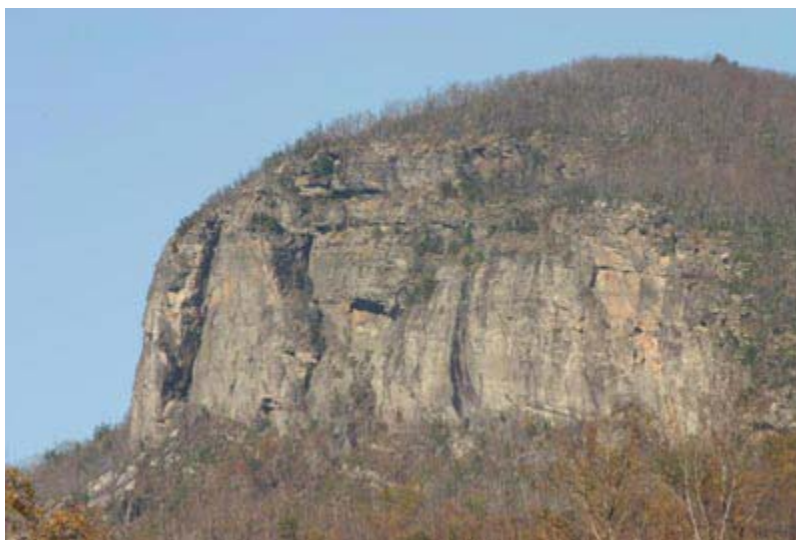


HIKING IN NORTH CAROLINA

The North Carolina mountains provide a wide selection of trails for both the inexperienced and advanced hikers. The national forests in North Carolina provide over 1,200 miles of primary foot trails; including seven National Recreation Trails and over 200 miles of the Appalachian Trail. Camping is permitted along all trails, but may be limited or require permits.

We are fortunate in Daniel Boone Council to have both Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests nearby. Some of the numerous trails in those forests can be found in sections III and IV.



Shortoff Mountain, Linville Gorge

Contents

- 1- Index**
- 2- Appalachian Trail**
 - Catawba Falls**
 - Cheoah Bald**
- 3- Grandfather Mountain**
 - Foothills Trail**
 - Linville Gorge**
- 4- Mountains to Sea Trail**
- 9- Roan Mountain**
 - Shortoff Mountain**

Appalachian Trail National Scenic Trail

The Appalachian Trail covers over 2100 miles from Maine to Georgia. 302 of those miles wind through North Carolina and parts of Tennessee. Since its creation, many hikers take the challenge each year to journey the rugged hills in the Appalachian Mountains. The Appalachian Trail has shelters at various locations for the convenience of campers. During the late spring, summer and early fall these shelters are usual crowded; they are available on a first come, first served basis. Hikers are encouraged to consider using the numerous other trails provided on the Pisgah and Nantahala Forests. The AT provides 500 access points. To camp overnight, permits are necessary in the Shenandoah National Park and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. For the advanced hiker, the AT provides trails from Georgia to Maine (2,158mi).

We cannot cover all of the trails in North Carolina, however, it is recommended that adventurers read the books entitled “AT Guide to Tennessee-North Carolina” and “AT Guide to North Carolina – Georgia” at your local bookstore or outfitter.

Appalachian Trail Conservancy
P.O. Box 807
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807
(304) 535-6331

<http://www.appalachiantrail.org>

Catawba Falls (privately owned)

(2,400ft) USGS Map: Marion

The Catawba Falls trip is popular family trip with impressive waterfalls on the headwaters of the Catawba River. At railroad station on US 70 is Old Fort, turn south onto Catawba Street, after 5 miles cross under I-40, immediately turn right onto exit ramp and go a half-mile. Turn onto SR 1274 on left, go 3 miles to bridge to end of road, park, cross bridge. Walk up stream, passing abandoned powerhouse and dam. Following is an easy decent. When the road runs out after 35minutes and becomes a streambed, walk on left bank 15 paces then right bank for 55 paces. Next go sharply left across stream, continuing for 175 paces to base of lower Catawba Falls, graceful, cascading type. Note: the turn made at stream is easy to go wrong on return. Upper falls plunges into a large pool which can be reached by hiking 30 minutes on a steep, slippery trail climbing beside lower falls. Easy 3.5 mile hike on private property.

800-807-5263

<http://www.catawbafallspreserve.com/>

Cheoah Bald

(5,062ft) from Stecoah Gap on the AT. Leave NC 28 from gap just west of Stecoah; go to Sweetwater Road (SR 143) for 2 miles southwest to Stecoah Gap where the AT crosses. Park, then follow the white blazes: climb southeast very steeply on AT to crest water 200 yards right. Continue to the summit of Cheoah Bald at 4.3 miles. The trail provides a strenuous 8.6 mile hike and primitive camping.

Grandfather Mountain (privately owned)

(5,964 if) Is located in Linville area and has a mile-high swinging bridge which connects 2 of the peaks. Grandfather is the highest mountain on the Blue Ridge Range and a spectacular Alpine-like ridge-top hike is found there. The highest peaks can be reached only by trail man undeveloped 5,000 acre area. 7 trails have been designated by the US Department of the Interior on the 2 mountains. Located within 10 miles of 6 ski resorts, Grandfather is one of the snowiest spots in North Carolina and a popular winter backpacking and hiking site. From the east, the Daniel Boone Scout Trail reaches Calloway Peak, the mountain's highest point in 3 miles. The Boone Trail begins on the West side of US 221, 10.8 miles north of the US 221 and Highway 105 junction in Linville and 1.5 miles south of the Blue Ridge Parkway and Halloway Mountain Road junction with US 221. Other trails on the mountain reach Indian House Cave, one of the East's highest archeological sites, and Black Rock Cliffs Cave, a 6 room cavern. There are 3 trails on Grandfather Mountain form a national recreation trail day or multi-night backpacking circuit over Calloway Peak. Camping is permitted at many backcountry campsites where some shelters are provided. Hiking permits are required and a fee is charged to support trail maintenance and monitoring system for safety. Permits are available at the Grandfather Mountain Entrance. For more information contact:
Backcountry Manager

Grandfather Mountain

P.O. Box 129

Linville, NC 28646

(828) 733-2013

<http://www.grandfather.com/>

Foothills Trail

The Foothills Trail in South Carolina connects Table Rock State Park and Oconee State Park with 74.8 miles of trail. It crosses into North Carolina and passes by the Horse Pasture River and the Towaway River. The trail makes use of old wagon and logging roads where possible. Careful planning of both food and equipment is suggested as there aren't any convenient mid-trip re-supply points after you leave Table Rock State Park in the first 30 mile segment.

Foothills Trail Conference

P.O. Box 3041

Greenville, SC 29602

<http://www.foothillstrail.org/index.html>

Linville Gorge

(2,600ft) Linville Gorge is one of Eastern America's most scenic and rugged gorges. It is also reputed to be the wildest and most treacherous area in the Blue Ridge Parkway, but the risks on graded trails described here are no greater than elsewhere in the wilds of the Southern Appalachians. The area has been set aside as a wilderness by the US Forest Service. Babel Tower Trails begin at the sign on the east side of old NC 105, 2.8 miles south from NC 183. None of these are circle trips, however, all the trails can be followed back to their starting points at 1 to 2.9 miles each. The Babel Tower Trail and Conley Cove Trail makes a hike of 8 miles. Before starting in the gorge, it is desirable to drive to Wisemen's View recreation site on old NC 105, 1.5 miles south of start of Babel Tower Trail. Here, the gorge can be scanned from overlooks that orient the hiker. The trail offers art 8 mile moderate hike.

828-652-4841

<http://www.northcarolinaoutdoors.com/places/mountains/linvillegorge.html>

The Mountains to Sea Trail

The Mountains to Sea Trail (Mountains to Sea Trail) of North Carolina is a 900+ mile trail consisting of footpaths, roads, and state bike routes. This trail started in 1973 when the North Carolina General Assembly passed the North Carolina Trails System Act.



North Carolina's Mountains to Sea Trail (MST) stretches from Clingman's Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Jockey's Ridge State Park by the Atlantic Ocean. The mainline distance is 908 miles and if an alternate section is followed it is 925 miles. With Ferry Rides, spur trails to scenic overlooks, and side trails to campsites, the adventurous journey is nearly 1000 miles. It's western terminus at Clingman's Dome is 6643 feet in elevation. Its eastern terminus, after reaching sea level, is in Jockey's Ridge State Park's on the highest sand dune (140 feet elevation) of the nation's East Coast.

As of June of 2005, The Blue Ridge Parkway sections of the Mountains to Sea Trail are now officially recognized as a **National Recreation Trail (NRT)**.

This guide includes most completed trail sections in the mountains, from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Hanging Rock State Park. Complete & up-to-date information can be found at <http://www.ncmst.org/>



Section 1 (27.2 miles)

Clingmans Dome on the Appalachian Trail (north) in Great Smoky Mountains National Park 3.5 miles to junction right with spur trail for connection to Fork Ridge Trail to Ocanaluftee River and western terminus of Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 469.1 (Swain County)

This is an excellent weekend hiking trip! The Mountains to Sea Trail signs are very easy to follow in the Smokys. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park has the Mountains to Sea Trail highlighted in purple on their trail map.

**Section 4
(24.2 miles)** Balsam Gap (South), Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 443.1 (US-23/74) to Bear Pen Gap (Wet Pen Gap, USFS) Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 427.6 (Jackson County) The Mountains to Sea Trail ascends into the Nantahala National Forest and at times follows old forest roads.

**Section 5
(8.5 miles)** Bear Pen Gap (Wet Camp Gap) Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 427.6 to Beech Gap (NC-215) Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 423.2 (Jackson and Haywood Counties)
A very scenic section of the Mountains to Sea Trail and remains at an elevation of 1 mile above sea level for the entire 8.5 miles. This section is an excellent day hike! Since this area is a wilderness area, no white blazes are allowed in this area.

**Section 6
(21.4 miles)** (21.2 miles main white-blazed route) (37.7 mi alternate blue-blazed route) Beech Gap (NC-215) Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 423.2 to Pisgah Inn at Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 408.6 (Haywood and Transylvania Counties)

After junctioning with the Art Loeb trail the Mountains to Sea Trail enters Graveyard Fields and Looking Glass Falls.

The Mountains to Sea Trail and the alternate Art Loeb trail make for a nice 3-4 day loop backpacking trip.

**Section 7
(32.0 miles)** Pisgah Inn, Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 408.6 to Folk Art Center Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 382 (Transylvania, Henderson, and Buncombe Counties)

The MOUNTAINS TO SEA TRAIL follows the Shut-In trail down into the North Carolina Arboretum. After crossing the French Broad river the Mountains to Sea Trail parallels the Blue Ridge Parkway through Asheville and to the Folk Art Center.

**Section 8
(22.0 miles)** Folk Art Center- Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 382 to Balsam Gap (North) at Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 359.8 (Buncombe County)

The Mountains to Sea Trail ascends up to Rattlesnake Lodge and then into Craggy Gardens before reaching Balsam Gap. This section could be called the "roller coaster", for its elevation change.

**Section 9
(14.5 miles)** Balsam Gap (North) at Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 359.8 to Black Mountain Recreation Area by South Toe River (Yancey County). This section includes Mt. Mitchell State Park for a great view of the Black Mountains.

Section 10 Black Mountain Recreation Area by South Toe River in Pisgah NF to Buck Gap at Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 344.1 (NC-80) (Yancey County)
(7.7 miles)

The Mountains to Sea Trail continues to parallel the Blue Ridge Parkway and offers scenic views; an excellent day hike adventure.

Section 11 **From Buck Gap at Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 344.1 (NC-80) to Woodlawn Park (US-221)** (McDowell County)
(13.2 miles)

The Mountains to Sea Trail leaves the Blue Ridge Parkway here and doesn't return to it until Grandfather Mountain. Parts of this section follow old US Forest Service Roads to Hwy 221.

Section 12 **Woodlawn Park at Hwy 221 to NC-181.** This section would make a good 3-4 day backpacking trip, and a very strenuous one at that (34.0 miles). This section of the Mountains to Sea Trail is the most remote and scenic through the Linville Gorge. You will need to cross the North Fork of the Catawba and the Linville River (no bridges), which can be dangerous during high water. Climbing up Bald Knob with 37 switchbacks with views of Shortoff Mountain and Table Rock is a challenge with a full backpack. You will then descend down into the Linville Gorge, cross the river and ascend sharply for about 2 miles to the top of Shortoff Mountain. Campsites are available on the top of Shortoff (there is a seasonal spring there). The Mountains to Sea Trail will then take you to Table Rock parking area at mile 23.0 and descend down into Steels Creek area for scenic waterfalls. Parking is available at NC-181. Topo maps are a must for this area along with Allen de Harts guidebook descriptions. As long as you are in US Forest property you may camp where you like.
(34 miles)

Section 13 **Ripshin Ridge (NC-181) to Beacon Heights** Blue Ridge Parkway 305.3 (Burke and Avery Counties) (Complete) (Designated by DPR) The Mountains to Sea Trail passes the highest waterfalls of its entire route.
(24.2 miles)

If pools of water and scenic waterfalls are what you want then this is the place to get what you want on this section of the Mountains to Sea Trail.

Section 14 **Beacon Heights to Blowing Rock at HW-321.** The Mountains to Sea Trail follows the exceptionally scenic Tanawha, Boone Fork and Rich Mountain trails through this area for 25.0 miles. This area is extremely scenic in the fall with Grandfather Mountain in the background. The only campground is J. Price Park along the Mountains to Sea Trail for \$14.00 per night at mile 13.5. The Cone Manner is a historic place you may want to stop before reaching Blowing Rock at HW-321. Going unde the Lynn Cove viaduct and sights of Grandfather Mountain make this area a great hike in the fall. Mountains to Sea Trail white blazes will soon be painted along this section.
(25 miles)

Section 15 Blowing Rock (US-321) near Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 291.9 to Deep Gap (US-421) Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 276.4 (Watauga County) (Incomplete, must hike Blue Ridge Parkway shoulder)
(15.5 miles)

Section 16 Deep Gap (US-421) Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 276.4 to Horse Gap (NC-16) (Watauga, Wilkes, and Ashe Counties) **Incomplete as of January 2006**
(15.2 miles)

Section 17 **Horse Gap (NC-16) Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 261.2 to Devils Garden**
(25.5 miles) **Overlook Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 235.7** - The Mountains to Sea Trail follows the Bluff Mountain Trail through Doughton Park where you can camp. The Mountains to Sea Trail has been completed from Hwy 18 to Devils Garden overlook as a natural surface trail. On clear days you can see all the way to Mt. Rodgers in Virginia. This section is 14 miles long and you could extend your trip into Stone Mountain State Park after leaving Devils Garden overlook.

Section 18 **Devils Garden Overlook Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 235.7 through Stone**
(9.5 miles) **Mountain State Park to its headquarters parking area.** (Wilkes County) Follows some named trails, but other trails are to be selected by Stone Mountain State Park. Some of the Mountains to Sea Trail follows old Forest Service Roads. For a routing update please call Stone Mt. State Park and speak with Ed Farr at (336) 957-8185.

Sections 19 & 20 Largely follow roads- refer to <http://www.ncmst.org/>

Section 21 From Surry County boundary through Stokes County. (This section includes 7 miles of trails in Hanging Rock State Park.) The Sauratown Trail that connects Pilot Mountain to Hanging Rock has been designated by DRP. The Sauratown Trail is a horse and hiking trail. Major road crossings are NC-66, NC-8/89, and US-311; towns are Danbury and Walnut Cove. Leave bike route #4 in Danbury and follow NC-89 to Walnut Cove, but NC-55 into Forsyth County.
(35.7 miles)

The Sauratown Trail offers 22 miles of hiking or horse back riding on the Mountains to Sea Trail to Troy's Den at Hanging Rock State Park.

Sauratown Trail - A Segment of the Mountains to Sea Trail

The Sauratown Trail (ST) is a unique 21.70 mile trail that begins at the Tories Den parking area of Hanging Rock State Park and runs in a general WSW direction to the Surry County Line parking area of Pilot Mt. State Park. The Sauratown Trail was built, and is maintained, by the volunteer efforts of the Sauratown Trails Association (<http://www.sauratowntrails.org/>), an equestrian group. They also maintain: three loop trails which branch off of the Sauratown Trail, a trail center, and three parking areas spaced at intervals along the trail. The two parking areas that anchor each end of the Sauratown Trail are maintained by the N.C. Park service. The total STA trail system exceeds 35 miles, and is connected to dozens of miles of park trails at each end. One can now hike from the Dan River to the Yadkin River, a distance of nearly forty miles. For directions to parking areas, and links to the two state parks (with download-able maps), or to purchase the official Sauratown Trail map, visit the STA website (www.sauratowntrails.org). The Sauratown Trail is well designed, with many switchbacks, so that even the steeper sections are not too strenuous, even for casual hikers. Numerous combinations of short hikes are available, so that one can make as much or as little of an outing as desired.

More of the Mountains to Sea trail

For the Piedmont and Coastal trail descriptions, visit <http://www.ncmst.org/>

Books:

Hiking North Carolina's Mountains-to-Sea Trail by Allen de Hart 384 pp., 6 1/8 x 9 1/4, 28 illus., 79 maps, appends., index \$18.95 paper, IBN 0-8078-4887-5 (available at outfitters statewide)

Order straight from the UNC website at : <http://uncpress.unc.edu/books/T-5156.html>

The Mountains to Sea Trail: Western North Carolina's Majestic Rival to the Appalachian Trail
Authors Donald E. Dossey and John I. Hillyer

Trail Profiles - The Mountains to Sea Trail, From Beech Gap to Black Mountain Campground
Author Walt Weber for the Carolina Mountain Club

Orders for this book can be placed with the Carolina Mountain Club on their website at:
www.carolinamtclub.com

Nantahala National Forest

See Section IV-A

Pisgah National Forest

See Section III

Roan Mountain National Recreation Trail

(6,286ft) Offers a loop trail that winds through Roan Mountain Gardens. A natural garden of rhododendron, fir trees, and grass openings are included. The peak of the bloom is in mid-June. Portions of the trail are paved with a viewing deck for the handicapped. Facilities include water, comfort station, picnic areas, and information stations are provided. Nearby, Cloudland Trail goes to an observation deck. Take NC 261 to Carver's Gap, turn left and follow the road to the summit and parking area.

<http://www.etsu.edu/biology/roan-mtn/>

Shortoff Mountain

(3,000 ft) Is a highly recommended trip. A moderate walk to the lower end of Linville Gorge (Trail 90) along a series of cliffs offering unsurpassed views into the gorge with Lake James as a backdrop in the distance. Exit from I-40 at Nebo-Lake James exit, east of Marion. Go north 2.8 miles; turn west, left for 0.3 miles; next, turn north, right onto NC 126, which leads around Lake James. After 10 miles, cross the Linville River; go 1.2 miles farther; turn onto the first road on Wolf Pit Road (Forest Road 117). Take the road 2.4 miles to turnaround at dead end to park. Walk 12 minutes more, reach another junction, go either right or left. In 13 minutes reach the 3rd junction; take the woodland footpath straight ahead west between two small gashed pine trees, avoiding the main road which climbs steeply right to the side road to the left which goes steeply downhill (pay special attention to stay on the right road). In 7 minutes you will arrive at the first observation point on the cliffs. Walk north as far as desired along the edge of the cliffs on the tiny trail through rhododendron, laurel, and sand myrtle. A moderate roundtrip of 5-8 miles is provided.