



PHOTOGRAPHER BRUCE ROBERTS

Signs of the early Cades Cove settlers pervade an open-air museum in Tennessee. Wintry scenes remind us how touched with beauty and hardship their lives were.

Winter Comes to The Cove

The clash of antlers breaks the cocoon of snowy serenity. Two snorting bucks, fighting for their territory, wrest away the quiet splendor of the wintry landscape and remind us of nature's beauty—and wildness.

The scene is Cades Cove, the open-air valley museum settlement in the Great Smoky Mountains, just minutes from Gatlinburg and Townsend, Tennessee. It is inundated with visitors during vivid green summer and fiery orange autumn. But the muted white winter lends a more subtle identity to the 11-mile loop surrounding the Cove.

It's an icy wonderland relatively undiscovered. Of the half-million cars that cruise the one-way road each year, only 14% make the pilgrimage during the snowflake months of December, January, February, and March.

"I've been going to Cades Cove for 25 years," says Bruce Roberts, the Jack Frost photographer who froze these images. "It's like sitting in the bottom of a cup, surrounded



by mountains. It was nice to discover this lovely area when it wasn't covered bumper to bumper."

Jeff Pardue echoes Bruce's sentiments. "The best time to come is during the winter," advises the Birmingham resident who visits the Cove annually. On this chilly morning, he pays homage again with his wife, Mary, and their two daughters, Kaitie and Madison. "In


winter, it's less crowded, more laid-back, and you can see a lot more."

Andy and Petra Alfrey of Ocala, Florida, also believe in frosty-weather sojourns, if only to escape the monotony of their state's seasons. "In Florida, there are no mountains and no cool weather," says Petra, who fumbles for her last name when introducing herself. The "Just Married" sign on the couple's car explains her momentary memory lapse.

Mother Nature rewards the couple's honeymoon choice with sights at once peaceful yet crackling with life underneath the still surface. In this cherished countryside, it's easy to believe you're in the proper place where forever and ever can begin. *Nancy Dorman-Hickson*

CATCHING COLD IN THE COVE

Cades Cove is in the western edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The visitors center closes in winter, but the loop road is open sunrise to sunset. Best snow months are January and February, although the white stuff can appear in March and even April. For weather reports and general information, call (423) 436-1200.

A photograph of a winter landscape. In the foreground, there is a snow-covered field with a wooden fence. In the middle ground, there is a large wooden cabin with a snow-covered roof and a smaller wooden structure to its right. The background is a dense forest of trees, some evergreen and some bare. The scene is framed by snow-laden tree branches in the foreground.

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—Bruce Roberts,
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A common sight in East Tennessee, the cantilever barn design originated in Europe.



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ABOVE: More than a half-million cars stream through the 11-mile Cades Cove loop during the year, but the soulful winter months invite more solitary journeys.



LEFT and BELOW: John Cable Mill, powered by a waterwheel, could grind grain faster than single family mills and indicated the growth of the community.





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LEFT: Settlers established the Missionary Baptist Church when their Primitive Baptist Church disagreed with missionary work as part of the denomination's calling.

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 The Great Smoky Mountains National Park maintains the 6,853-acre Cades Cove historic district to preserve the lifestyles of early 1800s settlers. Sustaining pastures—where deer are often spied—keep the surrounding dense forest from reclaiming the valley.

Catching Cold in the Cove

Cades Cove is in the western edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, about 8 miles from Townsend. The visitors center closes in the winter, but the loop road is open year-round from sunrise to sunset, except for a handful of days when the road is closed because of hazardous conditions. Best snow months are late December, January, and February, but the white stuff can appear in March and even April. For weather reports and general information, call (423) 436-1200. Or you can write the park office at 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738.