

Asheville & WNC Hikes

Amazingly, we have 3,000+ miles of free public hiking trails near Asheville, including 1,600 miles in the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests, 850 miles in Great Smokey Mountains National Park and many more along the Blue Ridge Parkway and in state parks and forests. Where to begin?

Here are just a few of our favorite hikes near Asheville in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains. To find the best hiking trails, we evaluated hikes for all skill levels. When selecting hikes and walks, we used the following criteria:

1. The hike is 80 miles or less from downtown Asheville.
2. It is safe, well marked, and not overly strenuous.
3. It does not require any special equipment or shoes.
4. It is easy to locate.

Panoramic Views



Black Balsam
For sweeping 360 degree views, roam the bald mountain tops at Black Balsam Knob. Almost entirely devoid of trees above 6,000 ft, the summit is more reminiscent of New England

than North Carolina. Directions from Asheville: *After traveling south for approximately an hour on the Blue Ridge Parkway, look for the "Black Balsam" sign. Drive about 8/10 of a mile down the road and look for the trail on the right. Park along the road.*



Max Patch

Hike a section of the famous Appalachian Trail on top of Max Patch near Hot Springs. This 4,600 foot mountain was cleared and used as pasture in the 1800's. Today, it's a 350 acre tract of open land on a high knob with 360 degree views. On a clear day, you can see from Mount Mitchell on the east to the great Smokey Mountains to the

south. The parking area is near the summit so you can do a short 1.4 mile loop to enjoy the views on top or you can do a longer loop or head north or south on the Appalachian Trail.

Directions from Asheville: Take I-40 West to Exit 7 (Harman's Den). Take a right on Cold Springs Road which soon becomes gravel. This usually well graded road climbs steadily but never steeply for 6.2 miles to SR-1182 (Max Patch Road). Turn left and drive 1.5 miles to the Max Patch parking area on the right. Allow an hour to drive.



Looking Glass Rock

For 180+ degree views from a rock face, hike Looking Glass Rock in the Pisgah National Forest. It is an especially great hike for the winter months because it's accessible year around (weather permitting) unlike some of the hikes from the Blue Ridge Parkways. The 6.4-mile round trip trail gains 1,700 feet in elevation. It's about a 45 minute drive from downtown Asheville.

Directions from Asheville: Take I-240 West to I-26 East to Exit 40 (Asheville Airport). Turn right onto NC-280. Follow this 4 lane highway for 16 miles toward Brevard. At the intersection of US HWY 276 & US HWY 64, turn right onto US-276 West (follow signs for Pisgah National Forest). Follow US 276 for 5.2 miles; turn left onto FR 475. The trail head parking area is on the right after 0.4 miles



Y O N D E R

LUXURY MOUNTAIN RENTALS



Mount Pisgah

A very popular hike is to the top of 5,700 foot Mount Pisgah located 26 miles southwest of Asheville, on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The 3 mile trail (round trip) gains 712 feet in elevation and is steep in spots. Your reward at the top is panoramic views of the North Carolina Mountains, including Cold Mountain.

Directions from Asheville: *Take the Blue Ridge Parkway south to mile post 407.6. Look for a parking area on the left before you reach the Pisgah Inn.*

Loftiest Hike



Mount Mitchell

This lofty North Carolina hiking trail keeps you above 6,000 feet and takes you over the highest two mountains

east of the Mississippi. Go to Mount Mitchell, the highest peak in eastern America at 6,684 feet to hike the Deep Gap Trail. You drive (yes, drive!) to the top of Mount Mitchell and look for the picnic area near the beginning of the summit parking lot. Deep Gap Trail begins here and descends and climbs through fragrant spruce-fur forests to Mount Craig with panoramic views (about a 2 mile round trip). The trail continues for another 3.5 miles, topping several more peaks. Dress warmly, it's usually about 20 degrees cooler here than in town.

Directions from Asheville: *Take the Blue Ridge Parkway north to mile post 355 about 34 miles from downtown Asheville.*



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Waterfall Hike



DuPont State Forest

Forty miles south west of Asheville near Brevard, our top pick is a 3-mile round trip easy hike to three beautiful waterfalls. On this hike, you will visit up to 5 of the 6 major waterfalls in Dupont State Forest. It starts as an easy path to some of the most spectacular waterfalls in the area: Hooker, Triple, and High Falls. Covered picnic shelters with views of the falls make for

excellent family outing possibilities. If you wish to continue to Grassy Creek and Bridal Veil Falls, this will become a moderate hike. You will cross the big covered bridge and pass a beautiful mountain lake on the way. Well worth the extra effort. Directions from Asheville: *Take I-240 West to I-26 East to Exit 40 (Asheville Airport). Turn right onto NC-280. Follow this 4 lane highway for 16 miles toward Brevard. At the intersection of US HWY 276 & US HWY 64, turn left onto US 64 east and drive 3.7 miles. Turn right onto Crab Creek Road. Drive 4.3 miles and turn right on Dupont Road. The road will climb and change names to Staton Road, then begin a long downhill, at the bottom of which is the bridge over Little River. The parking area is on the right just before the bridge. The trail to Triple and High Falls starts on the other side of the bridge.*

Highland Hike



Graveyard Fields

It is a gentle hike with little climbing, but you still are rewarded with beautiful views in the mile high valley filled with wild flowers and surrounded by North Carolina mountains with 6,000' peaks. With an easy 4-mile hike, you can see two nice waterfalls: Upper Falls and Second Falls. Arrive early since this is a very popular hiking location.

Directions from Asheville: *Take the Blue Ridge Parkway south to mile post 418.8, about 37 miles south west of downtown Asheville.*



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History Hike



Rattle Snake Lodge

A favorite hike for locals, the Rattle Snake Lodge Trail is a fun trip back in time. You hike to the ruins of a lodge that was built and enjoyed by many in the early 1900's. It burned in 1926. There are two trails that lead to the site. A 1.4-mile gradual climb from Ox

Creek Rd and a ½ mile steep climb from the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Directions from Asheville: *From I-240 take Exit 4A for US HWY 19/23 North toward Weaverville. Go 6 miles and take Exit 21 for New Stock Rd. At the end of the road take a right then a quick left then drive past the Ingle grocery store. Go 8/10 of a mile. At the stoplight, turn right onto Reems Creek Road. Go 4 miles and turn right onto Ox Creek Road. Go 3.7 miles to arrive at the parking area on the left. From the parking area, follow the trail for a short distance where it intersects with the Mountains to Sea Trail (White Blaze). Turn left on the trail and head up the switchbacks 1.4 miles to the lodge site.*

Best Sidewalk Stroll



The Urban Trail

The Urban Trail in downtown Asheville is a 1.7 mile walking tour with 30 sculptures that depict the history of downtown. Walk half of it, stop for lunch, and then complete your tour. Get a brochure at the

Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center or stop by Pack Place by the monument to pick up an audio tour at the art museum.



Y O N D E R

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Best VIP Hike



Biltmore Estate

Enjoy a variety of hiking trails at Biltmore Estate. If you don't feel special enough exploring this grand setting, get a guided private tour for hiking, biking, birding, or gardening.

Best in Town Nature Walks



North Carolina Arboretum

Just 10 miles south of downtown, the North Carolina Arboretum has several easy to moderate walking trails. Our favorite is the Natural Garden Trail, a 1 mile loop starting from the

plants of promise garden to the core area gardens. It is gently graded, naturally surfaced trail that overlooks Bent Creek and the National Native Azalea Repository.

Directions: *Take Exit 2 from I-26 then go south on highway 191 to the Blue Ridge Parkways / Arboretum Entrance. There is a \$12 per vehicle fee.*



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Botanical Gardens at Asheville

For a half mile loop across streams, through meadows, and over a woodland ridge to a wild flower cove with an authentic log cabin, the Botanical Gardens at Asheville is just 3 miles north of downtown, beside the University of North Carolina at Asheville. Admission is

free and they are open from dawn to dusk.

Directions: Take Broadway from downtown and turn left on Weaver Blvd. The Gardens are immediately on your left.

Important Notes

- Please be careful near waterfalls and ledges. Rocks and surrounding fauna can be very slippery. Serious injuries, including death, do occur every year.
- Do not block gated entrances with your car.
- Wear brightly colored clothing.
- Certain sections of the Blue Ridge Parkways are closed during winter months. Please check www.blueridgeparkways.org for availability.



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