked me into skipping Bjorn Borg's try for his sixth consecutive Wimbledon championship (ultimate sacrifice for a Borg fan) and then I had lost my only pair of glasses.

But both sacrifices were worth the trip. Wilson's Creek, located 20 minutes west of Lenoir, is a beautiful haven from hum-drum routine. Sandy campsites line the creek's edge, with the cold, clear water a jump away. The area offers hiking, swimming and chess by campfire, but tubing is the predominant activity.

An over inflated inner tube and a sense of adventure are all anyone needs to wind down the serpentine stream. The rapids are small and gentle upstream, offering a good training ground for the novice tuber, but become more thrilling downstream with triple falls, shutes and sheer drops.

The calm stretches between rapids give the tuber a chance to look at the towering green trees that cover the mountains, making them look like large hills of moss.

The large rocks are like grandstands, where watching the spills and chills of others can be as much fun as doing it yourself.

But people have left their marks on the place. "I Love Doris" is just one of the catchy phrases spray painted on the rocks. And pools left high and dry during low water strand beer cans and cigarette packs as well as minnows.

But if you get the chance, get some friends, and get to Wilson's Creek. Two requests: don't paint the rocks and don't get my space.

And don't wear your glasses in the water.

Photos by Keith King

