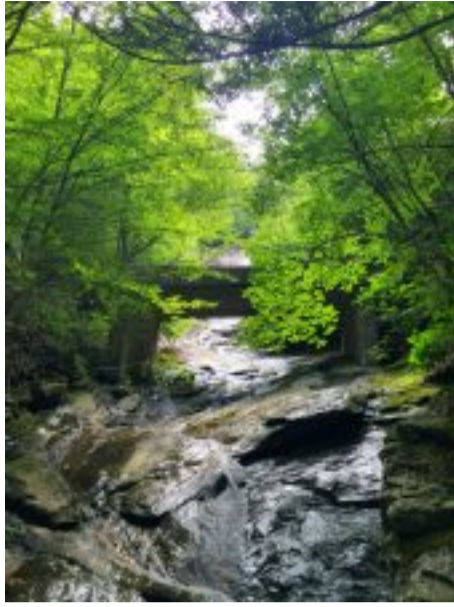


Wildcat Falls Hike



Wildcat Falls is a 60-foot waterfall in Pisgah National Forest, just a mile from the Blue Ridge Parkway on the Forest Heritage Scenic Byway (NC Highway 215).

The 1.5-mile easy roundtrip hike starts at a small parking area at a campsite. From the intersection of NC Highway 215 and the Blue Ridge Parkway, go north on NC 215 for 8/10 of a mile and watch for the small steep drive on the right (marked with a tiny roadside sign “BR 1”). There’s only room for 2-3 cars. There is additional roadside parking about 4/10 of a mile down the road. There are no signs for the waterfall.

From the campsite, the unmarked Flat Laurel Creek Trail starts to the right via on old logging road and railroad grade. There’s a slight incline on the hike, but it’s mostly wooded and easy. While trains and trucks once followed this path, it’s now only a narrow trail in sections.

Soon after starting your hike, you’ll step across Bubbling Spring Branch on stones without getting your feet wet. In about 1/4 of a mile, you’ll pass a pair of small cascades on the right. Keep walking and all of a sudden a nice concrete bridge magically appears! It certainly seems out of place since most of the evidence of the former road is gone.



See the top section of Wildcat Falls from the bridge. Then you can carefully and slowly venture down a steep side trail past the bridge on the left down for a view of the falls beneath the bridge. From there you can take a shot of your significant others as they worry about you falling below them!

There are several campsites along the way, should you like to pack in.

FYI: Flat Laurel Creek Trail continues from Wildcat Falls to Black Balsam parking area off the Blue Ridge Parkway (about 3 more miles

ahead).

Directions:

Exit the Blue Ridge Parkway (near Milepost 423) onto NC 215 and go north 8/10 of a mile.

Reverse? or continue? If you want to hike to Wildcat Falls from the other end of the Flat Laurel Creek Trail, take FR816 (Black Balsam Rd) off of the Blue Ridge Parkway around MP420 – between Devil’s Courthouse and Graveyard Fields. Drive to the end of the road and park. The Flat Laurel Creek Trail begins at the far end of the paved parking area. The trail begins by heading mostly south, but will swing to the west after about 3/4 of a mile or so. After about another 1/2 mile, look for the Little Sam Trail that comes in from the left. This trail heads up towards Devil’s Courthouse and connects to the Mountains to Sea Trail in that area. Continue along the Flat Laurel Creek Trail passing the Sam Knob Trail on the right, then the cascades and falls of Flat Laurel Creek. The trail will again swing to the south and away from the creek. It’s about a mile to Wildcat Falls from here. And you could shuttle a car and do one way or do a 5 mile out and back for a wonderful walk in the woods!

Want more? Continue north on Highway 215 one mile for Bubbling Spring Branch Cascades and 3.5 miles for Sunburst Falls. Head south on Highway 215 for Dill Falls, Courthouse Falls and French Broad, Mill Shoal and Cathedral Falls. Nearby on the Parkway are the waterfalls at Graveyard Fields and Skinny Dip Falls.

Bring snacks, water, and something to cook!