

SATULAH MOUNTAIN - Moderate
1 mile from downtown Highlands

The payoff of this hike that begins in downtown Highlands is a peak of 4,543 feet with a 270-degree view to the south, east and west.

To get there: Park downtown, then head south up the hill on 4th St. At the curve, walk straight onto Satulah Road. Continue to the end of the road; then, follow the old roadbed an additional 0.5-mile to the clearing at the top of the mountain

SLICK ROCK TRAIL - Moderate
6.1 miles from downtown Highlands

This is a simple, 0.2-mile round trip. The hike may be short, but the summit offers an impressive view of the mountains.

To get there: From downtown Highlands, take E. Main/Horse Cove Rd. to the end of the pavement. Take the right fork onto Bull Pen Road and continue one mile. On a sharp left curve, look for a pull-off and a steep, unmarked path on the right.



SUNSET ROCK - Easy
1 mile from downtown Highlands

This astonishing site is just a few hundred yards from downtown Highlands. Sunset Rock is an ideal choice for a late afternoon stroll. It's a short, 0.5-mile walk to the top. Beautiful sunsets and views of Brushy Face Mountain unfold over the town, while you sit on a natural amphitheater on slabs of granite.

To get there: Take Main Street for 0.5-mile east to the Highlands Nature Center on the left. Park and follow the sign to a gravel road to Sunset Rock and Ravenel Park. Note: The trail is a private drive, so do not block it when you park.

WHITESIDE MOUNTAIN - Moderate
7.2 miles from downtown Highlands

This jaw-dropping spectacle is only six miles from town on U.S. 64 East. The moderate trail, crowned by a panoramic vista, is a two-mile loop that climbs above sheer cliffs.

To get there: Take U.S. 64 East from downtown Highlands and turn right at the sign onto Whiteside Mountain Road. Travel one mile to a well-marked parking area on the left. This is a fee area, and a restroom is located at the end of the parking lot.

WHITEWATER FALLS TRAIL - Easy
23 miles from downtown Highlands

This easy, 0.6 mile-round trip trail will reward you with a spectacular view of the highest waterfall in the Eastern United States.

To get there: Take U.S. 64 East to Cashiers and turn right onto N.C. 107 South. Turn left onto Wigington Rd., then left at the stop sign onto S.C. 130, which turns slightly left and becomes N.C. 281. Look for the Whitewater Falls sign and turn right. The trail descends steeply into the river. An overlook is located along the trail. To the left, the trail continues and fords the river. There are numerous spots for picnicking and shallow pools for wading and quick dips.

YELLOW / SHORTOFF MOUNTAIN - Difficult
5.1 miles from downtown Highlands

This strenuous hike with amazing views is 4.8 miles one way, so allow for a full day of adventure. The reward is a spectacular, panoramic vista from the top of Yellow Mountain.

To get there: Take U.S. 64 East from Highlands three miles and turn left onto Buck Creek Road. Follow Buck Creek Road for 2.3 miles. The trail will be on the right.



For more hiking information and safety tips, please scan QR code



Highlands Welcome Center
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Hiking Guide



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Some of our Favorite Nearby Trails

For more information on these and other area hikes, stop by The Highlands Welcome Center at 108 Main Street, call 828-526-2112 or visithighlandsc.com.

BARTRAM TRAIL – OSAGE OVERLOOK - Difficult 5.5 miles from downtown Highlands

Named after the distinguished naturalist, Bartram Trail runs more than 100 miles from Oconee State Park in South Carolina through Georgia and North Carolina to the Great Smoky Mountains. This long-distance trail is marked with yellow blazes. The two-mile segment from the Osage Mountain trail head is a difficult hike, due to an elevation gain of 1,100 feet. The reward is views of Blue Valley and Tessentee Valley from the top of Scaly Mountain.

To get there: From downtown Highlands take N.C. 106/ Dillard Road. Travel 5.5 miles to a paved overlook area and trail head to the left. Park on the same side as the overlook but access the northbound Bartram Trail to Scaly Mountain on the opposite side of the road via the stairs. Look for the sign reading “Bartram Trail to Hickory.”

CHATTOOGA LOOP TRAIL & CHATTOOGA RIVER TRAIL TO WHITESIDE COVE - Moderate 8.2 miles from downtown Highlands

Chattooga Loop Trail is almost two miles and begins to the left of the notable Iron Bridge. Moderate in difficulty, it is a great hike for the entire family. Chattooga River Trail – a 6.25-mile, one-way hike – begins at the same place but ends at Whiteside Church on Whiteside Cove Road, so two vehicles are required.

To get there: From Highlands, travel east on Main Street for 4.5 miles. Main Street will become Horse Cove Road. Look for its intersection with Bull Pen and Whiteside Cove roads. Turn right onto Bull Pen Road (#1178/#1180). Proceed for 5.4 miles to the Iron Bridge. The trailhead is on the left, just before bridge.

CHINQUAPIN MOUNTAIN - Moderate 2.8 miles from downtown Highlands

The trail head for this 3.2-mile round trip is at the Glen Falls parking area near downtown Highlands. It is a moderate walk, and the trail crosses streams several times. A mile-long series of switch backs leads to the top.

To get there: Head west on U.S. 64 and turn left on N.C. 106. Drive 1.7 miles and look for the sign to Glen Falls Scenic Area on the left. Turn left, then immediately bear right onto Glen Falls Road. Travel on this gravel road for one mile to the parking area.

CLIFFSIDE LAKE RECREATIONAL AREA - Easy 5.3 miles from downtown Highlands

This is a delightful plunge into nature’s glorious bounty! You can enjoy several hiking trails – some of which lead to waterfalls – as well as picnic tables with grills and a lake for swimming and fishing (with a N.C. fishing license). A day-use fee is required, and picnic shelters must be reserved. Its Cliffside Loop Trail is an easy 0.75-mile walk around the lake.

To get there: Follow U.S. 64 West for 4.5 miles, turn right at the Cliffside Lake sign and continue for 1.5 miles.

ELLICOTT’S ROCK & BAD CREEK TRAILS - Difficult 6.9 miles from downtown Highlands

This area boasts Ellicott’s Rock, an enormous boulder embedded in the Chattooga riverbank, bearing the letters “NC” as carved by surveyor Andrew Ellicott who thought this was the intersection of North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina. (Spoiler Alert: It wasn’t. That’s Commissioner’s Rock, bearing the symbol NC/SC 1813.) Choose from two trails: Bad Creek Trail to Ellicott’s Rock is a moderate trail that stretches three miles, one way. Ellicott’s Rock Trail is 3.5 miles and more difficult. Prepare for a good workout!

To get there: From downtown Highlands, head northwest on Main Street, which will become Horse Cove Road. Turn onto Bull Pen Road and pass the Iron Bridge. Ellicott’s Rock trail starts at six miles; the Bad Creek trail starts at 10 miles. Both drop steeply down from opposite sides of the river near Ellicott’s Rock (on the left bank looking down stream) and continue down river.



HIGHLANDS BOTANICAL GARDEN & HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL STATION - Easy

A little less than a mile from downtown Highlands awaits this lovely, little jewel with several gardens to explore. The gardens are free and open to the public year-round, from sunrise to sunset.

To get there: From Main Street, head northwest as it becomes Horse Cove Road. Look for Highlands Nature Center and park in the gravel area across from it. The garden paths begin to the left of the Nature Center, with maps posted along the trails.



HIGHLANDS PLATEAU GREENWAY - Easy 0.1 miles from downtown Highlands

“Connecting the heart of Highlands” is this system of walking and hiking trails that protect and connect the natural settings and historic sites of the area. More than 10 miles of natural trails and sidewalks are open daily, from sunrise to sunset.

To get there: The trail head is on Oak Street between the intersection of S. 3rd St. and S. 2nd St. It is the nexus to any trail on the Greenway.

JONES KNOB - Moderate 10 miles from downtown Highlands

This portion of the Bartram Trail features spectacular views, with Jones Knob and Whiterock Mountain being the highlights.

To get there: Take U.S. 64 West to Turtle Pond Road. Turn left and travel 1.1 miles to SR1678. Turn right on the road (which may be marked Dendy Orchard Road) for 1.4 miles to the top of a hill. Turn left on Jones Gap Road (FR4522) and continue two miles to the parking area. The trail leaves the parking area on the right. An old roadbed leads right to a wildlife management field. At the far end of the field, yellow blazes mark Bartram to the right and blue blazes mark the Jones Knob spur trail to left. Follow the blue-blazed trail for .03 mile to a delightful mountaintop view.

THE NARROWS - Easy 5.7 miles from downtown Highlands

This is four-miles round trip, yet not well marked. Its trail head leads off Whiteside Cove Road which may also be known as Cane Creek Falls.. It features spectacular views of the Chattooga River forced into a narrow channel, exploding over boulders, and revealing an unexpected swimming hole.

To get there: From downtown Highlands, take N. 4th St./Horse Cove Road and turn left onto Whiteside Cove Road. Travel 0.9 mile. The trail is on a logging road on the right and descends two miles to The Narrows. You’ll pass a trail to the right, which continues to Bull Pen Bridge on Horse Cove Road. Be sure to return the way you came.