

Highlands Biological Station

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

VISITOR INFORMATION GUIDE

For your stay on campus

Housing, kitchens, and what to bring up the mountain.

5

RESIDENCES

52

BEDS ON CAMPUS

24

ACRE CAMPUS

4,118 ft

ELEVATION

READ BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

REVISED SEPTEMBER 2026

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. Almost everything visitors tell us they wished they had known is in these pages.

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

WE PROVIDE

Waiting for you

- A bed — every bed at the Station is an XL twin
- A fully equipped kitchen: range and oven, microwave, toaster, coffee maker, refrigerator and freezer
- 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 (details below)
- Cleaning of shared spaces, twice weekly
- Lab and classroom space by arrangement

YOU BRING

In the car

- **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

CAMPUS WI-FI

Free across campus

NETWORK

Coker

Join from any residence, lab, or classroom.

PASSWORD

5268282797

Cell signal in the surrounding mountains is another matter.

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.

Is it already there, or do I pack it?

ALREADY HERE	PACK IT
Pots, pans, skillets, baking sheets, casserole dishes	XL twin sheets, blanket, and pillow (or rent a set, \$50)
Knives, cutting boards, spatulas, ladles, tongs, wooden spoons	Mattress pad — the mattresses are firm
Mixing bowls, colander, can opener, measuring cups	Towels, washcloths, and toiletries
Plates, bowls, mugs, glasses, cutlery	Laundry detergent
Range with oven, microwave, toaster, drip coffee maker	Groceries for the whole stay; coffee and filters; spices, oil, condiments
Refrigerator and freezer; dish soap, sponges, dish rack	Foil, wrap, food-storage containers, and a marker for labeling
Washer and dryer; heat and air conditioning	A cooler for field days; rain gear and a second pair of boots
Wi-Fi across campus (Coker · 5268282797)	Your own laptop, phone, or tablet; earplugs; field gear and permits

Buy your groceries down the mountain

This is the single most expensive mistake visitors make. Everything sold up here has been driven up a mountain to a small resort town with a short season. **Prices run well above what you will pay off the mountain, and the selection is much narrower.**

Meals are not included in your stay and there is no dining hall. Every resident cooks. The nearest full-size supermarket once you are here is the Ingles in Cashiers, a short drive east on US-64 — but the cheaper shop is the one you do before the climb, in Franklin, Sylva, or Clayton.

~2,100 ft FRANKLIN • SYLVA • CLAYTON Full-size supermarkets on the common approaches. Shop here.	3,486 ft CASHIERS The nearest full-size store once you are on the Plateau.	4,118 ft HIGHLANDS • HBS One grocery store, a few convenience stores, Plateau prices.
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HOW MUCH FOOD IS THAT?

Count the nights and shop for that many breakfasts, field lunches, and dinners before the climb. Field days run long, so lunches travel with you. Plan on roughly one refrigerator shelf per person, and freeze anything for later in the week flat. For stays past nine nights, shop for the first several days, plan one resupply, and freeze the rest.

IN THE KITCHEN

Each residence has its own assigned kitchen with one or more refrigerators. **Label all food with your name and departure date** — unmarked items are discarded. Wash your dishes the day you use them and wipe down what you cook on. Remove all food and belongings when you leave unless someone has agreed to take responsibility for them.

04 • 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 and the address to use.

Valentine House

BUILT 1881 • 888 HORSE
COVE ROAD

13

sleeps • 6 bedrooms • 3
bathrooms

A historic two-story wood-frame building, formerly a private residence. Bedrooms hold two to three single beds each, with a living room, kitchen, dining room, and breakfast nook downstairs.

Laundry on site, first floor, free to residents. Kitchen its own, shared by the house.

The Duplex

BUILT 2003 • 888 HORSE
COVE ROAD

4 each

2 apartments • 2 bedrooms
each

Two adjacent self-contained apartments, each with its own kitchen, living room, and bathroom. HBS faculty and senior researchers have priority for these.

Laundry in Valentine House — let the Valentine residents know before you start a load. Kitchen private to each apartment.

Howell Cottage

RENOVATED 2018–19 • 265
NORTH SIXTH STREET

16

sleeps • 4 bedrooms • 2
bathrooms

A one-story building divided into four bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a common area. Completely renovated with new bathrooms, heat, and air conditioning.

Meals in the adjacent Cottages Dining Room. Laundry in the Weyman Building, through the exterior door to the left of the large windows.

Wright & Deacon Cottages

RECENTLY RENOVATED • 265
NORTH SIXTH STREET

8 each

2 cottages • one story

Two one-story hostel-style cottages, each sleeping up to eight, both recently renovated with new bathrooms, heating, and air conditioning.

Meals in the adjacent Cottages Dining Room. Laundry in the Weyman Building, through the exterior door to the left of the large windows.

SLEEPING

Every bed 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.

05 • DURING YOUR STAY

A shared campus

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.

CLEANING • TUE & SAT

There is no full-time housekeeper. A cleaning service comes twice a week 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 and wipe down what you cook on.

LAUNDRY & WI-FI

Laundry is free; bring 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 in Valentine House.

Wi-Fi is free across campus — bring your own device. Network **Coker**, password **5268282797**.

HOUSE RULES

- Bears are the reason for most of these rules. Never leave food or trash outside or in a vehicle.
- Alcohol inside residences only, per university policy.
- Label all food with your name and departure date. Unmarked items are discarded.
- Clean up after yourself in common-use facilities.

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, submit a request at highlandsbiological.org/maintenance-requests, 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.

06 • DAY OF ARRIVAL

Finding us

Your accommodation determines which address to use — check your arrival email, and 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.

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

BEFORE YOU SET OFF

Shop, and enter the address
Groceries in the car, navigation set while you still have signal.

FROM 1:00 PM

Self check-in
Arriving early? Park, and walk the Botanical Gardens or visit the Nature Center until your room is ready.

FIRST HOUR

Claim a shelf, meet the house
Label your food with your name and departure date, and sort out refrigerator space with your housemates.

ANYTHING WRONG

Say so on day one
Administration Building during business hours, or 828.526.2602, Option 2 outside them.

DEPARTURE DAY

Check out by noon
The checklist below takes a group about half an hour.

Departure checklist

Check-out is **12:00 PM (noon)** on your departure date. 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 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.

We look forward to welcoming you.

Highlands Biological Station • 265 N Sixth Street, Highlands, NC 28741 • 828.526.2602 • hbs@wcu.edu

Staff are at the Administration Building during business hours; outside hours, housing issues go to Option 2. 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.