Kick off 2018 in the Gorge

First Day Hike, Polar Plunge scheduled for New Year’s Day

Thrill seekers can attend two unique events in the Hickory Nut Gorge on New Year’s Day.

Starting at 8 a.m., visitors can join Chimney Rock State Park’s Superintendent, James Ledgerwood, for their First Day Hike.

This trek begins at the Park’s front gate and continues up Chimney Rock Road which is normally off limits to pedestrians. Hikers will learn about Chimney Rock’s rich history and unique features as they hike to the base of the Park’s Chimney.

 “As we start a new year, I like to look back at what the Park has accomplished in previous years,” said Ledgerwood.  “One of the greatest accomplishments was the construction of the 3-mile road that leads to the Chimney.  This happened over 100 years ago.  As we hike this road and remember the past, it also gives us time to think of the future.”

At the end of this hike, participants can enjoy views of Lake Lure and the Hickory Nut Gorge as well as hot chocolate and coffee courtesy of the Friends of Chimney Rock State Park.

Hikers should meet at 8 a.m. in front of the Old Rock Café in Chimney Rock Village and wear comfortable shoes or boots, dress appropriately for the weather and bring plenty of water. Shuttle service will be provided back to Chimney Rock Village at the end of the hike.

Registration to attend this hike is not required, there is no charge for this special before hours First Day Hike and participants can return to the Park during normal Park hours at no charge. Park hours are 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. during the winter.

For additional information on this hike, visit chimneyrockpark.com or Facebook.com/ChimneyRockParkNC.

After warming up at Chimney Rock, visitors can cool down at the Chamber of Hickory Nut Gorge’s 10th Annual Lake Lure New Year’s Day Polar Plunge.

Onsite registration for this year’s event begins at 9 a.m. and continues through the morning for folks who want to take part in some or all of the Plunge’s activities.

Those with a flair for fashion and who love a good workout can join the Plunge’s Dash and Splash run at 10:30 a.m. Participants are encouraged to don their wackiest apparel and run a little over a mile around Morse Park during this event.

A battle of the bronze will follow the run at 11 a.m. The Plunge-A-War tug-of-war plots two teams against one another and only the strongest will stay dry.

Lineup for the Polar Plunge will start right before noon. When the clock strikes twelve, participants will dash to the water’s edge and jump in, starting the new year with a splash.

Cost to register is $10 per person for the Dash and Splash, $20 per person for the Polar Plunge or $25 per person for both events. Proceeds from this event go to

Hickory Nut Gorge Chamber and to Hickory Nut Gorge First Responders.

For information about this event or to preregister , visit hickorynutchamber.org/events/details/10th-annual-polar-plunge.