HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL STATION

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY · HIGHLANDS, NORTH CAROLINA

VISITOR INFORMATION GUIDE

For your stay on campus

Housing, kitchens, and what to bring up the mountain

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READ BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

This guide covers what you need to know before you travel: what we provide, what you need to bring, what it costs to eat on the Plateau, and how our shared campus works. Read it before you pack — almost everything visitors tell us they wished they had known is on the next two pages.

Instructors and group leaders: printing or forwarding this to your students in advance saves a great many questions on arrival, and saves them money on groceries.

START HERE

WHAT WE PROVIDE · WHAT YOU BRING

QUICK REFERENCE

PROVIDED

- A bed — every bed at the Station is an XL twin
- A fully equipped kitchen: range and oven, microwave, refrigerator and freezer, coffee maker, toaster
- Pots, pans, baking dishes, knives, and cooking utensils
- Plates, bowls, mugs, glasses, cutlery
- Dish soap, sponges, dish rack
- Free laundry — Valentine House or the Weyman Building
- Campus-wide Wi-Fi — bring your own device
- Cleaning of shared spaces, twice weekly
- Lab and classroom space by arrangement

YOU BRING

- **All bedding and linens** — XL twin, or rent a set from us for $50
- Towels, washcloths, and toiletries
- **Groceries for the week**, bought before you drive up
- Coffee and filters; spices, oil, condiments
- Food-storage containers and a marker for labeling
- A cooler for field days
- Field gear and any research permits
- Laundry detergent — machines are free, soap is not supplied

LEAVE AT HOME

Cookware. Every season, visitors haul pots, pans, and place settings up the mountain and never take them out of the car. Every residence has a fully equipped kitchen. Bring food, not equipment.

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

Buy your groceries before you come up the mountain

This is the single most expensive mistake visitors make. Highlands sits at just over 4,000 feet, and everything sold here has been driven up a mountain to a small resort town with a short season. There is one grocery store and a few convenience stores. **Prices run well above what you will pay off the mountain, and the selection is much narrower.** Restaurants in town are priced for visitors, not for people eating three meals a day for two weeks.

Meals are not included in your stay and there is no dining hall. Every resident cooks. Plan to arrive with the whole week's food in the car.

SHOPPING PLAN	DO THIS BEFORE YOU CLIMB
Shop down the mountain	Make your last supermarket stop before the climb and build the time into your drive. Franklin, Sylva, and Clayton all sit on common approaches and have full-size grocery stores. Once you are here, the nearest full-size supermarket is the Ingles in Cashiers, a short drive east on US-64.
Buy for the whole stay	Breakfasts, field lunches, dinners, snacks, and drinks for every day you are here, plus staples: coffee, oil, rice, pasta, sauce. Replacing a forgotten staple in town can cost twice what it would have off the mountain.
Plan your cold storage	Every kitchen has at least one refrigerator with a freezer, and several have more than one. The space is shared with your housemates, so plan on roughly a shelf each. Freezer room is the tighter constraint — freeze meat flat, and label everything with your name.
Bring a cooler	Useful for the drive up, for field days, and for the overflow that will not fit in a shared refrigerator.

Highlands has a grocery store, a pharmacy, and hardware — you will not be stranded if you forget something. You will simply pay Plateau prices for it.

What to pack

Linens are not provided. Everything on this list is your responsibility to bring.

- **Bedding** — every bed is an XL twin. Bring a fitted sheet, top sheet, blankets, and a pillow, or a sleeping bag. A mattress pad is worth packing. **If you would rather not travel with linens, we rent a set for $50.00.** Arrange it when you book.
- **Personal items** — towels, washcloths, toiletries, laundry detergent.
- **For sleeping in shared housing** — earplugs and a sleep mask if you sleep lightly. Rooms are shared and bunk frames carry sound.
- **Kitchen extras** — coffee and filters, spices and oil, food-storage containers, a marker for labeling.
- **For damp weather** — the Plateau is one of the wettest places in the eastern United States. Rain gear, a second pair of boots, and a dry bag for electronics.
- **Field gear** — whatever your work requires. Ask your instructor for trip distances and terrain if you need to plan footwear.
- **Food** — enough for the whole stay. See the note on groceries above.
- **Paperwork** — collecting permits and any required documentation.

Research permits

Instructors conducting research in National Forests or National Parks must secure the appropriate Federal or State permits before arrival. A permit from the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission may also be required.

Send copies of all permits to James Costa at costa@email.wcu.edu.

YOUR HOUSING

Where you will stay

Five residences on campus sleep 52 people in total. Housing is hostel-style: shared bedrooms, shared bathrooms, and shared kitchens and living space. It is simple and practical, and it works because everyone cleans up after themselves. We cannot accommodate requests for private rooms or residences. Your arrival email names your building — the addresses differ, so check it before you set your navigation.

RESIDENCE	GRID	SLEEPS	WHAT IT IS
Valentine House	C8	13	A historic two-story wood-frame building from 1881, formerly a private residence. Six bedrooms with two to three single beds each, three shared bathrooms, living room, kitchen, dining room, and breakfast nook. Laundry on site. *888 Horse Cove Road.*
The Duplex	C7	4 each	Built in 2003: two adjacent self-contained apartments, each with its own kitchen, living room, bathroom, and two bedrooms. HBS faculty and senior researchers have priority. *888 Horse Cove Road.*
Howell Cottage	E7	16	A one-story building divided into four bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a common area. Completely renovated in 2018–

			2019 with new bathrooms, heat, and air conditioning. *265 North Sixth Street.*
Wright Cottage	E6	8	One-story, hostel-style, recently renovated with new bathrooms, heating, and air conditioning. *265 North Sixth Street.*
Deacon Cottage	D6	8	One-story, hostel-style, recently renovated with new bathrooms, heating, and air conditioning. *265 North Sixth Street.*

Howell, Wright, and Deacon residents take their meals in the adjacent Cottages Dining Room. Room and bed assignments are confirmed in your arrival email. Grid references match the Visiting Guest Map supplied with this guide.

Sleeping

Every bed at the Station is an XL twin, and bedrooms are shared. Mattresses are firm, so a mattress pad is worth the space in the car. Bunk frames and bedroom walls carry sound through a quiet building — earplugs are a small investment in a good night before a long field day. Nights on the Plateau are cool even in July; bring a real blanket, not just a sheet.

Bathrooms

Bathrooms are shared, and in the cottages and Valentine House they are used by everyone on your hall. Keep your things in your room rather than on the counter, and give the next person the bathroom you would want to walk into. Tell staff at the Administration Building when soap, paper, or anything else runs out.

CLEANING — TUESDAYS & SATURDAYS

There is no full-time housekeeper at the Station. A cleaning service comes **twice a week, on Tuesdays and Saturdays**, and takes care of shared spaces — bathrooms, kitchens, and common rooms. **Cleaners do not enter personal bedrooms.**

Between visits, the shared spaces are ours to keep. Wash your dishes the day you use them, wipe down what you cook on, and keep your bedroom tidy during busy weeks. Cleaning supplies are available if you need them.

TELL US THE DAY YOU NOTICE IT

If something is wrong — a dead burner, a shower that will not drain, a room that is not clean, a supply that has run out — report it to staff at the Administration Building right away, or call 828.526.2602 and use Option 2 outside business hours.

We would far rather fix a problem on Tuesday than hear about it in an end-of-season survey. Nobody should have a poor stay over something we did not know about and could have put right while you were here.

THE KITCHENS

What is in the kitchen

Each residence has its own assigned kitchen; Howell, Wright, and Deacon share the Cottages Dining Room. All of them are set up for cooking real meals, so you need to bring food, not equipment. The inventory below is what you can count on finding when you walk in.

KITCHEN INVENTORY — EVERY RESIDENCE

CATEGORY	PROVIDED
Appliances	Range with oven · microwave · toaster · drip coffee maker · at least one refrigerator with freezer, and more than one in several kitchens
Cookware	Saucepans, stockpot, and skillets · baking sheets and casserole dishes · mixing bowls and colander
Utensils	Knives and cutting boards · spatulas, ladles, tongs, wooden spoons · can opener and measuring cups
Table service	Plates, bowls, mugs, glasses, and cutlery for the full occupancy of the residence
Cleaning	Dish soap, sponges, dish rack, and trash bins. Tell staff when supplies run low.
Not provided	Food, coffee, filters, spices, oil, foil and wrap, and food-storage containers

Sharing a kitchen

- **Label all food with your name and departure date.** Unmarked items are discarded. Shelf space is worked out informally — sort it with your housemates on day one.
- Wash, dry, and put away your dishes the same day. There is no one else to do it.
- Wipe counters and the stovetop after cooking. Mice find crumbs faster than you would think.
- Clear your food out of the refrigerator before you leave, unless someone has agreed to take it on.

If something is broken

A dead burner or a failing refrigerator gets repaired only if it is on record, so tell staff the day you notice it rather than working around it for two weeks. In midsummer the kitchens hold heat — cooking early or late makes for a much more pleasant hour.

DAY OF ARRIVAL

Finding us

Your accommodation determines which address to use. Check your arrival email — it names the right one for your stay.

- **888 Horse Cove Road, Highlands, NC 28741** — for the Duplex and Valentine House.
- **265 North Sixth Street, Highlands, NC 28741** — for the cottages.

Enter the address before you set off. Cell reception is limited on the approach to Highlands, and a map app with no signal is no map at all.

Checking in

- Self check-in from **1:00 PM** on the first day of your reservation.
- Check-out is **12:00 PM** (**noon**) on your departure date.
- Arriving early? Park, and walk the Botanical Gardens or visit the Nature Center until your room is ready.
- Housing problems outside business hours: **828.526.2602, Option 2**.

FINDING YOUR WAY

Grid references match the Visiting Guest Map supplied with this guide.

	BUILDING	GRID	NOTES
1	Valentine House	C8	Laundry on the first floor
2	Deacon Cottage	D6	
3	Duplex	C7	
4	Bruce Biodiversity Building	C6	Labs and classrooms
5	Wright Cottage	E6	
6	Howell Cottage	E7	
7	Clark Foreman Museum / Highlands Nature Center	E9	Free to visit

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DURING YOUR STAY

The Station is a 24-acre public campus. Visitors, gardeners, and Nature Center guests share it with you, so a little consideration goes a long way.

House rules

- Housing is hostel-style, with shared living spaces. Be considerate of your housemates.
- Bears are the reason for most of these rules. Never leave food or trash outside or in a vehicle.
- Alcohol is permitted inside residences only, in accordance with university policy.
- Clean up after yourself in common-use facilities.

Parking

Park beside the Duplex, Valentine House, or the Cottages, depending where you are staying. Remove all food and trash from your vehicle and keep it locked.

On site

- **Nature Center** — free to visit. Current hours at highlandsbiological.org/nature-center. Bringing a class? Contact Julie at julie@highlandsbiological.org.
- **Botanical Gardens** — open daily, dawn to dusk. Trail maps at the entrances.
- **Reinke Library** — open to Station residents during business hours. See office staff to check out books.
- **Laundry** — free to current residents; bring your own detergent and empty the lint trap. Cottage residents use the Weyman Building, through the exterior door to the left of the large windows. Valentine and Duplex residents use the machines on the first floor of Valentine House; Duplex residents, let the Valentine residents know before you start a load.
- **Wi-Fi** — free across campus; bring your own device. Signal in the surrounding mountains is another matter.

Lab and classroom space

If you requested lab or classroom space, you will receive an access code for after-hours entry. Tell HBS staff at the Administration Building if equipment is damaged or missing — scopes and field gear are repaired and replaced on the strength of these reports.

IN THE LABS

- Label every chemical you bring with your name, the chemical name, and the date opened.
- Use secondary containers to prevent spills.
- Do not recap used syringes or needles.
- No food or drink inside lab spaces.

NEED ANYTHING

HBS staff are at the Administration Building during business hours, or call **828.526.2602**. Outside hours, housing issues go to Option 2.

TELL US WHAT IS NOT WORKING

This guide is rewritten each season from what visitors tell us. If something here is wrong, out of date, or missing, say so before you leave.

We look forward to welcoming you.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Departure checklist

Check-out is **12:00 PM (noon)**. Work through this with your group before you drive off — the next residents arrive the same afternoon.

KITCHEN

- [ ] Empty the refrigerator and freezer of all food, including the door shelves and the produce drawers.
- [ ] Clear your food out of the pantry and cabinets. Unmarked items are discarded.
- [ ] Wash, dry, and put away every dish, pot, and utensil.
- [ ] Wipe down countertops, the stovetop, and the inside of the microwave.
- [ ] Empty coffee grounds and rinse the carafe and basket.
- [ ] Take the kitchen trash and recycling out, and replace the liner.

BEDROOMS

- [ ] Strip your bed. Take your own linens home. If you rented a set, place all linen items in the provided canvas bag and drop it off in the laundry room in the Weyman Building.
- [ ] Check every drawer, closet, hook, and under the bed for belongings.
- [ ] Empty the wastebasket and sweep or vacuum the floor.
- [ ] Close and latch the windows.

BATHROOMS AND COMMON AREAS

- [ ] Clear your toiletries out of the bathroom and the shower.
- [ ] Clean the sink, toilet, and shower, and leave them ready for the next guests.
- [ ] Collect anything you left in the living room, dining room, or breakfast nook.
- [ ] Sweep floors, tidy shared spaces, and return furniture to where you found it.
- [ ] Empty the dryer lint trap if you did laundry, and clear the machines of any stray items.

LABS AND CLASSROOMS

- [ ] Remove or properly dispose of every chemical you brought. Nothing unlabeled stays behind.
- [ ] Clean bench tops and return shared equipment, scopes, and field gear to where they belong.
- [ ] Clear specimens, samples, and personal supplies out of refrigerators and freezers.
- [ ] Report anything that broke or stopped working during your stay, even if you worked around it.

ON YOUR WAY OUT

- [ ] Take all trash to the dumpster near the maintenance shop, and secure the bear safety chain.
- [ ] Turn off lights, fans, and air conditioning, and set the heat back as instructed.
- [ ] Leave keys and any rented equipment in the designated classroom space, and close the door.
- [ ] Check the parking area for gear, coolers, and trash left beside the vehicles.
- [ ] Tell staff at the Administration Building about anything that needs attention before the next group.