

5TH EDITION

WATERFALLS *of the* **BLUE RIDGE**

A Guide to the
NATURAL WONDERS
of the **BLUE RIDGE**
MOUNTAINS

JOHNNY MOLLOY



MENASHA RIDGE PRESS

Your Guide to the Outdoors Since 1982

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an imprint of AdventureKEEN

Waterfalls of the Blue Ridge

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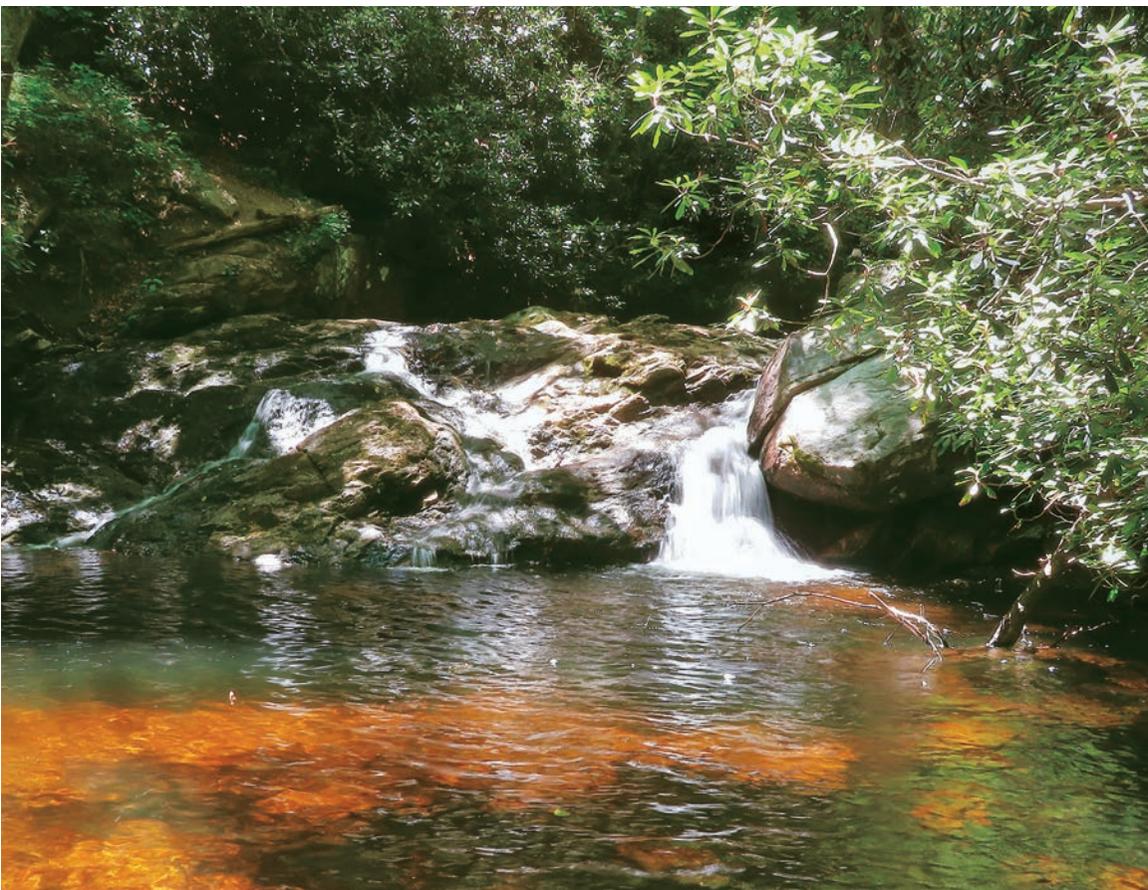
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Thanks also to all the outdoors enthusiasts among us who hike the trails, take the photographs, and revel in being near one of God's great joys of nature—the waterfall.

—Johnny Molloy



FALLS OF WILSON CREEK (see Trip 37, page 91)



DRY FALLS IN WINTER (see Trip 99, page 202) photo: Brenda J. Wiley

Preface

Waterfalls are perhaps nature's most captivating wonder. They are magical, holding all the secrets of the woods. Although they seem simple—falling water—we are astonished at finding these moving spectacles brightening the folds of the forest.

Mountain streams leave their birthplace, stretching and rushing toward the sea. They are fed by springs and rains as they travel down ancient slopes, following channels carved out centuries before. Reaching a precipice, they fall, creating an enchanting place.

For some people, waterfalls are simply excellent places to picnic. For others, they are the moving focus of all wild places. Whichever the case, waterfalls make you feel good. Their allure is similar to the cozy glow of a toasty fire, the endless rolling of the ocean surf, or a drumming rainstorm.

Add hiking and you double your pleasure. Most of the hikes in this book could stand alone, but they are even better when combined with the chance to visit a waterfall. Waterfall hiking in the mountains of the Blue Ridge is a marvelous way to experience the outdoors.

With this guide as your reference, you can seek out a different waterfall every time or hike to a favorite fall over and over, bringing friends and family. During an early morning walk, you might catch a glimpse of a wild animal drinking from a pool below the falls. Or you could camp beside a waterfall and fall asleep to the sound of rushing water.

Waterfalls often have interesting names, sometimes more mysterious than telling. Silver Run Falls has a beautiful name; Schoolhouse Falls has an unusual name; Big Rock Falls denotes a physical characteristic, while Bent Mountain Falls is named for a physical place. Like many waterfalls, Lower Cullasaja Falls and Soco Falls get their names from American Indian words. Others share common names, such as Upper Falls or Cascades. When setting off to see a waterfall, keep in mind that there may be another with the same name elsewhere and the falls may be known locally by a different name or simply as “the waterfall.”

Each waterfall has its own personality. Some are exceptional for the water volume they command, others for the tremendous height from which they fall. The personality of a waterfall changes with each rainfall. Rain saturates the

ground and feeds the creeks and rivers. Falls swell with an abundance of water: a delicate cascade might be a raging waterfall on the next visit, and vice versa. Thus, waterfalls invite visitors to return again and again.

The personality of a waterfall also changes with the seasons. The colors reflected in a clear mountain stream shift from pastels and greens to earth tones and shades of autumn. As the months progress, foliage around the falls blooms, flourishes, and withers away. One month, a flower grows out of a crack in the rock, watered by the constant spray of the falls; in another, an icicle hangs overhead.

Visit a waterfall in the spring and you'll see a pink-and-purple procession of flowering mountain laurels and rhododendrons. Waterfalls overflow from April rains, which bring May wildflowers to blanket the earth. The hillsides cry out for a wedding. In the summer, you'll enjoy the cool mist that drifts lazily off the face of the falls. This time of year, you can allow the waterfall to absorb you. Sink into the swimming hole at the base of the falls, lean back, and let the water cascade over you.

Visit a waterfall in autumn to be surrounded by the brilliant reds, yellows, and oranges of the hardwood forest. Color frames the white frothy cascade; painted leaves swirl and dance on the surface of the clear stream. Lie on a warm rock and bask in the sun for a while. The days of Indian summer, with crisp air and cloudless skies, beckon woodland adventurers. Subdued by winter, the wilderness offers wonderful solitude. Waterfalls freeze to create picturesque sculptures dangling from rocky cliffs. Snow blankets the forest floor, and bare trees provide unobstructed views.

The hills of the Blue Ridge harbor an incredible number of falls. Visitors, and even locals, are often unaware of how many extraordinary cascades adorn the area. The waterfall "collector," filling a personal list, will find heaven in the Blue Ridge, where hundreds of named waterfalls, and perhaps thousands more, are waiting to be discovered any time of year.

We've never met a waterfall—grand or gorgeous or graceful, bubbling brook or roaring river—we didn't like.

Introduction

Welcome to the fifth edition of this book, a collection of more than 140 waterfalls in the Blue Ridge Mountains. More than 20 were added for this new edition. The others were updated. New photos were added. The waterfalls range in height from 10 feet to 500 feet. Some require no hike at all, while others can only be seen from the trail, with hikes of up to 10 miles round-trip. For the purpose of this book, we roughly defined the Blue Ridge as the mountainous region along the Blue Ridge Parkway between Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Shenandoah National Park.

Waterfalls of the Blue Ridge will take you to two states, Virginia and North Carolina (plus a couple of waterfalls in South Carolina within walking distance of North Carolina); five national forests, George Washington, Jefferson, Pisgah, Nantahala, and Sumter; three national parks, Shenandoah, Blue Ridge Parkway, and Great Smoky Mountains; eleven state parks, Douthat, Grayson Highlands, Natural Bridge, New River Trail, Chimney Rock, Hanging Rock, Gorges, South Mountains, Stone Mountain, Mount Mitchell, and Caesars Head; four wilderness areas, Saint Mary's, Three Ridges, Linville Gorge, and Southern Nantahala; a state forest, DuPont; three Nature Conservancy tracts, Falls Ridge Preserve, Bottom Creek Gorge and Florence Nature Preserve, and the Cherokee Indian Reservation.

The waterfalls are grouped together according to their proximity to a particular town or their location in a state park or national park. Each chapter describes the waterfalls of the base town area with directions, including GPS coordinates. The waterfalls appear in geographic order, north to south.

To arrange a day of waterfall hiking, look under the chapter for the base town or park you plan to visit. Using the maps and information provided, you can plan hikes that fit your time limitations and physical ability. Choose a waterfall trail on which to spend the whole afternoon, or chart out a circuit and visit several in one day. We've provided trail distances and difficulty, waterfall descriptions, and directions to the trailheads.

TRAIL DISTANCE

The mileage listed for each hike is recorded as the total distance, round-trip (there and back along the same footpath or on a loop). To estimate how long

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it will take you to hike a certain distance, take into account your hiking style, your physical condition, and the trail conditions. The average hiker covers about 2 miles per hour, less with children or older hikers, and less carrying a fully loaded backpack when overnighiting in the Blue Ridge.

TRAIL DIFFICULTY

The ratings for trail difficulty are based on the amount of energy expended by an average, healthy person. More effort is needed for each level: easy, moderate, and strenuous. Trail difficulty generally reflects elevation gained per mile. The longer and steeper the grade, the more difficult the trail is.

EASY It is possible to hike an easy trail without getting tired. The gradient is generally flat with slight inclines.

MODERATE You may be somewhat winded and need an occasional rest on a moderate hike. The trail will have some modest inclines.

STRENUOUS The average hiker will definitely feel the workout on a strenuous trail. Several breaks may be necessary. The trail will have steep sections.

WATERFALL DESCRIPTIONS

Waterfalls are often described using a stack of superlatives: the highest, the widest, and the most beautiful. Such descriptions often neglect details and overlook the character of a waterfall. We tried to be informative by using specific details. Each waterfall description gives an estimated height of the falls and other details such as width, number of tiers, average flow, and angle of the falling water. Often we found a story behind the falls.

Most people prefer a waterfall with lots of volume, but the beauty of a waterfall is not necessarily tied to its rate of flow. Some waterfalls are always powerful, while others fluctuate dramatically with rainfall. If you want to see a waterfall at its most forceful, visit in the spring. Or watch the weather. Sometimes it just takes one good thunderstorm.

DIRECTIONS

This guide aims to get you to the waterfall or waterfall trailhead as easily as possible with clear, concise directions. These detailed driving directions, along

with GPS trailhead coordinates at the end of each waterfall entry, will get you to the trailhead. The location of a trailhead is always indicated. Maps at the beginning of each chapter help you identify the falls relative to one another, as well as the surrounding towns and roads. However, the chapter maps are not intended to replace the driving directions. General trail information, positioned within the waterfall entry, will get you to the waterfall.

To find out more about a waterfall, a trail, or an area, go to the back of the book. Page 222 lists websites, addresses, and phone numbers for the parks mentioned throughout.

WILDERNESS ETHICS AND ETIQUETTE

More and more hikers visit the mountains of the Blue Ridge every year. Waterfall trails are especially popular destinations. The problems of overuse—soil erosion, overcrowding, litter, and decreasing numbers of wildlife and vegetation—are evident at some scenic spots. Wild places are for solitude and splendor. Those who love wild places can help preserve them.

In addition to the following list, we encourage you to consider doing two things. First, consider adopting one waterfall trail, officially or unofficially, that you can hike at least four times a year. Volunteer with the park headquarters, when applicable, to perform trail maintenance. And second, on your waterfall hikes, carry a trash bag and spend a few minutes picking up after someone less courteous. A little effort makes a tangible difference.

Stay on maintained trails. Safeguard against crushing sensitive plants and increasing soil erosion by not straying from designated paths. Trail builders strive to create a path that has good erosion control and as little impact on vegetation as possible. Do not walk off the trail, even to avoid muddy stretches, because this destroys the border and enlarges the trail. Switchbacks are the most often abused trail sections. Avoiding the temptation to take a shortcut can prevent future scars on the hillside.

Travel quietly in the woods. You are less likely to intrude upon other hikers, as well as the wildlife, when you walk and talk quietly. When taking a break, be courteous of those passing by. Don't block the trail or block someone's view of the falls with your picnic.

Hike during the off-season. Help spread out visitor use by taking advantage of the off-season. Off-season doesn't necessarily mean winter. Try going on weekdays, very early in the morning, or during rainy weather.

Travel in small groups. You lessen your impact on the trail and on other visitors when you are not hiking with a crowd. Large groups (10 people or more) cause a disproportionate invasion of narrow trails and small overlooks.

Pack everything out. You can contribute to the beauty of the woods by not adding anything. This principle includes biodegradable material; food scraps are unsightly and attract pests. Don't bury leftovers because animals may dig them up. Plan ahead: reduce the amount you pack in and carry a bag specifically for packing out waste.

Respect wildlife. When you enter the wilderness, you are traveling in other creatures' homes. Try to minimize your impact on wildlife. It is particularly important not to feed wild animals, for your safety and theirs.

Leave the things of nature in their place. You afford others the opportunity to enjoy the same experience that you enjoyed if you do not disturb the natural environment. If every hiker dug up a flower or collected an edible plant, we would quickly deplete an area. Take a photograph of the fire pink and only an occasional sample from the blackberry bush, and you will help protect the vegetation of our backcountry.

WARNINGS AND WATERFALL SAFETY

Oh, no! More rules? That's what we thought. But after talking with rangers, park employees, and city officials throughout the Blue Ridge, we discovered that accidents around waterfalls are a serious problem. Don't climb on slippery rocks or atop falls. Lovely waterfalls often hide lethal danger. Virginia's Crabtree Falls has claimed more than 30 lives since the U.S. Forest Service began keeping records in 1982.

Also remember that developed areas can be just as dangerous as undeveloped areas. As one ranger put it, "It is just the nature of rocks and water and cliffs. You can build observation decks and post signs, but people will be careless and use poor judgment."

The hazards are real, and we urge you to be careful. But instead of incorporating “a single slip could be your last” into every chapter, we decided to outline the basics of waterfall safety here.

- ◆ **STAY ON DEVELOPED TRAILS** and don’t stray from observation points or platforms. Do not cross barriers—they are there for a reason.
- ◆ **WATCH YOUR FOOTING.** Rocks may be slippery, and algae-coated areas are unforgiving.
- ◆ **THE TOP OF ANY WATERFALL** is, of course, the most dangerous part. Avoid the temptation to lean over a ledge at the top of the falls.
- ◆ **EXERCISE CAUTION** on the trail to the falls, as well as around the falls themselves. Waterfall trails are often treacherous—steep and rocky with sheer embankments.
- ◆ **BE ESPECIALLY CAUTIOUS** when taking photographs. You are likely to pay more attention to your camera than to your footing.
- ◆ **WATCH CHILDREN CAREFULLY.** Children should always be under the immediate supervision of an adult.
- ◆ **WATCH YOUR DOG.** Our golden retriever, who was sure-footed but didn’t understand the concept of slick rocks, fell off a 12-foot drop. He was fine, but we were nearly injured scurrying down to him.
- ◆ **NEVER HIKE ALONE.**

On any hike, carry a small day pack with useful items and extra gear. Most people consider these 10 items essential: lighter, compass, map, knife, flashlight, sunglasses, fire kindling, extra food, extra clothing, and a first aid kit. Add plastic baggies to the list for waterproofing and organizing. And be sure to carry an adequate supply of water. Don’t drink any surface water unless it has been boiled for 1 minute or treated.

Do not count on a smartphone for your safety. Wireless reception may be spotty or nonexistent on the trail, even on a waterfall walk near a town or an interstate.

The preceding list may seem long, but the first six essentials can fit into a zip-top plastic bag. Extra food and clothing (a few candy bars and a raincoat or fleece) don’t take up much space. Avid hikers sometimes keep a day pack

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filled and ready to go. Check the contents occasionally, testing batteries, restocking first aid supplies, and adding to food reserves as necessary.

PHOTOGRAPHING WATERFALLS

We photograph every waterfall we visit, preserving the collection on our computers and printing and framing our favorites. Not all photographs we take are great, just snapshots to preserve a memory. We've spent a lot of time shooting waterfalls, but getting an excellent shot takes time, effort, and luck.

For the best effect, you need a tripod, a digital camera with manual settings, and early-morning or late-afternoon light. Capturing the personality of a waterfall may mean several visits at different times of the year. The photographs in this book are the result of years of hard work, early-morning wake-up calls, and lots of shooting and reshooting.

HOOKER FALLS (*see Trip 83, page 171*)



In the process, we gained some solid insight that relates directly to waterfall photography. Here is a summary of the basics.

Tripod You'll need a sturdy tripod because your hands can't hold a camera sufficiently steady when using slow shutter speeds. Be sure the tripod is compact and lightweight so you'll be willing to carry it with you no matter how long the hike. Use a cable release, a cord attached to the shutter button that separates you from the camera. Better yet, set your camera and use a timer. This reduces shaking caused by pressing the shutter button. Our tripod rule: Use a tripod whenever you can, especially if the shutter speed is less than the lens focal length. For example, don't hand-hold a 50-millimeter lens when using a shutter speed slower than $\frac{1}{60}$ of a second.

ISO speed The ISO setting on most modern digital cameras is designed to approximate the ISO speed of a chosen film and corresponding camera setting used in a traditional film camera. The lowest ISO number you'll find on a digital camera, usually 100 but sometimes lower, is generally the preferred setting for shooting waterfalls. This number will yield the greatest detail, sharpness, effects, and color accuracy.

Shutter speed Slow shutter speeds give a sense of movement. Mike Wyatt, in his book *Basic Essentials of Photography Outdoors*, explains how shutter speed relates to moving current: "The movement of flowing water will be completely stopped at $\frac{1}{2000}$ second. The fastest portions of the water will begin to soften at $\frac{1}{60}$ second. At $\frac{1}{15}$ second, the water's movement will be clearly evident, but the water will not be completely blurred." Most waterfall photographs are shot at $\frac{1}{8}$ second or slower to produce a soft quality.

Time of day Midday sun creates harsh lighting and shadows. Visit a waterfall at daybreak or an hour before sunset, and observe the wonderful quality of the light. The light is softer, and colors are richer. Cloudy days afford more photo opportunities.

Exposure The white water of a falls will often cause underexposure of your shot, making the water gray and the foliage slightly dark. With digital cameras you can immediately see what you just shot and adjust aperture, shutter speed, or ISO setting.

Perspective Waterfall photographs need a reference to indicate their size. To give a feeling of depth and space, use foreground elements, such as trees, rocks, and people. In essence, try to frame the waterfall.

Position Shoot from the top, bottom, or side of the falls, but always try to keep one side of the image frame parallel to the ground. Basically, treat the waterfall like a piece of architecture. Be creative and see if you can shoot the fall from a different perspective.

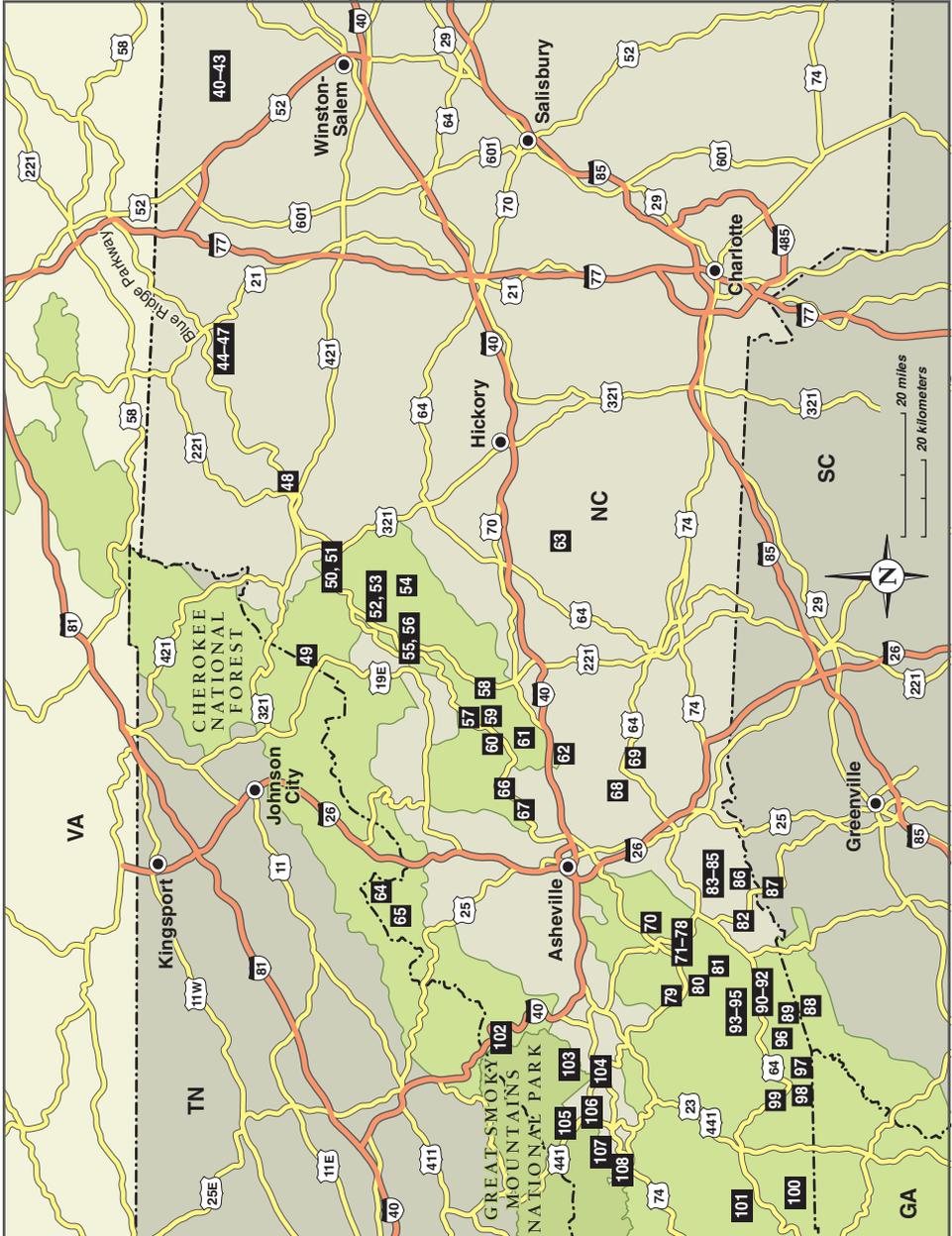
People The high reflectance of water tends to underexpose people in a waterfall photograph. When positioning people, consider proper lighting for both your subjects and the waterfall.

Rainbows If you're lucky enough to find a rainbow at the end of a waterfall, take as many pictures as you can. Don't miss the opportunity for a spectacular photograph. Shoot at different settings and then delete pictures back at home.

Other notes Watch the sun, because light reflecting in the lens between the glass surfaces can cause a flare (diffused spot) or a ghost (multisided bright spot); look for the sun in the periphery. Watch the horizon; horizon lines should be level and, in general, not placed in the center of the composition. Middling skies have no place in a great photo; if the sky isn't deep blue, contrasted by white clouds, or intensely colorful, compose your shot without it. In the image area, look for wasted space, light and dark areas, and distracting elements. Before you take your photo, follow the rectangle of the viewing screen with your eyes.

North Carolina Overview Map

See the Table of Contents and individual area maps for keys to numbering below.



section one

The Basics of Blue Ridge Waterfalls



HIDDEN FALLS (see Trip 41, page 100)

About the Blue Ridge

THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

Join us on an adventure through the Blue Ridge Mountains. Our fascination with waterfalls brought us here. In our search, we discovered a region rich in natural and human history and encountered compelling physical beauty. It is said that to share a joy is to multiply it. We would like to share the joy of our discoveries with you.

The Blue Ridge Mountains run from southeast Pennsylvania to northwest Georgia. They form the eastern portion of the Appalachian Mountains, the great range that extends 1,600 miles from Quebec Province to Alabama. In Virginia, the Blue Ridge Mountains divide the Piedmont from the Shenandoah Valley. In North Carolina, they form the eastern section of a mountain chain that is more than 75 miles wide and includes the Black Mountains and the Great Smokies.

When seen from a distance, the forested slopes of the Blue Ridge project their bluish tone because of water droplets and gas molecules released into the air by the trees. William Byrd of Virginia was one of the first to note this ever-present blue color in 1728 when he surveyed the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina. Byrd noted that the distant horizon “lookt like Ranges of Blue clouds rising one above another.”

STORY OF THE MOUNTAINS

The story of the formation of the Blue Ridge Mountains is not a simple one. These mountains are believed to be among the oldest in the world. Their complicated history helps explain why the mountains exist in their present form. According to plate tectonics, a concept of geologic change, Earth’s crust is made up of gigantic, rigid plates of rock that are floating on the hot liquid mantle below. These crusts are always moving—grinding against one another, fusing together, and then breaking apart again.

The process that formed the Appalachians and the Blue Ridge began long ago. Miles beneath the surface of the earth, molten magma slowly solidified into the core of what we now know as the Blue Ridge Mountains. Over time untold,

this basement rock folded and uplifted, collided with other landmasses, lay under giant shallow seas, eroded, and once again thrust upward.

The last significant event probably occurred when eastern North America collided with a continental fragment that later became Africa. This collision caused the seafloor to fold, lift, and break apart. The older underlying layer of rock tilted upward and slid over the younger layer, creating the Appalachians. The continents fused and then split again, the Atlantic Ocean filling the void between the separating landmasses.

So, the mountains were formed, but there is more to the story. The rolling mountains we see today were once as jagged and craggy as the Himalayas. The rounded peaks of the Blue Ridge are largely a product of erosion. These forces have sculpted the mountains into peaceful swells shrouded with blue mist. Wind, water, and gravity continue to etch the face of the landscape day by day.

HUMAN HISTORY

The history of the people who have lived in these mountains for centuries is as interesting as the story of the mountains' formation. Archaeological research has found traces of human habitation in this area as early as 8000 BC. Evidence found at various sites throughout the mountains indicates that people have been in the Blue Ridge continuously since that time. American Indian tribes lived off this land before the arrival of Europeans. The first white men were hunters and traders in search of pelts. Tales of savages and other horrors kept many pioneers away. At the same time, the American Indians were battling other tribes. More decimating, however, was the whiskey and smallpox brought by fur traders and pioneers.

The colonists who came here were from hardy stock. They were Scotch-Irish immigrants who had survived hard times in Northern Ireland, and Germans who came to escape the horrible conditions of the Thirty Years' War. They were joined by Englishmen from the coastal regions.

Before the American Revolution, many rebellious colonists entrenched themselves in the mountains. From their mountain strongholds, they fought and defeated the king's men during the Revolution. Later, the Cherokee were their foe. Eventually, the area came entirely under white control.

Because of their physical isolation, these Appalachian pioneers became self-sufficient. Schooling was sporadic. While many of the original settlers

could read and write, often these skills gradually slipped away. Christianity was the major influence in their lives. Traveling ministers carried the gospel to the isolated areas and were usually the only outsiders. An old mountain saying, "There's nothing stirring out there but crows and Methodist preachers," hints at the ever-present influence of religion on a people shut off from outside civilization.

Roads were barely passable, when they existed at all. In waves, miners and loggers, enticed by rich ore veins and lush forests, depleted resources and departed. The mountain folk were left as destitute as before, and their land was desecrated. The coming of the automobile, coupled with the increase in road building, brought change to the highlands. Electricity and modern conveniences made life somewhat easier for the mountaineers, but they maintained their self-sufficiency and their unique customs.

With the Blue Ridge Parkway came an interest in the lives of the colorful people who occupy the mountains and valleys of the Blue Ridge. Part of the stated purpose of the Blue Ridge Parkway is to preserve the history and culture of the highlanders.

PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Just as we are intrigued by the history of the mountains and their inhabitants, so are we captivated by the diversity of their natural wonders. This area is one of the most ecologically complex woodlands in North America. Thousands of species have developed here over millions of years of evolution. The dramatic upheavals and shifting that formed the mountains also contributed to the great variety of plant life. Forerunners of rare botanical specimens were deposited in coves created by ancient glaciers.

The abundant rainfall, mild climate, and great variations in elevation make the Blue Ridge a paradise for botanists. Driving from the foothills of the Blue Ridge to the higher elevations, you encounter the same plant life zones that you would find driving from Georgia to New England. Trees vary from the sycamore and river birch typical of Southeastern stream bottoms to spruce and fir forests similar to those found in northern Maine.

Naturalists also find the animal life of the region diverse and plentiful. Hikers may see wild turkeys, beavers, deer, bears, foxes, opossums, rabbits, chipmunks,

squirrels, groundhogs, and skunks. Bird-watchers in the Blue Ridge have a great opportunity because a major migratory flyway follows the mountains.

The Blue Ridge Mountains offer incredible seasonal variety. Spring and summer engage visitors with their constant palette of colors, from brilliant to pastel, showcased against a tapestry of greens. Wildflowers, mountain laurel, rhododendron, and flame azalea provide a procession of color that gives way to the spectacular blaze of fall. The muted tones of winter often belie the unpredictability of this season. The rime ice that adorns trees and rocks warns of the chill but provides a magnificent, sparkling picture. The clear, unobstructed panoramas in winter are beyond comparison.

THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

The Blue Ridge Parkway, linking Shenandoah National Park to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, forms the backbone of this marvelous scenic region. The Blue Ridge Parkway provides a platform from which to survey many of the wonders of the entire area. Writer Harley E. Jolley described it as “a road of unlimited horizons, a grand balcony.”

The Parkway is also a masterful feat of engineering that has preserved the natural beauty and the cultural heritage of the Southern Highlands. Few of the millions of tourists who travel the scenic road each year have any concept of the hard labor, politics, and dreams that were involved in making it a reality. Considering the countless hardships, adversities, and today’s government red tape, it is astonishing that the first rural national parkway in the United States was ever completed.

The Blue Ridge Parkway was designed as a Depression-era project to provide desperately needed jobs for engineers, architects, and landscape architects, as well as for the laborers of the Southern Highlands. The National Park Service archives don’t recognize a single originator of the idea. Several people, however, have taken credit. As early as 1909, Colonel Joseph Hyde Pratt, head of the North Carolina Geological Survey, dreamed of a scenic highway through the Blue Ridge Mountains. He even had a short section built before World War I diverted funds and manpower away from the project.

Several historians give credit for the Parkway to Virginia Senator Harry F. Byrd. On an August day in 1933, Byrd was with President Franklin D. Roosevelt,



CATAWBA FALLS (see Trip 62, page 140)

who was on an inspection tour of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Shenandoah National Park. Roosevelt was very impressed with Shenandoah's Skyline Drive (see the Shenandoah National Park chapter, page 26). Byrd suggested the grandiose scheme of constructing a road to connect Shenandoah National Park and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Roosevelt was enthusiastic, and the wheels were set in motion. Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes was asked to determine the route.

The problems confronting the Parkway were just beginning, and the project faced incredible obstacles, including debate over the actual path the road would take. Original plans directed the Parkway through North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Bitter fights between politicians from Tennessee and North Carolina placed Secretary Ickes in a difficult position. Amid great protest from Tennessee officials, he opted for the so-called North Carolina route, stating that he found it

to be more scenic and that the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests would provide a good corridor for the scenic road.

There were many problems obtaining rights-of-way, especially through the Cherokee Indian Reservation, which is the final link to Great Smoky Mountains National Park. After years of negotiations between Cherokee and government officials, the Parkway was routed through the Cherokee Indian Reservation for many of its final miles.

The first rocks of the Parkway were blasted near Cumberland Knob, North Carolina, on September 11, 1935, but it was 52 years before the last 7.5 miles across Grandfather Mountain were completed. The landowners were intensely opposed to the route, and the final right-of-way was not granted until October 22, 1968. This missing link included the Linn Cove Viaduct, said to be one of the most intricate segmental concrete bridges ever constructed. This engineering marvel, which carries vehicles 1,240 feet across the face of Grandfather Mountain, ended the 14-mile detour on US 221. The final section of the Blue Ridge Parkway was completed and dedicated on September 11, 1987.

The Parkway begins at milepost 0 at Rockfish Gap, Virginia, the southern entrance to Shenandoah National Park. For 469 miles, this scenic roadway closely follows the highest ridges of the Southern Appalachians. It ends at milepost 469.1, the entrance to Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the land of the Cherokee. Along the way, the Parkway reaches elevations of more than 6,000 feet, with an average of 3,500 feet. For the first 355 miles, the Parkway closely follows the Blue Ridge in a southwesterly direction. For the remaining 114 miles, it follows the southern end of the imposing Black Mountains and threads through the Craggies, the Pisgahs, and the Balsams.

Traveling the Parkway, visitors are treated to a multitude of panoramic views, varying from dense forests to mile-high mountains. There are plateaus and farmland valleys where early settlers lived. Meadows are lined with split-rail fences and are lush with wildflowers. You will see historic structures such as old farm buildings and homesteads. The cultural sites and the sheer physical beauty preserved here make for a journey rich in history and inspiring scenery.

The one thing that you will not see on your journey is commercial development, although it is rapidly encroaching, especially around Roanoke and Asheville. As a parkway, this road is designed and administered like any other

national park, complete with overlooks, exhibits, displays, and interpretive signs. Park rangers work closely with naturalists, agronomists, and environmentalists to protect and restore what lies within the Parkway's domain.

Geographically located within one day's drive of half of the nation's population, the Blue Ridge Parkway is not meant to be a road to somewhere. It is a destination in itself. Millions of visitors come here for the camping facilities, trout-laden streams, picnic grounds, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, hiking trails, and, of course, waterfalls. The Blue Ridge Parkway will lead you to several waterfalls with easy-to-access trailheads at the parking areas and to overlooks directly alongside the road. Watch for the mileposts and enjoy the scenery along this famous drive.

SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

One of the most popular parks in the country, Shenandoah National Park straddles the Blue Ridge at the northern end of the Parkway. This skinny park varies in width from 1 to 13 miles and covers almost 200,000 acres, 95% of which is forest and 40% of which is federally designated wilderness. The 105-mile Skyline Drive rides the ridge, traveling the entire length of the park and providing access to facilities and viewpoints. Shenandoah River and Massanutten Mountain lie to the west; the Piedmont lies to the east.

Shenandoah is an American Indian name. Some say it means "daughter of the stars." Another interpretation is "river of high mountains." Either name is an apt description of the long, narrow park on the crest of the mountains. A trip through Shenandoah along Skyline Drive is a ride across the top of Virginia.

Two federal projects were instrumental in the development of Shenandoah National Park, even before it was officially established. One was Skyline Drive, which was planned to generate jobs in the economically depressed area. President Herbert Hoover authorized the use of drought-relief funds for its construction, which began in 1931. The second was the Civilian Conservation Corps, which contributed a great deal to Shenandoah. Following the CCC's creation in 1933, 10 camps were established in the area. The Corps' men were given responsibility for firefighting, erosion control, trail and road construction, infrastructure such as telephone and water service, and planting trees and bushes in open areas and on the roadside along the entire Skyline Drive.

In 1926 Congress approved Shenandoah as a site for a large Southern national park. However, while federal funds had been used to build Skyline Drive and fund CCC projects in the area, no federal monies were appropriated for building the park. Western parks had been established on federal land, but populated private lands had never before been designated for a park. Consequently, there was no precedent for such a purchase, which had to be made with donated funds.

The campaign to create and fund the park involved the untiring efforts of thousands of private citizens, as well as many employees of the state of Virginia. Senator Byrd was an enthusiastic supporter. A total of \$1.3 million was pledged by Virginia's residents, and the state legislature added another \$1 million. A great deal of partisan lobbying went into the site selection for the park. George Freeman Pollock, an entrepreneur and owner of the Skyland Resort in northern Virginia, was influential in the selection. His enthusiasm and energy were tremendous assets in the effort to have the final site chosen. Finally, after years of fights and lawsuits, the state of Virginia had clear title to more than 250 square miles of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Virginia presented this land to

GAUGE ROCK CASCADES (*see Trip 9, page 42*)



the United States on December 12, 1935. President Franklin Roosevelt dedicated the park on July 3, 1936.

Entrance stations at four points split the park into north, central, and south districts. The North District of the park is close to Washington, D.C., and many visitors enter there. The Central District contains the park's primary overnight lodging accommodations (and many of its waterfalls). The South District offers much of the beautiful backcountry for which Shenandoah is known. Some facilities are open year-round, but the majority operate mid-May-late October.

The park includes 500 miles of hiking trails, varying in length from leg stretchers to 101 miles of the Appalachian Trail, and the waterfall hikes are some of the most popular. Skyline Drive runs roughly parallel to the Appalachian Trail, and many hikers consider this portion of the Appalachian Trail to be one of the most beautiful. Additionally, there is enough backcountry to keep backpackers busy for a long while.

The forest, primarily oak and hickory, is an ecosystem with many life-forms. The flora includes rose azaleas, lady's slipper orchids, jack-in-the-pulpits, interrupted ferns, and more than 1,300 other plants. Animal life abounds in the park as well. White-tailed deer (which visitors see frequently), wild turkeys, and black bears call the park home. Of the 200 species of birds recorded in the park, you may see some of the permanent residents such as ruffed grouse, barred owls, and woodpeckers.

Often called a gentle wilderness, Shenandoah National Park offers many unique areas. One of the most unusual is the large plateau known as Big Meadows, located at an elevation of 3,500 feet. Big Meadows has the greatest variety of plant life in the park, with at least 300 species, as well as a wide variety of animal life. At Big Meadows, you'll find a lodge and campground, as well as a gift shop, a camp store, a gas station, and several of the waterfall trailheads.

Other areas of the park offer their own unrivaled features. At Big Devils Stairs, you can find some of the oldest trees, which are inaccessible to timbering. Hawksbill, at 4,051 feet, is the highest point in the park and contains remnant red-spruce and balsam-fir forests. Painted trilliums await at Laurel Prong.

The park features two visitor centers, an information center, five campgrounds, and seven picnic areas. The park does have an entrance fee, which is good for seven days. Yearly passes are also available.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Located at the southern end of the Blue Ridge Parkway, Great Smoky Mountains National Park is filled with majestic mountains; hiking trails; beautiful campsites; and rivers for fishing, swimming, and tubing.

The Great Smoky Mountains are part of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and the Cherokee called the area *Shaconage*, or “place of blue smoke.” The bluish mist that pervades the valleys and hovers over the Blue Ridge Mountains is even more visible in the Smokies, creating a mysterious and eerie hue.

The Cherokee people were the first inhabitants of the Great Smoky Mountains. While geologists have developed theories about how the mountains were formed, the Cherokee have another version. Legend has it that a great buzzard was sent down from the sky to find a dry place for everyone to live. Over Cherokee land, the buzzard became very weary and dropped close to the earth. His beating wings struck the soft earth, forming the mountains and valleys and creating the tribe’s homeland.

The Smokies were seen by some for their timber value more so than their scenic worth. Much of what became the park was logged. A St. Louis librarian named Horace Kephart was one of the first to recognize the value of the Great Smoky Mountains. He came to the Great Smokies in 1904 to recover from ill health and grew to love the mountains. Appalled by the wide-scale decimation of the land, Kephart worked doggedly for years to have the Smokies preserved as a national park. In *Our Southern Highlands*, he wrote of his years in Deep Creek, Hazel Creek, and Bryson City. His sensitive writing helped alert the public to the fact that the mountains were being destroyed and its residents’ way of life overlooked.

In 1923, Mr. and Mrs. Willis P. Davis and Colonel David Chapman of Knoxville, Tennessee, formed the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association. Under the leadership of Colonel Chapman, and with the influence of others such as Kephart, groups in North Carolina and Tennessee began to raise money to buy the land. Businessman and philanthropist John D. Rockefeller contributed \$5 million to the cause. With the help of all these contributors, Great Smoky Mountains National Park was established on June 15, 1934.

Like Shenandoah, it incorporated private land, which had to be purchased from individuals, much by eminent domain. Once again, there were

many questions concerning titles and rights-of-way. Finally, President Franklin Roosevelt officially dedicated the park on September 2, 1940.

The park sits astride the border of North Carolina and Tennessee. Elevations range from 840 feet at the mouth of Abrams Creek to 6,642 feet at Clingmans Dome. There are more than 900 miles of trails and footpaths, including 70 miles of the Appalachian Trail. These pathways thread through the park, leading to coves, balds, and rushing streams, as well as dozens of waterfalls. This book includes several waterfall hikes accessed from Bryson City and Cherokee.

From the Blue Ridge Parkway on the North Carolina side of the park, the first stop is the Oconaluftee Visitor Center, which is open year-round. Here, you can get park information and literature about the Smokies. Adjacent to the visitor center is the Mountain Farm Museum, an exhibit that shows how the mountains' first settlers lived. Just north of the visitor center on Newfound Gap Road, Mingus Mill, a large, water-powered gristmill, grinds corn daily from mid-March to October.

"Always clear and fragrant," wrote Kephart about the forests of the Smokies, and so they are. The park is a sanctuary, preserving some of the world's finest examples of temperate deciduous forest. More than 130 species of trees grow in the Smokies. Broadleaf trees dominate in the coves, and conifer forests cover the crests at the highest elevations. This is the largest remaining virgin forest of the eastern American wilderness, covering an estimated 100,000 acres, or 20% of the park. Of the old-growth forest that remains in the eastern United States, 90% lies within Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The park encompasses nearly 800 square miles. Within its boundaries lies a wealth of natural wonders. The annual rainfall in the park is more than 85 inches at the higher elevations, equivalent to that in a rainforest. This abundant rainfall and the fertile soil have encouraged the development of a world-renowned variety of flora, with more than 1,500 kinds of flowering plants. Many plants in the higher elevations are more typical of New England than of the southeastern United States.

An additional attraction is the diversity of animal life. There are more than 400 species of animals, including 200 species of birds. The park is this country's salamander capital, with 30 species. There are at least 60 species of mammals,

including bears, deer, and wild boars. The wild boars, however, are not a native species and pose a threat to the ecosystem. Their wallowing behavior destroys soil-level plant life, including rare species, and even the nests and eggs of ground-nesting birds. Park officials are working to remove these animals.

WATERFALLS

Of all the many treasures to be found in these two national parks and along the Parkway, the most precious are the water resources. The Blue Ridge is laced with miles upon miles of rivers and streams. In essence, the mountains were molded by the force of water, and water continues to sculpt the valleys and ridges. The nature and personality of the Blue Ridge Mountains are intrinsically tied to the mystery, magic, and movement of water.

We came to research the waterfalls of the Blue Ridge; we learned about the complex interrelationship between modern civilization and nature. Eons of evolution determined the type of plant and animal life that would survive in this region. Aborigines dwelled here for centuries, and settlers from far and wide became hardy Appalachian pioneers. Today, ecological and cultural sights abound on the waterfall trails of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

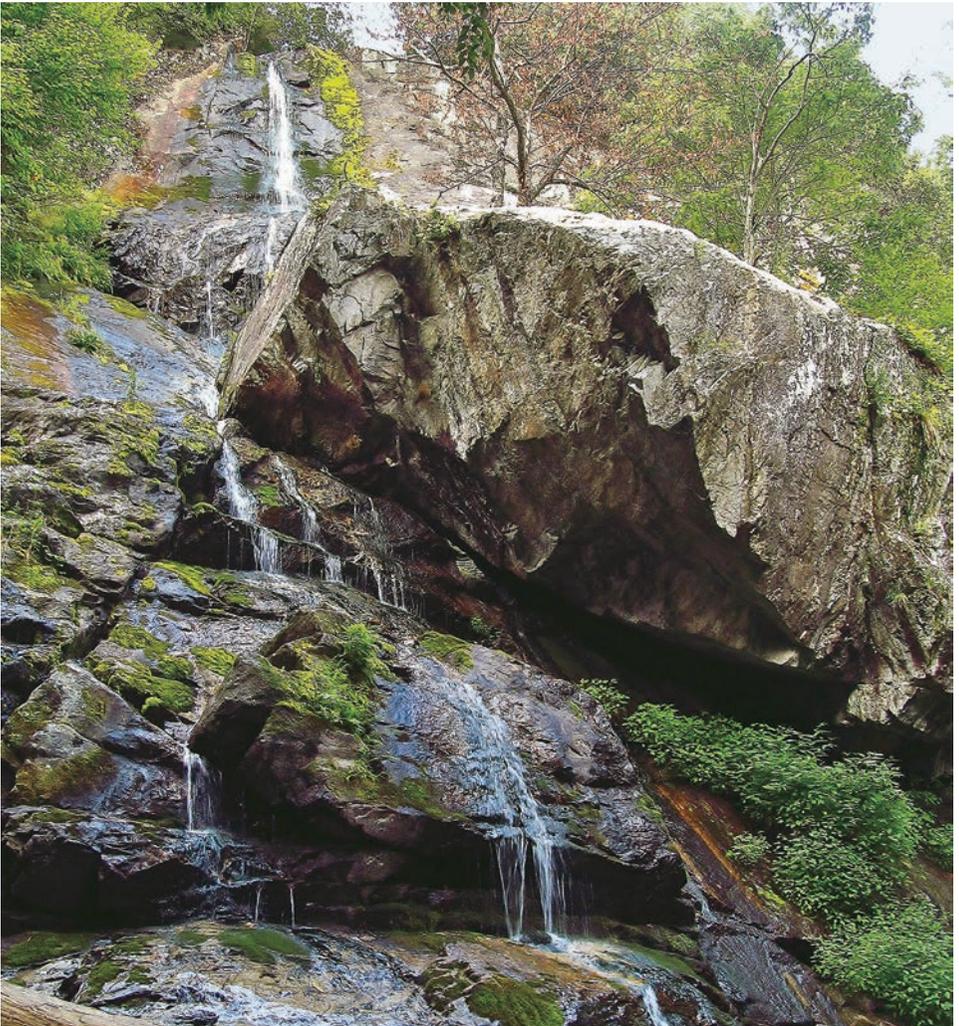
We came to see the waterfalls, and we found the Blue Ridge Parkway, that undulating ribbon of highway that connects two national parks. The road exists as a monument to those who were committed to providing us all with a view from the mountaintops.

We came to see the waterfalls, and we discovered Shenandoah National Park and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. These parks are being preserved as the crown jewels of the Southern Appalachians.

We came to see the waterfalls, and we took away a sense of the mystery and majesty of the mountains. Come and see the waterfalls of the Blue Ridge yourself. Enjoy the peace that the mountains offer. Take a moment to consider the abundant beauty at hand and the farsighted wisdom of preserving all of this for future generations.

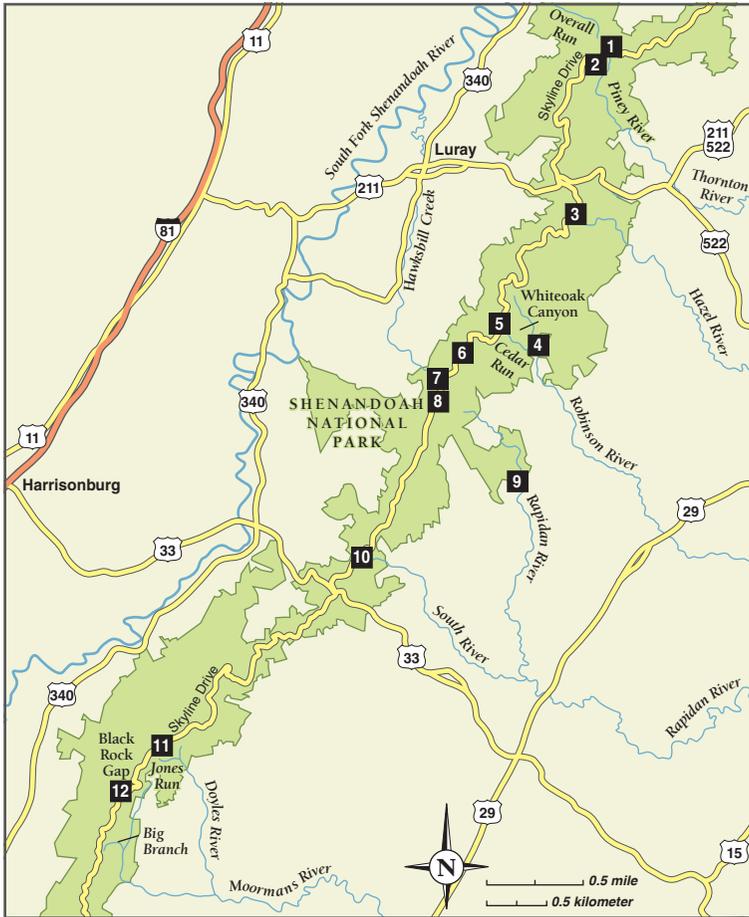
section two

Virginia Waterfalls



APPLE ORCHARD FALLS (see Trip 22, page 64)

Shenandoah National Park



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| 1 Overall Run Falls and Twin Falls 27 | 7 Lewis Spring Falls 39 |
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1 OVERALL RUN FALLS AND TWIN FALLS

[6.8-mile out-and-back, strenuous]

Overall Run is Shenandoah's highest falls. The cataract is complemented with a grand vista and a warm-up fall along the way. Start with a pleasant mountain-top stroll on the Appalachian Trail, and wend your way down the slopes of Hogback Mountain, crossing many flats. Pass wide Twin Falls, and then come to Big Falls. From a rocky precipice, you can see the nearby cataract and a whole lot more in the distance.

From the parking area, join the Appalachian Trail and head south. Gently climb through lovely fern-carpeted woodland, passing a few rock outcrops. At 0.4 mile, turn right onto the Tuscarora–Overall Run Trail. Stroll downward. Rock and wood erosion bars cross the trail and form steps. Make a couple of switchbacks before coming to another trail junction at 1.1 miles. Here, meet a connector to the Traces Nature Trail. You aren't far from Mathews Arm Campground, a fine base camp to explore the falls of Shenandoah.

Turn right, staying on the Tuscarora–Overall Run Trail. Stairstep down Hogback Mountain. At 1.6 miles, hop over uppermost Overall Run. This trickling branch increases hope that a waterfall awaits at the end of this dry hike. The adjacent high-elevation flats seem to attract bears, which we've seen multiple times around this area.

At 2.9 miles, the trail intersects Mathews Arm Trail. Keep right. Walk just a short distance and come to another concrete signpost. Here, pass the now abandoned section of Mathews Arm Trail. At this point you may be wondering where the falls are getting their water. The Tuscarora–Overall Run Trail answers the question and turns left toward Overall Run on wood and earth steps. Reach the first cataract, Twin Falls, at 3.1 miles. A side trail leads left to Twin Falls and a rock outcrop where you can view it. Overall Run is split by a large boulder, forcing the water to divide, resulting in two streams dropping 29 feet.

Keep astride the canyon, passing through laurel-oak woods. Tempting outcrops lure you to the edge of the valley. Come to a wide-open cliff at 3.4 miles. The world opens beyond. To your left Big Falls tumbles 93 feet over a huge rock face into the gorge below. More rock forms a wall on the far side of the falls. The Overall Run canyon plunges below. It's a long way down there!

28 ***Waterfalls of the Blue Ridge***

The canyon maw divulges Page Valley and Massanutten Mountain in the background. In the distance you can see West Virginia and the Alleghenies . . . a great waterfall and a great view.

DIRECTIONS The hike starts at the parking area just south of the Hogback Mountain Overlook, milepost 21.1 on Skyline Drive. To reach the trailhead from the Thornton Gap entrance station, take Skyline Drive north for 10.4 miles to the parking area on the west side of Skyline Drive, just before Hogback Mountain Overlook.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES 38.761267, -78.282317

OVERALL RUN FALLS



2 PINEY RIVER FALLS

[6.8-mile out-and-back, moderate–strenuous]

Piney River Falls is one of the least-visited cataraacts at Shenandoah, and we're flummoxed about why. The trailside scenery meets high Shenandoah standards, and the falls are a worthy destination. Start your hike at the back of the field between Skyline Drive and the parking area across from the old Civilian Conservation Corps camp building. Look for the concrete post marked PINEY BRANCH TRAIL. Hike through black locust trees taking over an old pasture. Almost one-third of the land within Shenandoah National Park was once field, pasture, or meadow—treeless. At 0.1 mile intersect the Appalachian Trail and continue straight on a track much fainter than the AT. Just ahead, cross a grassy lane, also growing up with trees. Note the apple trees.

The Piney Branch Trail winds downhill in very gentle switchbacks. Come to the upper reaches of the Piney River at mile 1.3. Big boulders line the small river, and the grassy area beside the stream makes for a good sitting spot. Curve right, away from Piney River. Spring-fed creeklets cross the rocky path ahead. Park personnel did an outstanding job of keeping a dry track in this mushy area.

Meet the Pole Bridge Link Trail at 1.5 miles. Turn right, staying with the now narrower and even less-used section of the Piney Branch Trail. Wildflowers thrive in the Piney River Valley. The mountain laurel-lined path follows an old road on a slight downgrade. The gorge of Piney River cuts ever deeper to your right. At mile 2.0, the old road continues straight, but the Piney Branch Trail veers right and follows another old road. At 2.7 miles, the trail nears the Piney River. A spur trail leads right to the riverside and a nice picnic spot. Stay straight here, going deeper into the valley.

Cross the Piney River at 3.0 miles. This is a rock hop at normal flows, but it takes a little footwork. Another method is to simply shed your shoes and socks and walk through the water with a stout stick as an aid. At lower levels, this crossing will be a breeze. You are now on the southern side of the river, and the falls are only 0.4 mile distant. Watch and listen for other cascades along Piney River while making your way downstream. Cove hardwoods of yellow birch, black birch, red maple, and basswood shade the frothing watercourse.



PINEY RIVER FALLS

Stumble through river rubble, flood-strewn rocks from high-water events. Ferns spread wide beside rock outcrops, and sycamores find their place amid the rocks and water. Pass two house-size rock bluffs on your right at mile 3.2. A hard-to-reach falls spills to your left. This part of the gorge is rugged. Begin listening for Piney River Falls, which are only 0.2 mile away. At mile 3.4, turn left on a side trail leading to the cataract. Piney River Falls is a 25-foot tiered cascade that flows over mossy rock into a deep and wide pool. Rock slabs border much of the drop and make for good observation locales. It's a good place to cool off after a hot hike, so relax a spell.

DIRECTIONS From the Thornton Gap entrance of the park, take Skyline Drive north for 9.4 miles to the old Civilian Conservation Corps building in the upper Piney River area. The entrance road is on your right at milepost 22.1, just north of the turn to Mathews Arm Campground on the left. Park in the designated visitor parking area across from the CCC building. The Piney Branch Trail starts between the parking area and Skyline Drive.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES 38.750500, -78.292317

3 HAZEL FALLS

[5.2-mile out-and-back, moderate]

This waterfall walk takes you into Hazel Country, a heavily settled area before Shenandoah National Park was formed. The route traverses hills and hollows to reach the banks of the Hazel River, where a rock indentation forms a natural shelter, a cave of sorts, beside an alluring waterfall, all located within a deep stone amphitheater. The difficulty of this hike is hard to rate: The first 2.4-mile portion is an easy stroll on old settler roads, but the last 0.3-mile trek to the falls and cave is on a steep footpath. Though rugged, this section has been upgraded by the National Park Service; it was once an eroded user-created mess of a path.

Leave Skyline Drive on the Hazel Mountain Trail. At 0.4 mile, veer right, still on the Hazel Mountain Trail, as the Buck Ridge Trail drops left. Striped maples crowd the path and form a dense canopy overhead. The trail bears left, levels out, and crosses several small spring-fed branches dribbling off Buck

HAZEL FALLS



32 *Waterfalls of the Blue Ridge*

Ridge. Sidle alongside the Hazel River at mile 1.0. The valley spreads wide into a cove, which was farmland long ago.

Turn left on White Rocks Trail at mile 1.6. The path ascends slightly, leaving Hazel River, and then levels out along an old road shaded by tulip trees and maples. Large boulders are strewn about the forest, which morphs to pine and chestnut oak as the trail tops out on the ridge. Wild azaleas bloom in May. An aquatic symphony drifts from below. Come to a trail junction at mile 2.4. White Rocks Trail continues forward, while Cave-Falls Trail veers right. Follow Cave-Falls Trail downhill, the steep dive mitigated by stone steps.

Reach Hazel River at 2.5 miles. Notice the peeling trunks of the many yellow birches. Turn right, following the footpath upstream. Pass a sizable trailside tulip tree as you dance between boulders. Reach the rock shelter on your right just before the waterfall; the rock indentation lies at the base of a huge, granite bluff—quite a sturdy roof. The cave is about 10 feet deep, 25 feet wide, and 7 feet high. It gets a little deeper in one spot. A natural rock amphitheater envelops the scene. Hazel Falls slices about 25 feet down a slender chute into a stony punch bowl and forms the centerpiece of this picturesque mountain mosaic.

DIRECTIONS The trailhead and parking area are located on the east side of milepost 33.5 of Skyline Drive, Meadow Spring. It can be accessed by driving south for 2 miles from Shenandoah National Park's Thornton Gap entrance on Skyline Drive.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES 38.637500, -78.314083

4 WATERFALLS OF WHITEOAK CANYON

[5.4-mile out-and-back, strenuous]

It's hard to keep track of all the falls at Whiteoak Canyon. There are six numbered falls. The count starts from the crest of the Blue Ridge and Skyline Drive and ends at the base of the canyon. To confuse matters, this hike starts at the bottom of Whiteoak Run and heads upstream, which is the best way to see all the falls in the fewest miles hiked. *Note:* Beware of the warm-weather weekend crowds. We highly suggest heading to a different waterfall during those times.

Leave the parking area on a trail easement through private property, reaching Cedar Run. At this point, the streambed is often dry, though Cedar Run may be flowing farther upstream. Span Cedar Run on a metal bridge. Beech, sycamore, black birch, and magnolia trees shade the track. When you reach the Cedar Run Trail junction at 0.2 mile, veer right, staying on Whiteoak Canyon Trail. Bridge Whiteoak Run, a rocky river if there ever was one, and gently ascend the creek bank. Sycamores overhang the scenic stream. Note the rock walls and piles, evidence that this area was once cultivated.

Pass the junction with the Whiteoak–Cedar Run Link Trail at 0.8 mile. Stay on the east bank of Whiteoak Run, and enter a rock garden. The canyon closes, and the stream gathers in deep pools. The path becomes rockier and steeper. Rock-hop Tims River, which has falls of its own, on your right. Just beyond this crossing, close in on Lower Whiteoak Falls (number 6) at 1.4 miles. A short trail leads left to the precipitous two-tiered, 60-foot cataract, which spills over an open rock face. The uppermost falls, this hike's turnaround point, is the canyon's tallest at 86 feet. The ones in between—which are hard to count because it is indiscernible where they start or stop—purportedly range from 45 to 65 feet each.

The main trail switchbacks, meandering far from the stream. The area can be confusing, as erosive user-created trails continue straight up the canyon. Climb sharply along the base of a bluff in pines, well above the stream, sometimes traversing open rock. In places, steps have been chiseled into this bare stone. At 1.7 miles, come to a cedar tree that mans a rock-slab overlook into the canyon. Catch glimpses of the crashing falls below and the lands beyond the canyon. The stream and path come together again by 1.9 miles. This is where the numbered falls get confusing. Simply enjoy the cataracts and leave the counting to others.

Begin a pattern of coming to a falls and then switchbacking away and uphill to the base of another. Huge walls rise beyond the stream. Pass an overhanging boulder on your right at 2.3 miles. Keep climbing through a wonderment of rock and water, where pools and cascades beckon you off the trail and to Whiteoak Run. As you continue uphill, a melding of stone and concrete makes the pathway more hiker-friendly. A side trail leads left to the base of Whiteoak Falls (number 1) at 2.5 miles. The main trail switchbacks to the right and passes a concrete trail marker indicating the halfway point of the Whiteoak Canyon Trail, with a warning for hikers that no shuttle is available at the bottom of the

canyon. Apparently, hikers have walked Whiteoak Canyon Trail from Skyline Drive and decided that they could not walk back up.

Come to a rock observation point for Whiteoak Falls (number 1) at 2.7 miles. You are well above the falls on a large slab. This is the second-highest falls in the park at 86 feet. It slides over bare rock in multiple stages bordered by hardwoods. Rest and enjoy these falls and the good view into the canyon below. On your return trip, try to count them. After all, Whiteoak Run has more falls per mile than any other stream in the park.

DIRECTIONS From the town of Madison, Virginia, on US 29 north of Charlottesville and south of Culpeper, drive north on VA 231 for 5 miles to VA 670. Turn left on VA 670 and follow it for 5 miles to VA 643. Turn right on VA 643 and follow it for less than a mile to VA 600. Turn left on VA 600 and follow it for 3.7 miles to Berry Hollow. The trailhead is in the back of the far parking area, which will be on your right.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES 38.539133, -78.348100

5 CEDAR RUN FALLS

[3.4-mile out-and-back, strenuous]

This hike leads you into rugged upper Cedar Run Canyon. The trail down to the main falls is steep. However, aquatic rewards are many along the way—you pass innumerable cascades spilling down the narrow, boulder-laden gorge, a wild place deserving of national park protection. Your trip to the cascades will be slow, as you will need to watch your footing and stop often to admire the scenery. *Note:* This hike can be busy on warm-weather weekends.

Leave grassy Hawksbill Gap to enter tall hardwoods on Cedar Run Trail. Immediately come to a four-way trail junction. Keep straight, descending, still on Cedar Run Trail. The Skyland–Big Meadows Horse Trail leaves left and right. Pass a rock outcrop often used as a relaxing locale for those returning up Cedar Run Canyon. The trail grade drops sharply in a thick forest alongside the upper reaches of Cedar Run. The white noise of cold mountain water serenades you all the way to the falls.

A northern hardwood forest of cherry, witch hazel, sugar maple, and large oak trees rises from the stony woods. Despite elaborate trail work by the



CEDAR RUN FALLS

National Park Service, the path remains very rocky. Take your time and carefully plant your feet—a rolled ankle is possible here. Sturdy boots and trekking poles will make this waterfall hike more palatable. On the plus side, the plethora of boulders provides ample resting spots on your return trip.

Cedar Run picks up steam on its drop, falling in multiple incarnations of moving water. A side branch crosses the trail, forming a cascade of its own. At 0.6 mile, step onto a wide rock, facing a cascade to your right. Cedar Run descends 20 feet in a fan pattern and then crashes onto the rock atop which you are standing. Beyond this waterfall, the trail drops steeply alongside a staircase cataract to your right and a rocky bluff to your left. At 0.9 mile, enjoy a brief interlude of level, relatively rockless pathway. Then the trail resumes, diving headlong into a procession of stone, and passes another waterslide-type pour-over. At other times, monstrous midstream boulders nearly obscure the water as it seeks gravity's level. At 1.1 miles, away from the stream, rock ramparts rise from the trees, forming canyon walls that echo and redouble the sounds of moving water.

At 1.3 miles, on the far side of the trail, a tributary stream adds its flow in a waterslide. A deep pool with brook trout forms on Cedar Run just below

this tributary. The clash of water and rock remains relentless. At 1.4 miles, pass another cliff line. At 1.5 miles, the trail comes to a big, alluring pool below a two-tiered cascade. You have reached the crossing of Cedar Run. This is usually a rock hop; however, it can be a wet crossing at high water.

You are now on the right bank heading downstream. Yet the trail goes uphill, passing a feeder stream trickling in from your right. Cedar Run Trail then descends a set of stone steps to the base of Cedar Run Falls at 1.7 miles. The water spills down a slick rock face and lands in a deep and clear plunge pool, and then it drops again in whitewater froth charging through a narrow slot canyon.

Many large boulders make relaxing observation points at this mid-falls area. Half Mile Cliff rises on the far side of the falls. You can go a bit farther downstream to enjoy the lower segment of Cedar Run Falls. It has a deep plunge pool at the base of the slot canyon. You will be thinking of reasons to hang out down here, as the hike back is steep. Pace yourself, and use those trailside boulders to catch your breath.

DIRECTIONS The Hawksbill Gap trailhead is located at milepost 45.6 on Skyline Drive, 14 miles south of the Thornton Gap entrance to Shenandoah National Park. Cedar Run Trail starts behind the gravel parking area on the east side of Skyline Drive.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES 38.556567, -78.386567

6 DARK HOLLOW FALLS AND ROSE RIVER FALLS

[4.0-mile loop, moderate]

This loop hike is the best way to bag both Dark Hollow Falls and Rose River Falls. Most visitors reach Dark Hollow Falls via Skyline Drive. You will begin your trek on Rose River Fire Road and gently descend to reach the lower Dark Hollow Falls Trail. Make the worthwhile 0.2-mile ascent to reach Dark Hollow Falls. Next, follow the Rose River Loop Trail downstream along Hogcamp Branch, passing numerous cascades along what is arguably the prettiest stream in Shenandoah National Park. Bridge Hogcamp Branch, and then pass the tailings of an old copper mine. Beyond here, the hike ascends the upper Rose River, passing Rose River Falls before returning to the trailhead.

Pick up the gated Rose River Fire Road on the east side of Skyline Drive. Walk just a few feet down Rose River Fire Road and reach an intersection. The Skyland-Big Meadows Horse Trail crosses the fire road. Keep straight on Rose River Fire Road, descending along the gravel track in a maple- and white oak-dominated hardwood forest. Small rills flow off Big Meadows above and then pass under the fire road via a culvert. The track levels out among locust trees, land once farmed. Pass the Cave Cemetery on your right, atop a grassy hill, at 0.5 mile.

Reach the junction with Dark Hollow Falls Trail at a bridge over Hogcamp Branch at 1.0 mile. Check out the 30-foot fall just above the bridge. A ribbon of frothing whitewater slices through a rock outcrop partially covered in moss. Turn right and head up Dark Hollow Falls Trail. More falls tumble down as you ascend. However, you will know Dark Hollow Falls. It makes a wide drop and then gathers to tumble down three more tiers, a total descent of 70 feet. In summer, the base of the falls will be crowded, as most everyone has come from Skyline Drive on the Dark Hollow Falls Trail.

Return to Rose River Fire Road and cross the bridge, leaving the crowds behind. Just beyond here, Rose River Loop Trail angles left and downhill along Hogcamp Branch. Young hardwoods are replacing adelgid-killed hemlocks and, for now, Dark Hollow is dark no more. Hogcamp Branch puts on a scenic display while stairstepping down to meet Rose River, falling and crashing in every type of fall, slide, cataract, and cascade, one tumbler after another, to gather in surprisingly deep pools, only to fall yet again. This is truly national park-level scenery.

At 2.0 miles, pass an open rock slab on the creek that lures in hikers. A deep pool lies at the base of the slab. At 2.2 miles, reach a bridge spanning Hogcamp Branch. The steel span arches well over and above Hogcamp Branch. Rose River Loop then rock-hops a small stream. Reach the tailings of an old copper mine, with a path leading to the top of the tailings, back against a big bluff. Notice the stone- and ironworks at the mine. This mine was opened in the early 1900s but proved unprofitable, and the shafts were filled. Keep downhill to reach a signpost near a large wooded flat. Turn left here and head upstream along Rose River, which is crashing to your right, giving Hogcamp Branch a run for its scenic money.



DARK HOLLOW FALLS

Rose River Loop Trail leaves the river, climbing sharply in a ferny forest, only to return at Rose River Falls at 2.8 miles. Here, the watercourse drops over a rock ledge about 30 feet, spreading out before reaching a pool. A spur trail leads downstream to a vista at lower Rose River Falls, which drops again directly over a second ledge and out of sight from the viewing spot, making a splash into a large pool.

Beyond the falls, ascend a perched valley under thriving hardwoods such as yellow birch and basswood. Reach another concrete signpost when meeting an old roadbed at 3.1 miles. Turn left here on a now wide trail, leaving the river. Rise into drier, oak-dominated woods to meet the Skyland-Big Meadows Horse Trail at 3.6 miles. Stay left here, as the two trails run in conjunction, mostly climbing to reach Rose River Fire Road. It is but a few steps to Skyline Drive from here. Complete your loop at 4.0 miles.

DIRECTIONS The Rose River Fire Road starts on the east side of Skyline Drive, just north of Fishers Gap Overlook, at milepost 49.4. Parking is on

the west side of the drive. The overlook is on a short spur loop that leaves Skyline Drive. Rose River Fire Road starts across Skyline Drive from the overlook's north end. From the Swift Run Gap entrance, it is 16.1 miles to Fishers Gap Overlook.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES 38.533567, -78.420783

7 LEWIS SPRING FALLS

[3.4-mile loop, moderate]

Don't forget to bring your camera, so you can capture the visual features along this high-country waterfall walk. The loop takes place near the busy Big Meadows area, with its park lodge, visitor center, ranger station, and campground. Thus, this circuit gets traffic, but deservedly so. Leave the parking area near Tanner Ridge Overlook and head down Lewis Spring Service Road to reach the Appalachian Trail (AT). Walk northbound on the AT, climbing to Blackrock and its stellar views. From there, the hike passes more interesting rock features and then joins Lewis Falls Trail, where it descends to a loud and dramatic falls. Lewis Spring Falls is one of the highest-elevation falls at Shenandoah.

The start can be confusing. Leave the little parking area just north of the Tanner Ridge Overlook. Walk a few yards north along Skyline Drive to reach Lewis Spring Service Road. Pass around a chain gate, and then head downhill on a gravel track bordered by a stunted high-country forest of haw, fire cherry, and maple reclaiming former fields. Look for apple, birch, and locust trees too. The blue-blazed track crosses the yellow-blazed Tanners Ridge Horse Trail and continues descending.

At 0.2 mile, reach the AT. Turn right here, heading northbound for Big Meadows Lodge. Lewis Spring is just below this intersection. Begin working uphill in hardwoods mixed with rocks, pines, and even a preserved hemlock or two. The well-used path features stonework to keep the trail from sloping. At 0.7 mile, reach a spur trail leading right to Blackrock. Turn right and make the 0.1-mile climb to the outcrop, at 3,720 feet. Along the way, see if you can find a few red spruce trees. In winter, the evergreens are easy to spot among the barren hardwoods. Mountain ash clings to the crags of Blackrock. The spiny rock protrusion opens to the west, where you can see the towns of Stanley and Luray in

Page Valley, especially the high peaks of the park's north district, amid the 180-degree view to the southwest and northwest. Below, the tops of oak trees seem close enough to touch. When the leaves are off, the AT can be seen below.

Return to the AT, cruising along the base of Blackrock. Ahead, pass below Big Meadows Lodge before meeting Lewis Falls Trail at 1.3 miles. Here, turn acutely left on Lewis Falls Trail into lush woods with a fern-filled understory. Keep south along the western escarpment of the mountain. Curve onto a southwest-facing slope, with mountain laurels and pines joining the sturdy oaks. Outcrops along the trail provide views into the hollow of upper Hawksbill Creek.

Reach another junction at 2.5 miles. Here, a spur trail leads right to an outcrop with a view into the valley below and lands beyond. Massanutten Mountain forms a backdrop. The main spur path crosses wide and rocky Hawksbill Creek and then curves beyond a precipice. A guardrail guides you the last bit to a rock-walled observation point. Here, you can look down at the 81-foot falls spilling over the rock face, crashing into rocks and then splashing

LEWIS SPRING FALLS



out of sight. There is no safe way to reach the base of the falls, so do not endanger others by trying it and getting hurt.

Backtrack to Lewis Falls Trail and begin a switchback-filled ascent along upper Hawksbill Creek, drifting into rich waterside woods and drier pine-oak forest away from the stream. Join an old roadbed, and then pass the actual Lewis Spring, which is housed in a rock-and-wood structure with a visible outflow. Just ahead, reach the AT again, at 3.2 miles. To your right is another boxed spring. From here, keep straight on the gravel road, backtracking to the trailhead.

DIRECTIONS The parking area for Lewis Spring Service Road is at mile 51.4 on Skyline Drive. This parking area is sandwiched between Big Meadows' south entrance and Tanners Ridge Overlook, on the west side of the road. The trailhead is 19.9 miles south of the Shenandoah National Park's Thornton Gap entrance station.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES 38.516933, -78.442317

8 BIG ROCK FALLS

[3.0-mile round-trip, moderate]

The plunge pool of Big Rock Falls was a favorite fishing hole for President Herbert Hoover (1929–1933), as it was near his retreat in what is now Shenandoah National Park. This first presidential refuge, known as Camp Rapidan, is only 0.4 mile beyond Big Rock Falls. You should add the extra distance to see this preserved locale, where President Hoover escaped the hot summers of Washington, D.C., during the pre-air-conditioning days. The president also hosted world leaders at Camp Rapidan. The site is chock-full of interpretive information.

Start the waterfall hike at Milam Gap on Skyline Drive, heading east on the Mill Prong Trail to immediately cross the Appalachian Trail. Here, delve into open, ferny forest, and then hop wide, shallow, and rocky Mill Prong at 0.6 mile. Descend farther into the Mill Prong vale, stepping over a side stream before meeting the Mill Prong Horse Trail at 1.1 miles. You'll stay straight with the Mill Prong Trail on a level but rocky section before switchbacking down to come alongside Big Rock Falls at 1.5 miles, a descent of around 600 feet. Here, find a wide slide cascade flowing white into a clear plunge pool. A large rock



BIG ROCK FALLS

at the top of the 14-foot falls inspires the name. Hoover's Rapidan Camp is less than a half mile away, enhancing the trek.

DIRECTIONS From Harrisonburg, Virginia, take US 33 east 23 miles to Shenandoah National Park and Swift Run Gap. Turn north on Skyline Drive and follow it for 12.7 miles to the Milam Gap trailhead, at milepost 52.8, on the west side of Skyline Drive. The hike starts on the east side of Skyline Drive.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES 38.500306, -78.445639

9 FALLS OF THE STAUNTON RIVER

[2.2-mile round-trip, easy]

This hike ventures to two overlooked falls on the Staunton River, coursing down the east slope of the Blue Ridge in Shenandoah National Park. The hike starts low and stays low, ranging from 1,100 feet to 1,400 feet with no fords, making it a preferred winter waterfall trek.

Start on the wide Graves Mill Trail, heading upstream along the left-hand bank of the rocky, sizable, and scenic Rapidan River. The walking is easy. At

0.5 mile, split left on the Staunton River Trail. At 0.6 mile, scramble downhill to your first waterfall, just upstream of a USGS water-monitoring station. You can see it from the trail above or walk down to its base and pool. This one—Gauge Rock Cascades—pours about 20 feet over a stone face in multiple rivulets. The rock face is open to the sun above. Continuing uptrail, wander through former farmland now grown to forest while the Staunton River flows around small islands. Look for stone fences, rock piles, and other evidence of human habitation. At 1.1 miles, the trail leads past 20-foot Jitterbug Falls, so named for its twisting, turning course, as it froths white into a large plunge pool.

DIRECTIONS From Madison, Virginia, on the east side of Shenandoah National Park, take US 29 south for 2 miles to turn right onto VA 230 west. Follow VA 230 for 3.7 miles to turn right onto VA 662. Follow VA 662 for 5.3 miles, then stay right on Graves Mill Road, still on VA 662. Follow Graves Mill Road for 1.3 miles to reach the trailhead. Do not block the gate.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES 38.436944, -78.366944

JITTERBUG FALLS



10 SOUTH RIVER FALLS

[4.2-mile out-and-back, moderate]

The valley of upper South River is quite scenic, with its rich wildflower habitat, northern hardwoods, and two impressive perches to view South River Falls dropping 83 feet over a rock face. Go farther and enjoy the setting from the base of the falls. You will have to fight the earth's tug on your climb out of the South River watershed, back to the former mountaintop pastureland, but the falls are worth the scramble.

Take South River Falls Trail from the picnic area, passing the Appalachian Trail. Watch for piled rocks in this grown-over former farmland. Continue down to a switchback at 0.4 mile. Twist and turn three more times before coming to South River, which is a small but wide creek at this point. Cross a side branch and appreciate the lush streamside environment.

SOUTH RIVER FALLS



Yellow birch trees shade mossy rocks and ferns. Violets, toothworts, white trilliums, and wild geraniums color the moist margins, as do straight-trunked tulip trees and gray beeches. Other wildflowers include trout lilies, false Solomon's seals, jack-in-the-pulpits, and columbines. Come to a second tributary at 0.7 mile. The valley narrows, and so does the stream. Cross a rock field at 1.0 mile, and then step across a boulder-filled tributary. Ahead and to your right is the top of the falls, but keep going; there's a better and safer viewpoint a short distance past the granite overhang to your left. Walk out on the outcrop, which is bordered with a man-made stone wall to your right. Gaze upon South River Falls. It spills over a rock face and then splits into two chutes charging downward.

For a different perspective, continue down the trail, reaching a junction at 1.4 miles. Veer right toward the base of the falls. Curve past a tributary into a fertile wildflower zone. Descend to river level again, reaching a flat. Head upriver on a narrow foot trail, passing an impressive fractured rock rampart to your right. Stone steps aid your ascent. Reach the base of South River Falls at 2.1 miles. Looking up, you can clearly see the narrow chute splitting in two before resuming a calmer path toward the sea. This second view adds impressive perspective to the falls.

DIRECTIONS From Harrisonburg, take US 33 west 23 miles to Shenandoah National Park's Swift Run Gap entrance station. Find the trailhead at South River Picnic Area, at milepost 62.8 on Skyline Drive. The picnic area entrance is 2.7 miles north of the entrance station. The path starts at the back of the picnic area on the one-way loop road. The trailhead will be on your right.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES 38.380217, -78.515650

11 UPPER DOYLES RIVER FALLS, LOWER DOYLES RIVER FALLS, AND JONES RUN FALLS

[7.0-mile loop, strenuous]

This hike visits three major cataracts and numerous other cascades while exploring two boulder-strewn canyons connected by the Appalachian Trail. The hike up Jones Run passes some old-growth tulip trees with impressive girths. If you catch the falls after a rainstorm, you will be well rewarded—falling water is all over the place then. Civil War history enhances the hike. Start at Browns Gap, through

which Confederate general Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson passed in early 1862 while outwitting Union forces in the mountains around the Shenandoah Valley. Jackson’s local knowledge left the Northerners bamboozled time and again.

Browns Gap was important because of the strategic turnpike that went through it; the turnpike, built in 1805, connected Richmond with the Shenandoah Valley. You will walk the very same turnpike on the first leg of this hike. Think of all the farmers with loads of corn (and liquid corn, also known as moonshine), circuit-riding preachers, traveling hucksters, weary immigrants, and Civil War soldiers who walked this way. And now you’re here.

Cross Skyline Drive, descending on Browns Gap Fire Road, the current name of the turnpike. (Madison Run Fire Road, which leaves west from the gap near the parking area, is the western relic of this turnpike.) Look for a small path leaving the road to your left at mile 0.4. Scramble a few feet up this path to the grave of William H. Howard, a Confederate soldier. A carved stone slab

UPPER DOYLES RIVER FALLS





JONES RUN FALLS

marks the location of his interment. Return to the fire road and continue down the trail on a gentle grade.

Cross an iron bridge spanning shallow Doyles River to make a trail junction at 1.7 miles. Turn right onto Doyles River Trail. Other hikers, having come from Skyline Drive and the upper Doyles River Trailhead, will be joining you. The footpath descends along lively Doyles River. Cross the waterway, an easy rock-hop, at mile 1.9.

Doyles River Trail continues along the watercourse but swings away as it approaches Upper Doyles Falls. At 2.1 miles, a side trail leads to the dark pool at the base of the three-tiered, 30-foot waterfall. The cataract spills into a boulder-filled glen at the point where a tributary feeds the river. The canyon tightens; Doyles River continues making frenzied drops. Unnamed cascades accompany you downstream until a sharp switchback leads to the base of Lower Doyles Falls at mile 2.4. At 63 feet, Lower Doyles Falls is the steeper and more spectacular of the two. It dives over a rock lip and then spills in ribbons and channels over multiple tiers. It finally lands in a pool before charging on. The cataract will display different faces depending on the water flow.



LOWER DOYLES RIVER FALLS

The trail squeezes down the narrow, very rugged gorge, using a wooden bridge to span a tributary spilling into Doyles River at 2.7 miles. At 2.9 miles, find a deep pool between fast-moving rapids. At 3.1 miles, come to a trail marker and the end of Doyles River Trail. Jones Run and Doyles River merge below the signpost. Veer right on lesser-used Jones Run Trail. Begin climbing, and then rock-hop Jones Run at 3.3 miles. Impressive tulip trees grow tall and wide, with such large diameters that it would take several hikers to encircle them.

Look up the slope. Jones Run gorge is littered with huge boulders. Keep an eye on the creek, too, as many scenic cascades tumble down the relentless watercourse, including some long slide cascades. At 3.8 miles, step over a tributary and then arrive at Jones Run Falls, where water spills 45 feet over a solid rock wall. Large waterside rock slabs make for good observation points. The chilly air and mist from the cataract will cool a hot and sweaty hiker.

The trail turns sharply left, circumventing a rock rampart. Achieve the top of the falls. The path traces Jones Run past more cascades before veering away from the creek. At 5.0 miles, join an old wagon road. The path widens. Step over Jones Run, diminutive at this point at 5.2 miles. Jones Run Trail ascends

and makes a sharp left turn at 5.4 miles. Meet the Appalachian Trail at 5.7 miles. The Jones Run Trailhead and parking area are just steps away. Turn right on the Appalachian Trail, northbound. Dry species such as mountain laurel and chestnut oak straddle the grade back to Browns Gap. Pass spur trails to Dundo Picnic Area at 6.3 miles. Intermittent views of Cedar Mountain open. The Appalachian Trail descends before arriving at Browns Gap at 7.0 miles.

DIRECTIONS From Charlottesville, take I-64 west 23 miles to Shenandoah National Park's Rockfish Gap entrance station. Take Skyline Drive north for 21.6 miles to the trailhead, on your left. The hike starts at the Browns Gap parking area, milepost 83.0 on Skyline Drive.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES 38.240483, -78.710467

12 BIG BRANCH FALLS

[7.6-mile out-and-back, strenuous]

This delicate slide waterfall is most rewardingly accessed from Skyline Drive, thus availing a solitude-filled trek. The vast majority of visitors start from Charlottesville Reservoir, making their way up to the falls. Big Branch Falls can run low by summer, so make your visit from late winter through spring.

Your waterfall hike leaves Blackrock Gap (2,330') and descends Moormans River Fire Road. The Appalachian Trail is just to your right. At 0.1 mile, step over a small branch that the trail begins to parallel. Pass through pine, black gum, oak, and hickory woodland with an understory of mountain laurel, descending gently on the wide doubletrack. The branch you crossed drops steeply for North Fork Moormans River.

At 1.1 miles, come to a gate on the road; you are leaving the park for a period. The trail stays on a right-of-way, descending to a junction at 1.5 miles. Turn right and immediately cross North Fork Moormans River on rocks. At higher flows this may be a ford. The trail follows the river downstream. Look for ironwood and black birch in this deep vale. Wildflowers color the trailside in spring. At 1.6 miles, a private road splits left; stay right, passing a ramshackle hunter's camp on your left. Look for the smooth gray trunks of the many beech trees that grow in the area; their nuts are a favored food source for wildlife.

50 *Waterfalls of the Blue Ridge*

Make another rock-hop of the river at 2.0 miles. You will stay on the west bank for the remainder of the hike. Bisect a small grassy clearing. Reenter the park at the crossing of Little Gale Branch at 2.1 miles. The road takes on a more overgrown appearance. Tightly grown, spindly trees are rising from what once was barren soil, remnants of a cataclysmic flood back in the 1990s. We saw this valley then, and the reforestation is truly amazing.

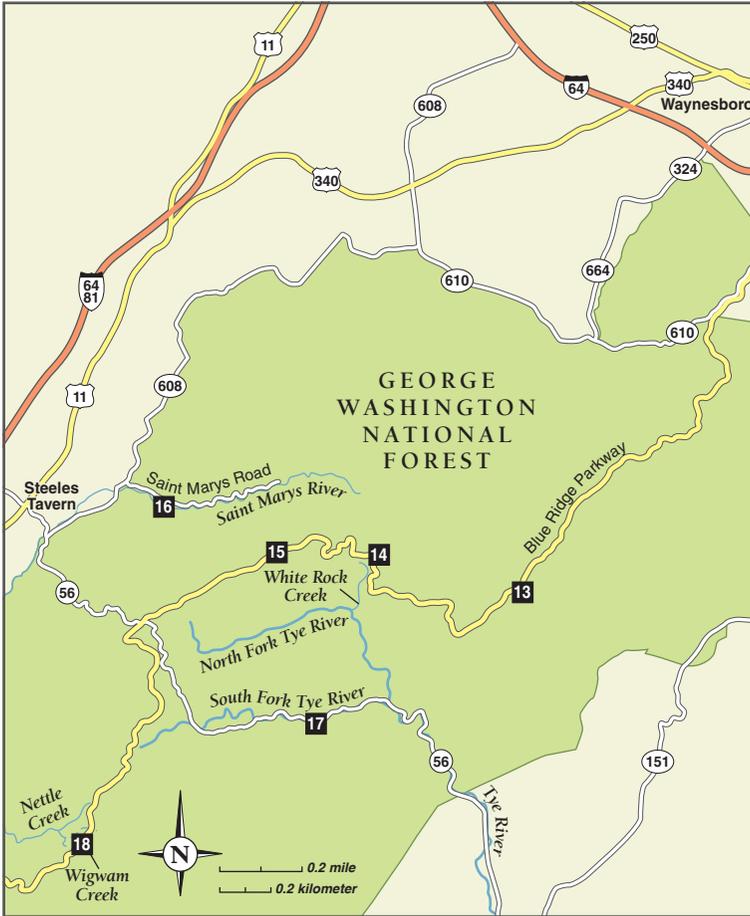
Cross Shop Run at 2.3 miles. The metal remains of an old bridge lie in state here. Before the 1995 flood, Shenandoah National Park maintained this trail as a fire road. Step over an unnamed perennial stream at 2.7 miles. Come back along North Fork Moormans River at 2.9 miles. Tulip trees and sycamores rise from the streamside. Gigantic boulders, gravel bars, speedy shoals, and quiet pools—some deep enough for a dip—all intermingle below. Streamside open rock slabs beckon a visit. Brook trout, rock bass, and smallmouth bass ply the waters.

Come to Big Branch at 3.7 miles. You can see the lower drops of Big Branch Falls from the main trail. Step over the stream and then take the 0.1-mile side trail leading right to the falls. This canyon was gouged back in 1995, exposing the rock bed of the creek, making the entire scene more dramatic. The low-volume cataract drops 30 feet into a plunge pool, and then another cascade slides into a second pool. The third and lowermost drop dips into the deepest pool. As you explore the falls, avoid slick spots on the open rock slabs adjacent to the moving water.

DIRECTIONS From Charlottesville, take I-64 west 23 miles to Shenandoah National Park's Rockfish Gap entrance station. Take Skyline Drive north for 17.7 miles to Black Rock Gap, milepost 87.4. This is where Moormans River Fire Road begins.

GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES 38.206850, -78.749683

Waynesboro



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14 White Rock Falls 53

15 Mine Bank Creek Cascade 55

16 Saint Mary's Waterfall 56

17 Crabtree Falls 57

18 Wigwam Falls 59

Contact Information

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

199 Hemphill Knob Road
Asheville, NC 28805
828-348-3400, nps.gov/blri

CAESARS HEAD STATE PARK

8155 Geer Highway
Cleveland, SC 29635
864-836-6115
southcarolinaparks.com/caesarshead

CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK

PO Box 39
Chimney Rock, NC 28720
828-625-9611, chimneyrockpark.com

DOUTHAT STATE PARK

14239 Douthat State Park Road
Millboro, VA 24460
540-862-8100
dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/douthat

DUPONT STATE FOREST

PO Box 300
Cedar Mountain, NC 28718
828-877-6527
dupontstaterекреationalforest.com

EASTERN BAND OF THE CHEROKEE NATION

88 Council House Loop
Cherokee, NC 28719
828-497-7000, ebci.com

GEORGE WASHINGTON AND JEFFERSON NATIONAL FORESTS

5162 Valleypointe Parkway
Roanoke, VA 24019
888-265-0019, fs.usda.gov/gwj

GORGES STATE PARK

976 Grassy Ridge Road
Sapphire, NC 28774
828-966-9099
ncparks.gov/gorges-state-park

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

107 Park Headquarters Road
Gatlinburg, TN 37738
865-436-1200, nps.gov/grsm

HANGING ROCK STATE PARK

1790 Hanging Rock Park Road
Danbury, NC 27016
336-593-8480
ncparks.gov/hanging-rock-state-park

NANTAHALA AND PISGAH NATIONAL FORESTS

160 Zillicoa Street, Suite A
Asheville, NC 28801
828-257-4200, fs.usda.gov/nfsnc

NATURAL BRIDGE OF VIRGINIA

15 Appledore Lane
Natural Bridge, VA 24578
540-291-2121, naturalbridgeva.com

SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

3655 US 211 E.
Luray, VA 22835
540-999-3500, nps.gov/shen

SOUTH MOUNTAINS STATE PARK

3001 S. Mountain Park Avenue
Connelly Springs, NC 28612
828-433-4772
ncparks.gov/south-mountains-state-park

STONE MOUNTAIN STATE PARK

3042 Frank Parkway
Roaring Gap, NC 28668
336-957-8185
ncparks.gov/stone-mountain-state-park

THERE IS MORE MINISTRIES

7935 Parkway Road
Balsam Grove, NC 28708
828-884-6350, thereismoreministries.com

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About the Author



photo: Keri Anne Molloy

Johnny Molloy is a writer and adventurer, based in East Tennessee, who has lived in the shadow of the mountains for more than three decades. His outdoor passion started on a backpacking trip in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. That first foray unleashed a love of the outdoors that has led to his spending countless nights backpacking, canoe camping, and tent camping for the past 30 years. Friends enjoyed his outdoor adventure stories; one even suggested he write a book. He soon parlayed his love of the outdoors into an occupation. The

results of his efforts are more than 75 books. His writings include hiking, camping, and paddling guidebooks; comprehensive guidebooks about a specific area; and true outdoor adventure books. Molloy has also written numerous articles for magazines, websites, and newspapers. He continues writing and traveling extensively throughout the United States, endeavoring in a variety of outdoor pursuits. His other interests include serving God as a Gideon, studying American history, and following University of Tennessee sports. For the latest on Johnny, please visit johnnymolloy.com.

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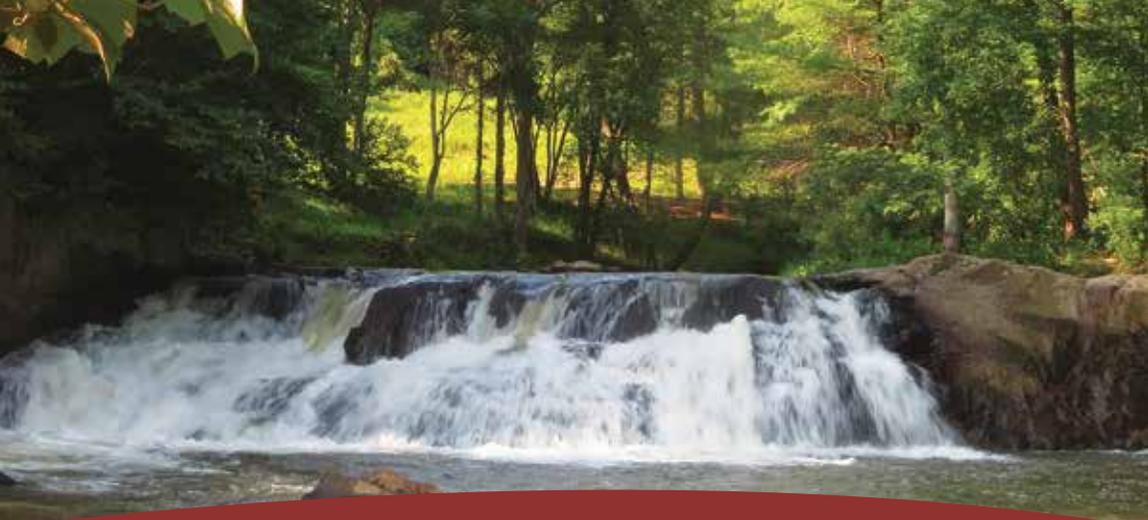
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Sehlinger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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