

Blowing Rock Conference Center Area Hiking Trails

Off the Blue Ridge Parkway

(Blowing Rock is off Milepost 296)

Cascades Trail - Milepost 271

MODERATE

The Cascades Trail is named for the waterfall to which it leads, but the trail itself is worth the visit. Part of the E.B. Jeffress Park, the Cascades Trail is a self-guided interpretive trail with twenty interpretive plaques labeling tree species of the Blue Ridge. From the parking lot, the trail turns from paved to gravel and then follows the crest of a cliff. The trail is a 1.2 – mile loop, and cascade falls can be viewed from observation platforms located both above and below the falls. About a 20 mile trip on the Parkway from Blowing Rock.

Moses Cone Manor – Milepost 294.6

EASY TO MODERATE

Named after the post-Civil War textile entrepreneur, conservationist and philanthropist, Moses Cone, this Victorian mansion exemplifies the resort home tradition in the High Country. During summer months, the estate is open as an arts and crafts center. The network of trails that crisscross the 3,500-acre Moses Cone Park is open year round. All trails are easy grade and great for larger groups with children. A four mile trip on the Parkway from Blowing Rock.

Boone Fork Trail – Milepost 296.4

STRENUOUS

The Boone Fork Trail differs from most Parkway hikes in two ways. The first is that the majority of the trail is in the woods, where tumbling streams and rock outcroppings replace typically grand vistas. The second is its length. At 4.9 miles, the Boone Fork Trail is longer than most, and slightly arduous. But given adequate time to complete and a picnic lunch, it is one of the most beautiful hikes in the area, with several stream crossings, rhododendrons, tunnels and open grasslands. About 6 miles from Blowing Rock.

Price Lake – Milepost 297.2

EASY TO MODERATE

Just one mile south from the Boone Fork Trail, Price Lake is ideal for larger groups or for those looking for something a little less strenuous. The 2.4-mile loop around Price Lake is suitable for hikers of any level. Views of Grandfather Mountain can be seen from several points along the trail, which runs primarily along the lakeshore. About 7 miles from Blowing Rock.

Daniel Boone Scout Trail – Milepost 299.9

STRENUOUS

Ascending about 2,000 feet in 3 miles, the Daniel Boone Trail runs from the Tanawha Trail to the summit of Calloway Peak, which, at 5,964 feet, stands as the highest point in the Blue Ridge Mountain Range. Extraordinary views, including one of Price Lake and one of the Linn Cove Viaduct, punctuate the trail, which intersects the Cragway Trail about halfway up, at Flat Rock View. In-place ladders and cables help hiker negotiate the steep sections right before Calloway Peak. A permit is required for this hike, and the closest outlet is the Grandfather Mountain

Country Store (located at the junction of Highway 221 and the Holloway Mountain Road). About 10 miles from Blowing Rock.

Tanawha Trail to Rough Ridge – Milepost 302.8 **MODERATE TO STRENUOUS**

Rough Ridge is one of the most easily accessed vistas along the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Tanawha Trail is actually more than 13 miles long, spanning from Price Park to Beacon Heights, but the section from the Parkway to Rough Ridge is a short 1.5 miles, with great views as close as 0.6 miles from the Parkway. The trail follows a ridge crest and leads to boardwalks where 360-degree views give visitors a birds-eye view of The High Country. About 13 miles from Blowing Rock.

Grandfather Trail to Calloway Peak – Milepost 305.1 **STRENUOUS**

At 5,964 feet, Calloway Peak is the highest point in the Blue Ridge Mountains. It is part of Grandfather Mountain, which has several other high altitude peaks, including MacRae Peak (5,939 ft.). Calloway can be accessed via multiple trails, but the Grandfather Mountain Trail, for its boulder formations and beautiful evergreen forests, remains a favorite. Additionally, the Grandfather Trail is only a short distance from the Parkway. Travel south on the Blue Ridge Parkway to the Highway 221 intersection at milepost 305, then take 221 South for 1 mile to the entrance of Grandfather Mountain. The Grandfather Trail begins at the highest parking lot, opposite the Linville Peak Visitor Center. About 16 miles from Blowing Rock

Beacon Heights via Tanawha Trail – Milepost 305.2 **MODERATE**

Beacon Heights is a popular Parkway destination for its spectacular views of Grandfather Mountain and minimal distance. A mere 0.7 miles round trip, this leg-stretcher leads to a south-facing exfoliated dome, from which Mt. Mitchell and the Linville Gorge are visible. From the parking lot, walk across SR 1513, which parallels the Blue Ridge Parkway. Enter the woods where the sign says “Tanawha Trail Beacon Heights 0.2”. The path climbs to a junction point for the Tanawha and Mountains-to-Sea trails; from there, follow signs marker “Beacon Heights Trail” to the right. By adding in sections of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, hikers can easily avoid the large crowds often found at Beacon Heights, and still gain gorgeous views. About 16 miles from Blowing Rock.

Flatrock Self-Guiding Loop Trail – Milepost 308.3 **MODERATE**

Like the Cascades Trail, the Flatrock Trail is a self-guided tour of local tree species and rock names. Twenty interpretive signs point out specific examples of natural occurrences, like a yellow birch that grew around a fallen log and now appears to be standing on its roots. There is also a virgin remnant of a northern red oak, a sign that The High Country was once similar to northern New England states. The trail is only a short distance to Flatrock, where views on a clear day are extensive. About 19 miles from Blowing Rock.

Other Great Area Hiking Trails

Elk Knob

STRENUOUS

Elk Knob State Park is a new addition to the NC state parks system and is in an interim development stage. There are parking areas, a picnic area and a trail to the summit of Elk Knob, the second tallest peak in Watauga County. The hike and the view are well worth the effort, for on a clear day you can see White Top Mountain and Mount Rogers in Virginia and – more than 50 miles away – Mount Mitchell, in Yancy County NC, the highest peak in the eastern US. The park is approximately 9 miles from Boone off NC 194, near Meat Camp NC: Take NC 194 out of Boone, go 4.3 miles. Turn left on to Meat Camp Road, go 5.4 miles. (5564 Meat Camp Rd., Todd NC 28684)

Elk River Falls

As one of the High Country's most popular waterfalls, you can expect a crowd on good weather days, but it's worth it to catch a glimpse of the impressive 60-ft. falls. The falls are a quarter-mile walk from the parking lot. From Boone, take Highway 105 South toward Banner Elk. Turn right onto Highway 184, and then turn left onto Highway 194. At the intersection of 19E, turn right. In 1.3 miles, make a sharp right onto SR 1303. Follow signs leading to the falls, making a left onto Elk River Road. About 50-55 minutes from Blowing Rock.

Glen Burney Falls

MODERATE TO STRENUOUS

An ancient native trail winding along New Year's Creek in Blowing Rock. The 1.5 mile trail (3 miles round-trip) begins in the Annie Cannon Gardens and descends about 800 feet, providing breathtaking vistas of two waterfalls, the Glen Burney (45') and the Glen Mary (55'). This is a two hour hike into a virgin Appalachian hardwood forest with spectacular cascades.

Harper Creek Falls

Harper Creek Falls is part of the Wilson Creek Gorge, which is a beautiful, secluded area. It may take some turning around to find it, but if you're looking for something off the beaten path, you won't be disappointed. Take the Blue Ridge Parkway south from Blowing Rock. Just past Linville (about 25-30 minutes) catch Highway 181 South. Make a left onto Brown Mountain Beach Road. Continue for 5 miles, passing the off-road area, and make a left on SR 1328. Pass the commercial campground. The road will turn to gravel and there will be several parking places.

Hebron Rock Colony

MODERATE

Hebron Rock Colony offers a beautiful, long slope of giant boulders, great for crawling, jumping and climbing. The river cascades down the rocks, creating numerous small waterfalls in between dozens of little swimming holes. Take Highway 105 from Boone and turn left at the Hound Ears Club on Old Shull's Mill Road. After passing a church on the left, take Old Turnpike Road. Continue on this gravel road for 5 to 8 minutes. Park along the road where it curves sharply to the right, and follow the trail into the woods to the right. It is a 10-minute walk to the river.

Linville Gorge/Falls

MODERATE TO VERY STRENUOUS

Two main hiking trails lead to views of Linville Falls. Both begin at the Linville Falls visitor Center and pass through remnants of a virgin hemlock forest mixed with other familiar trees such as white pine, oaks, hickory and birch. A colorful and varied display of wildflowers decorates the trails in spring. Red and golden leaves in fall beautifully contrast with the soothing green of hemlocks.

Linville Falls can be viewed from a distance by hiking the moderate Erwin's View Trail, offering hikers four overlooks, is a 1.6 mile round trip.

The Grand Canyon of the East, Linville Gorge is as remote and pristine as it gets. The Linville Gorge Trail and connecting trails within the gorge are recommended for highly experience hikers only. These trails, often climbing and descending the V-shaped walls of the gorge, are very strenuous. To get to the Linville Gorge Visitor Center, take the Blue Ridge Parkway south from Blowing Rock to a few miles past Linville. There will be a left turn for the Linville Falls parking area. The Linville Gorge Trail can be accessed at several locations along its western edge. Take US 221 South from Blowing Rock to Highway 183. Then turn left onto SR 1238 (Kistler Memorial Highway). Trailheads are marked by parking areas on the left.

Profile Trail – Grandfather Mountain

MODERATE TO STRENUOUS

Spectacular views and challenging terrain await you at Grandfather Mountain. The Profile Trail to the top is 3 miles long and rises more than 2,000 feet in elevation. The first mile is fairly easy, but the trail becomes more challenging quickly after that. This trail requires a permit which you can get at the Grandfather Mountain offices or at several area outfitters and gas stations. To reach the Profile Trail entrance, take Highway 105 South from Boone for about 12 miles. Parking is on the left, about 5 miles past Foscoe.

Upper Creek Falls

STRENUOUS

Upper Creek Falls could be called nature's playground. A swimming hole, complete with a rope swing, is located above the falls, and natural rock slides are found at several points below the falls. The waterfall itself is over 30 feet high, and continues for another 5 feet. The trail leading to the upper falls is less than 1 mile, but strenuous. Take Highway 105 South from Boone. Turn left onto Highway 181 South. After crossing the Blue Ridge Parkway and passing signs for Table Rock, the parking lot for Upper Creek Falls is on the left.