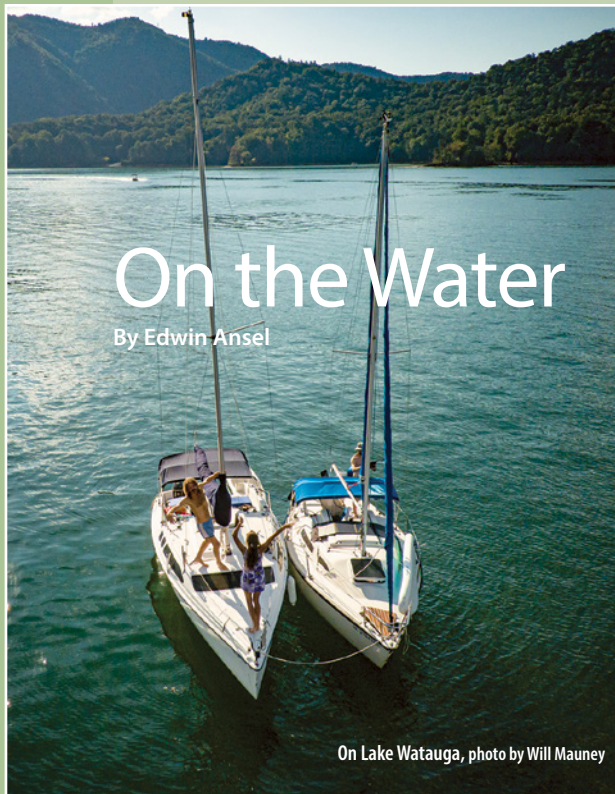




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On the Water

By Edwin Ansel

On Lake Watauga, photo by Will Mauney



Yoga828, photo by Jenna Stone



Sail Watauga, photo by Will Mauney

Trees shussssh in a soft breeze. There is warm sun on your shoulders, and then cool shade...this is practically a spa treatment. Smell the freshly mown hay. Somewhere children are laughing. There are no screens for a mile in any direction, and no phones ringing. You reach out and sweep the water with your hand, you're maneuvering just a bit because your cooler has a flotation device of its own...

Yes, you're tubing on the New River.

Sound good? It is good. It's a foretaste of heaven. And there are teams of smart, generous people up here in the High Country who just can't wait to make this—and other adventures — happen for you.

Zaloo's Canoes is the grandad of the outfitters offering the flat-water experience on the New River, easing now into their 50th year hosting people on the water. "Flat water" is just what it sounds like. "There isn't anything you'd call a rapid on our stretch of the river," says Mac Cornish, the man in charge. "It's great for families and groups; it's easy to stay together." Zaloo's has an excellent website that will help you plan, showing maps, restaurants, attractions. "Our boathouse in Jefferson is about two

hours from Charlotte or Greensboro (and a half-hour from Boone). You can be here by ten, spend two or three hours on the water. We bring you back to your car, you can spend the afternoon in West Jefferson—a great destination—the kids fall asleep in the car, and you're home by seven!" Zaloo's offers tubes, canoes and kayaks, a boathouse with facilities, and if you forget something, not to worry, their shop has everything you'll need.

What if you want to take it up a notch? What if you want rapids? **Edge of the World** can take you down the Watauga River. "It starts when you board our bus in Banner Elk," says Jake Barrow, "with the show that our staff creates, folks cry they're laughing so hard." The first part of the river has rapids, culminating at the big one, "Anaconda," where you'll stop for a legendary fried chicken lunch. "It's our family recipe. People have told me that our lunch is half the reason they come." Edge of the World has another special offering at this point. "The river is dam-controlled, so we have a guaranteed flow of water every day but Sunday. And we own the land at Anaconda, so we stay and run that rapid over and over, as many times as you like. We're the only company that offers this opportunity." Below

Anaconda the river is calm and flat, a great place to jump out and swim or just lounge in the sun. "We've got some of everything," says Jake. The white water and the flat, the great food, the sassy and joyful company culture, and the memories. "It's The Show."

What if you want to take it up another notch? **High Mountain Expeditions** offers full-day trips on the French Broad River, which offers Class III and IV rapids, suitable for both new paddlers and those with more experience. "We offer a full-day trip," says Bill Leonard, "that's the best way to experience the French Broad." This river offers lush scenery, opportunities to swim and loaf, and a sandy beach for the Master's style lunch, as well as the more challenging rapids. And if you really enjoy that challenge, keep an eye on High Mountain Expeditions. They have also guided trips on the rugged Nolichucky River, which would take the challenge up still another notch. The Nolichucky was affected by Hurricane Helene, and the clean-up is ongoing, but the river may be open for trips later this year. High Mountain also offers trips on the New River and the Watauga. Bill offers some timely encouragement. "The New River was affected by the hur-



Edge of the World



Photo by Will Mauney



Tubing with Zaloo's



High Mountain Expeditions

ricane, but the cleanup has been very good; they not only took out debris left by the storm, they improved places with pre-existing problems."

Day trips are great, but sometimes coming off the river is bittersweet. It's the opposite of homesickness. "I want this to last, I'm not ready to go home." You don't have to. Zaloo's will help you organize multi-day trips on the New River. There are a half-dozen places to camp along the river, including Zaloo's own Outpost. The Outpost is very appealing, with six campsites and a structure with bathing facilities and drinkable water, a broad grassy riverbank, and wide, shallow water. With fish! It is possible to reserve the entire site for family gatherings and other large events. I envision taking my chair out in the shallows, setting myself up with a kabob and a beverage, and watching the sunset. Just an idea...

This last bit raises a very important point. If you want to camp, ask for help. If you have special requirements, ask for help. If you have an idea of something fun you'd like to do, just ask. Bill Leonard summed it up, "If you need or want something special, we'll help you if we can, or we'll point you to the right

person." All these outfitters are family businesses, with family values. They are a community of smart, generous people who sincerely want you to have a good time. They've been doing it for decades, and they know things.

Rivers aren't the only place to have adventure on the water. **Sail Watauga** can take you out on Lake Watauga. "Summer cruises on the lake are my favorite," says Captain William Mauney. "It's calm and relaxing, we only get a couple of months like this. It's a great time to just drift and play in the water around the boat. My boat has a swim platform on the back, and a pass-thru to the cockpit, it's easy to jump out and get back on board." And the wind will pick up. You can sit back and let the Captain handle the boat, or you can take a turn at the helm. William offers some special cruises, including the Date Night/Engagement cruise. He is a professional photographer and so he invites you to "put down the phone" and let him capture the moment. And there's the Fireworks cruise on the Fourth of July. Act fast!

Sometimes you don't even need a boat. **Yoga828** offers paddleboard yoga. "We have special paddleboards for yoga; they're a little wider and more stable

than ordinary boards," says owner Jenna Stone. She offers private lessons, group lessons, and a casual experience for wedding parties or anybody who has a group that would enjoy this kind of experience. Imagine a peaceful morning, right there on the water. "The acoustics are great, sometimes you can hear children's voices from the other side of the lake." And then, depending on your group, the Mother of the Bride gets wobbly and takes the plunge. "Yeah, people will fall in," Jenna reveals. "The first person usually gets a round of applause."

And finally, there is **Price Lake Boat Rentals**. No need to call, no need to plan, just drop in. Canoes and kayaks, and even paddleboards. A quiet hour paddling across a scenic lake—with a young fisherman, perhaps—on a lazy summer afternoon? Might be the best adventure of them all.



Price Lake Boat Rentals