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FIREHOUSE OR DOGGY CAMPGROUND, CABINS OR UPSCALE BED AND BREAKFAST, RUTHERFORD COUNTY'S LODGING ACCOMMODATES

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Now that you've decided to visit Lake Lure and the Blue Ridge Foothills area, where do you stay? Whether you want a bed and breakfast with a German-style restaurant and seasonal beer garden, a room just steps away from a plunge into the Rocky Broad River, a mountain cabin on a gravel road or a conventional hotel or camping experience, choices abound. And if you've ever wanted to sleep in a firehouse or travel where Rover is not only welcome but rules, you're in luck.

"We're so fortunate to have a myriad of accommodations for different kinds of experiences for our guests," says Ann Almond, executive director of Lake Lure & The Blue Ridge Foothills. "It depends on what you're looking for. Is it going to be something low-key, or do you want to be catered to?"

For catering canines, Four Paws Kingdom campground in Rutherfordton has an agility area, park, pond, bathhouse and grooming station for the four-legged companions of visitors. Owners Meik and Birgit Bartoschek say their business, which offers agility, obedience and behavior training, is the first and only dog-dedicated campground in the United States. With sites for cabins, RVs and tents, the campground is open April through November.

Also in Rutherfordton is The Firehouse Inn, which occupies the town's former fire station, built in 1925. The restored bed and breakfast, located downtown, has five guest rooms. "Every B and B should be different. How many people do you know who have stayed overnight in a firehouse?" says David Robinson, innkeeper with his wife, Lynn. "The only thing that's missing is the fire pole." The inn was featured on HGTV in 2004.

For a taste of Europe, visitors may choose the Gaestehaus Salzburg, a B and B in Lake Lure with cabins, suites, rooms and a German restaurant. Guests enjoy the pool, hot tub, sauna and gardens along with a menu of Austrian pork roast, Bavarian sausage and other dishes. A beer garden is offered in October with live accordion music. Owner Werner Maringer, of Austria, runs the business with his wife, Patricia.

In different settings, Lake Country Vacation Rentals, based in Lake Lure, manages privately-owned rental properties that include lake-front houses, mountain cabins and condos. Cabins, some on the Rocky Broad River, can sleep up to 14 people.

Evening Shade River Lodging draws guests who enjoy swimming and trout fishing in the Rocky Broad, beside the motel. With picnic tables and grills along the river, porch swings and campfires, "It's a good, relaxing atmosphere," manager Gene Medlen says. The motel is in Chimney Rock, half a mile from Chimney Rock State Park.

For a complete list of accommodations in the Lake Lure and foothills area, go to www.visitncfoothills.com


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The Foothills of Western North Carolina
Chimney Rock, Lake Lure, Forest City, Rutherfordton, and Spindale

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