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LIVING

## The best state parks in NC, ranked by Southern Living (some are near the Triangle)

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[Southern Living Magazine](#) highlighted 13 state parks out of North Carolina's 41 total.

“From the mountains to the sea, North Carolina state parks bless nature lovers with everything from mountain cliffs to sand dunes,” the magazine wrote.

“Here, scenic variety satisfies even the most seasoned travelers. Whether you’ve got your sights set on mountaintop hikes or you’re hoping to cool off by the water, there’s an ideal place for everyone among the state’s 41 total parks.”

Southern Living named Chimney Rock as the best among them all, citing its “majestic views” on the western end of the state.

Here’s what Southern Living said about North Carolina’s best state parks, which was published in March.

You can see the full list at [southernliving.com](https://southernliving.com).

### BEST STATE PARK IN NORTH CAROLINA, SAYS SOUTHERN LIVING

**Chimney Rock:** “Southeast of Asheville along the Blue Ridge Mountains, the 315-foot spire of Chimney Rock is the main draw for this hiker’s paradise. An elevator offers an accessible option to reach the summit of this ancient rock formation, though visitors are welcome to climb the 500 steps to the top and make their fitness trackers proud.

“After seeing the 75-mile views to Lake Lure and Hickory Nut Gorge, hikers can set off on one of the many trails around the Rock, including Hickory Nut Falls, where ‘The Last of the Mohicans’ was filmed, and catch a glimpse of the area’s peregrine falcons.”

Peruse the list of best state parks per southern state at [southernliving.com/souths-best/state-parks](https://southernliving.com/souths-best/state-parks).

### **Fort Macon State Park:**

- **Highlights:** The park is centered on a pre-Civil War fort that offers daily guided tours and frequent cannon and musket demonstrations. Extensive exhibits educate visitors on fort history and the natural surroundings, [NC Parks says](#). From the beach, you can even spot dolphins.
- **Distance from Raleigh:** More than 150 miles, taking [under three hours](#) by car.
- **Southern Living says:** “Built in the early 1800s, the pre-Civil War fort transports visitors to the nineteenth-century. Seized by Confederate troops at the outbreak of the Civil War, the immaculately restored fort is the centerpiece of Fort Macon State Park. The park is situated along a skinny barrier island with trails through dunes, forests, and marshes. Take in the history then take a dip along the lovely Crystal Coast beach.”
- **Learn more:** [ncparks.gov/state-parks/fort-macon-state-park](https://ncparks.gov/state-parks/fort-macon-state-park)