

where slabs of granite provide front row seats. Beautiful sunsets and clear night skies can be seen over Highlands and Brushy Face Mountain to the west. The vista of Horse Cove to the east (Sunrise Rock) also provides sweeping views.

Directions: Take Main Street (which becomes Horse Cove Road) east from the intersection of Highways 28 and 64 in Highlands, 0.5 mile to the Highlands Nature Center. Park on the right side of the road and follow the sign indicating a gravel road to Sunset Rock and Ravenel Park. Although the trail is marked "Hiking Trail Only" it is a private drive so do not park as to block it. The road ends at a monument for Ravenel Park. Sunset Rock is to the right.

Whiteside Mountain

Perhaps one of the best trails in the area for a panoramic view is the Whiteside Mountain Trail. Beautiful views of the surrounding area can be seen from vantage points all along the trail. The summit of the mountain reaches an elevation of almost 4900 ft., about 2000 ft. above Whiteside Cove to the south. The trail is a 2-mile loop that goes around the back or north side of the mountain and then along the ridge. The total climb is approximately 500 ft. The trail can be walked in an hour, but you will want to allow plenty of time to take in the night sky vistas.

Directions: From Highlands, take Highway 64 East for 5.5 miles. Turn right onto Whiteside Mountain Road (SR# 1690), Go 1 mile to the well-marked parking area on the left. This is a fee area, there is a flat charge per vehicle.

For your safety, please wear appropriate shoes when on any trail and when heading out at night bring headlamps and/or flashlights.

Highlands, NC is a supporter of the dark-sky movement, a campaign to reduce light pollution. The advantages of reducing light pollution include an increased number of stars visible at night, reducing the effects of electric lighting on the environment, improving the well-being, health and safety of people and wildlife, and cutting down on energy usage.

Stargazing Aid

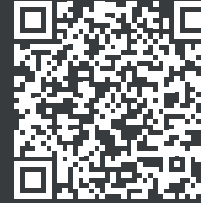
SkyView Lite App

SkyView uses an augmented-reality interface to show you what's up above, and you can track your favorite constellations as they move across the sky.

Apple



Android



Embark on an enchanting stargazing adventure in Highlands, NC, where the limitless expanse of the universe eagerly awaits your exploration.

THE HEIGHT OF HAPPINESS



HIGHLANDS

NORTH CAROLINA

— ELEV. 4118 —

Highlands Welcome Center

108 Main Street

Highlands, NC 28741

828-526-2112

welcome@highlandschamber.org

visithighlandsc.com

Night Sky Trail

THE HEIGHT OF HAPPINESS



HIGHLANDS

NORTH CAROLINA

— ELEV. 4118 —

visithighlandsc.com

What better place to see the stars than from Highlands, NC. Our high elevation, remote location and minimal light, make our town an ideal location for amazing nighttime star gazing.

Night Sky Trail

The first moment you find yourself beneath a truly dark night sky, the sheer brilliance of the stars is nothing short of awe-inspiring. The world's darkest skies are becoming increasingly rare, tucked away in remote areas that can be hard to reach. But you don't have to travel to the most secluded corners of the world to witness an incredible night sky.

The experience of gazing upward into a sky adorned with countless stars evokes a profound sense of wonder within us. In Highlands, unobstructed vistas offer unparalleled views of our magnificent galaxy after dusk.

Here are some tips to ensure optimal night sky visibility in Highlands:

Strategic Moon Observation

Plan your stargazing outings during the days of the new moon and the days just before and after it. Take note of the moon's position in the night sky, as its brightness can be ten times greater than that of the stars. While a full moon atop the mountain is a breathtaking sight, it can also contribute to light pollution, making a new moon the ideal time for unparalleled star gazing.

Escape City Lights

To fully immerse yourself in the wonders of the night sky, it's best to avoid city lights. Light pollution stemming from urban areas can significantly diminish the clarity and brilliance of celestial views. Opt for locations far removed from artificial light sources to ensure an unparalleled stargazing experience.

Weather Watch

Before embarking on your stargazing adventure, it's important to stay updated with the latest weather forecast. Unanticipated storms or dense fog can unexpectedly derail even the most carefully crafted plans. Prioritize clear skies to optimize your night sky observations and make the most of your celestial journey.

Milky Way Marvels

If your goal is to witness the majestic Milky Way, focus your outings between March and September, the prime months for observing its densest region.

March to May: Face south during the pre-dawn hours for optimal viewing.

June to early August: The best time is near midnight, although the Milky Way remains visible throughout the night.

Mid-August through September: Head out soon after sunset when the sky darkens for an excellent view of the Milky Way.

By incorporating these tips, you can truly enjoy your Highlands stargazing experience and fully appreciate the wonders of the night sky.



Our favorite stargazing spots:

Blue Valley Overlook

Blue Valley earns its name from the soft, natural haze that envelops both the valley floor and the embracing mountains. The rolling hills stretch out endlessly.

Directions: Take NC 106 3.5 miles from Highlands. The parking lot will be on your left.

Osage Overlook

To experience a breathtaking view reminiscent of the region's landscape a century ago, venture to the Osage Overlook, where you'll be treated to the stars over panoramic vistas of the majestic Scaly and Osage Mountains.

Directions: From Highlands, travel 5.7 miles on NC 106 to the Osage Overlook. The parking lot will be on your left.

Sunset Rock

Sunset Rock is a short 1/2-hour walk, approximately 0.7 mile one way, leads to a natural cliff side amphitheater