

HAYWOOD COUNTY

Hiking Guide

Top Trails & Tips



CANTON | CLYDE | LAKE JUNALUSKA
MAGGIE VALLEY | WAYNESVILLE

— VISIT —
HAYWOOD
WESTERN NC MOUNTAINS

Welcome to the official Haywood County Hiking Guide! Maximize fun and minimize stress on your next hiking adventure when you use this guide to some of Haywood's easy-to-moderate hikes. Let this be your invitation to explore the unfiltered beauty of Haywood County's Western North Carolina mountains—where every trail leads to a new discovery.

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Hiking Safety

Prioritizing safety is essential to having a memorable and incident-free experience on the trails.

Please follow these safety guidelines:

- ▲ Check the weather forecast.
- ▲ Research the trail.
- ▲ Hiking is better with friends! Solo hiking is not recommended.
- ▲ Tell someone your hiking plans.
- ▲ Choose a trail that matches your group's fitness and skill level.
- ▲ Plan to reach your destination before sunset.
- ▲ Stay alert for ice, wet leaves, and unstable rocks.
- ▲ Exercise caution when crossing waterways.



Gear Up Before You Head Out

Include these essential items in your pack:

- ▲ Detailed map and secondary navigation device.
- ▲ First-aid kit.
- ▲ Raincoat & warm layer no matter the season.
- ▲ Weather-appropriate clothing.
- ▲ Sturdy footwear.
- ▲ Multi-tool or knife.
- ▲ Whistle and signal mirror.
- ▲ Headlamp or flashlight.
- ▲ Battery bank for phone or rechargeable lights.
- ▲ Matches, lighter, and fire starter.
- ▲ Sun protection.
- ▲ Bear spray.
- ▲ Insect repellent.



*Stop by the **Visit Haywood Welcome Center** to pick up a free safety whistle!



We want to keep our beautiful Haywood County outdoors just that—beautiful! Haywood County has partnered with Leave No Trace to support conservation and sustainability efforts.

Follow these 7 Principles to protect the wilderness around us:

- 1** Plan ahead and prepare.
- 2** Stick to trails.
- 3** Trash your trash.
- 4** Leave what you find.
- 5** Be careful with fire.
- 6** Keep wildlife wild.
- 7** Be considerate of others.



Waterfall Safety

Follow these waterfall safety guidelines to avoid accidents and injury. Just a few inches of water can sweep you off your feet.

- 🌲 Heed posted warning signs and barriers.
- 🌲 Stay off slick surfaces. Rocks at waterfalls and streams can be extremely slippery.
- 🌲 Stay on established trails and paths.





Be Elk Smart

- 🌲 It is illegal and dangerous to approach elk within 150 feet. Elk can be unpredictable and aggressive at close-range.
- 🌲 Never feed elk.
- 🌲 Reduce speed near elk-grazing and crossing areas.

Be BearWise®

- 🌲 Do not feed bears.
- 🌲 Secure food and garbage.
- 🌲 If you see a bear before it notices you, don't approach.
- 🌲 If the bear sees you, back away slowly. Never run, which may trigger the bear's chase instinct.
- 🌲 If the bear approaches, hold your ground, blow your safety whistle or yell until it leaves. If the bear continues to approach, use bear spray.
- 🌲 If a black bear makes contact with you, do **NOT** play dead; fight back aggressively.



EASY HIKES

Those new to hiking or just looking for a relaxed outdoor escape will enjoy this selection of easy hikes. These undemanding trails offer beautiful scenery, minimal elevation gain, and all the joy of being out in nature—no hardcore gear or intense training required.



LAKE JUNALUSKA TRAIL

Lake Junaluska Trail

Length: 3.8 miles, Loop

Elevation Gain: 95 feet

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: Leashed

Lake Junaluska's paved trail circles shimmering waters and provides great views of nearby mountains and wildlife. The walking trail is located at Lake Junaluska. A map of the walking trail is available at the Lake Junaluska Bethea Welcome Center, 91 N. Lakeshore Drive, Lake Junaluska, NC 28745.

The Waynesville Greenway Trail System

Length: Varied, Out and Back, Loop

Elevation Gain: Varied

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: Leashed

The Greenway features 8.2 miles of hard surface and gravel trails, including stretches that run adjacent to Richland Creek.

A map of the Waynesville Greenway Trail System is available at the Waynesville Recreation Center, 550 Vance Street, Waynesville, NC 28786.



Lower Bubbling Springs Branch Falls

Length: 0.6 miles, Out and Back

Elevation Gain: 45 feet

Waterfall: Yes

Pets Allowed: Leashed

A lesser-known trail leading to a 20' waterfall.

From the intersection of NC 215 and US 276 in the Bethel Community, drive south on NC 215 for 17.4 miles. Turn right into the trailhead parking area. The trailhead is located just north of the parking area on the left.

Dahlia Ridge Trail System

Length: Varied, Loop, Out and Back

Elevation Gain: Varied

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: Leashed

An easy-going trail system featuring 3.5 miles of paved, gravel and natural footpaths, including a one-mile campus Loop trail and an additional 2.5 miles of trails through the wooded areas of campus.

Upon entering the Haywood Community College Campus, turn into the first parking lot on the left, where you'll find a kiosk with a map of the trail system. Haywood Community College, 185 Freedlander Drive, Clyde, NC 28721.



DAHLIA RIDGE TRAIL SYSTEM



EASY HIKES

Sam Branch Falls and Wash Hollow Falls Trail

Length: 0.6 miles, Out and Back

Elevation Gain: 50 feet

Waterfall: Yes

Pets Allowed: Leashed

Make the short hike to Sam Branch Falls, a 60' high waterfall and Wash Hollow Falls, a 50' high waterfall.

From the junction of NC 215 and US 276, drive south on NC 215 for 13.8 miles to a small pulloff on the left as the road makes a right sharp hairpin curve. The trailhead is located at the south end of the guardrail on the east side of the road.

Soco Falls Trail

Length: 0.1 miles, Out and Back

Elevation Gain: 19 feet

Waterfall: Yes

Pets Allowed: Leashed

This short trail leads to a unique, 30' high double-waterfall.

From the intersection of US 19 and the Blue Ridge Parkway, drive south on US 19 for 1.4 miles to the trailhead parking area on the left. The trailhead is located at the south end of the parking area.



SOCO FALLS





GRAVEYARD FIELDS LOWER FALLS

Flat Laurel Creek to Wildcat Falls

Length: 1.5 miles, Out and Back

Elevation Gain: 114 feet

Waterfall: Yes

Pets Allowed: Leashed

Trail leads to Wildcat Falls, a cascade of nearly 60 feet.

From the intersection of NC 215 and US 276, drive south on NC 215 for 17.1 miles. Turn left into the parking area. The trailhead is located at the northeast end of the parking area.

Graveyard Fields Lower Falls Trail

Length: 0.6 miles, Out and Back

Elevation Gain: 124 feet

Waterfall: Yes

Pets Allowed: Leashed

This short trail leads to a 70' high waterfall.

From the intersection of US 276 and the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), drive south on the BRP towards Cherokee for 7 miles to the trailhead parking lot on the right. The trailhead is located at the northeast end of the parking lot near the restrooms.



MODERATE HIKES

Ready to take things up a notch? These moderate hikes strike the perfect balance between challenge and reward—think steady climbs, varied terrain, and views that make the extra effort totally worth it.



GRAVEYARD FIELDS OVERLOOK

Graveyard Fields Upper Falls Trail

Length: 3 miles, Loop

Elevation Gain: 321 feet

Waterfall: Yes

Pets Allowed: Leashed

Ascend to Graveyard Fields' Upper Falls, a 50' high waterfall rushing into the Lower Falls below.

From the intersection of US 276 and the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), drive south on the BRP towards Cherokee for 7 miles to the trailhead parking lot on the right. The trailhead is located at the northeast end of the parking lot near the restrooms.

Richland Balsam Nature Loop Trail

Length: 1.4 miles, Loop

Elevation Gain: 383 feet

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: Leashed

This trail winds through a balsam fir forest to Balsam Mountain, offering occasional scenic mountain views.

From the intersection of US 74 and the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), head north on the BRP towards Asheville for 12.6 miles to the Haywood Jackson Overlook parking area on the right. The trailhead is located at the northeast end of the parking area.



Flat Laurel Creek

Length: 7.5 miles, Out and Back

Elevation Gain: 823 feet

Waterfall: Yes

Pets Allowed: Leashed

This moderately challenging trail leads through a variety of picturesque landscapes, including forest, streams, meadows and the 60-foot cascade of Wildcat Falls.

From the intersection of US 276 and NC 215, drive south on NC 215 for 17.1 miles. Turn left into the parking area. The trailhead is located at the northeast end of the parking area.

Black Balsam via Art Loeb Trail

Length: 1.4 miles, Out and Back

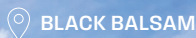
Elevation Gain: 354 feet

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: Leashed

This trail includes sweeping, long-range views atop a 6214'-high mountain bald, with the option to extend your hike along the Art Loeb Trail.

From the intersection of US 276 and the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), drive south on the BRP towards Cherokee for 8.4 miles to Black Balsam Knob Road (FS 816). Turn right and proceed .75 miles to the trailhead parking on the side of the road. The trailhead is located on the east side of the road.





MODERATE HIKES



TENNENT MOUNTAIN

Ivestor Gap Trail, Tennent Mountain Trail, Black Balsam Knob Trail Loop

Length: 4.3 miles, Loop

Elevation Gain: 688 feet

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: Leashed

Take this loop of intersecting trails and soak in far-reaching views from two 6000'-high mountain balds.

From the intersection of US 276 and the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), drive south on the BRP towards Cherokee for 8.4 miles to Black Balsam Knob Road. (FS 816). Turn right and proceed 1.3 miles to the parking lot. The trailhead is located on the northeast end of the parking lot.

Sam Knob Trail

Length: 2.5 miles, Out and Back

Elevation Gain: 564 feet

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: Leashed

Trail climbs to a 6050'-high peak with panoramic views of the surrounding mountains.

From the intersection of US 276 and the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), drive south on the BRP towards Cherokee for 8.4 miles to Black Balsam Knob Road (FS 816). Turn right and proceed 1.3 miles to the parking lot. The trailhead is located at the southwest end of the parking lot.



Sam Knob Trail and Flat Laurel Creek Trail Loop

Length: 4 miles, Loop

Elevation Gain: 807 feet

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: Leashed

Sam Knob Trail climbs to a 6050'-high summit with panoramic views of the mountains towering nearby. Return by way of Flat Laurel Creek Trail, which meanders through forestland back to the trailhead.

From the intersection of US 276 and the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), drive south on the BRP towards Cherokee for 8.4 miles to Black Balsam Knob Road (FS 816). Turn right and proceed 1.3 miles to the parking lot. The trailhead is located at the southwest end of the parking lot.

Cataloochee Divide Trail

Length: 12.8 miles, Out and Back

Elevation Gain: Varied

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: No

Ridge trail offering scenic mountain views. This customizable out-and-back trail makes it easy to tailor your hike to your comfort. Just remember, however far you hike in, you have to hike the same distance back!

From the intersection of US 19 and US 276 in Maggie Valley, travel north on US 276 for 5.6 miles. Turn left onto Cove Creek Road and drive 5.8 miles to the trailhead parking area on the left. The trailhead is located on the west side of the parking area.

Hemphill Bald Trail

Length: 9 miles, Out and Back

Elevation Gain: 326 feet

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: No

A rewarding trail that ends with scenic, long range mountain views at Hemphill Bald. A picnic table provides the perfect place to eat lunch while taking in the scenery. From the intersection of US 19 and the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), drive south on the BRP towards Cherokee for 1.3 miles. Turn right onto Heintooga Ridge Road. Travel 5.9 miles to the trailhead parking lot on the right. The trailhead is located at the southeast end of the parking lot.



CATALOOCHEE DIVIDE



MODERATE HIKES



WATERROCK KNOB

Waterrock Knob Trail

Length: 1 mile, Out and Back

Elevation Gain: 426 feet

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: Leashed

Take the popular, occasionally steep trek up to a 6200'-high peak, offering scenic, long-range mountain views. From the intersection of US 19 and the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), drive north on the BRP towards Asheville for 5 miles. Turn left on the road to the Waterrock Knob parking lot. The trailhead is located at the northeast end of the parking lot.

Flat Creek Trail

Length: 5.1 miles, Out and Back

Elevation Gain: 820 feet

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: No

A serene trail through the forest to a scenic mountain view and the Heintooga Picnic Area.

From the intersection of US 19 and the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), drive south on the BRP toward Cherokee for 1.3 miles. Turn right onto Heintooga Ridge Road. Travel 5 miles to the trailhead parking area on the left. The trailhead is located on the west side of parking area.

Mountains-To-Sea Trail (MST)

Length: 70 miles in Haywood County, Linear

Elevation Gain: Varied

Waterfall: No

Pets Allowed: Leashed

The MST offers a variety of terrain, ecosystems and vistas. The MST in Haywood County runs adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway and has many access points. Please see the interactive map at: mountainstoseatrail.org/the-trail/map/





Not ready to set off on your own just yet? Scan here for a list of guided hiking opportunities in Haywood County!



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WESTERN NC MOUNTAINS

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WESTERN NC MOUNTAINS

Elevation-chasers and casual trekkers alike, look no further to find your trail match in Haywood County, NC! Use this hiking guide to wind your way through our unparalleled corner of the Great Smoky and Blue Ridge Mountains.

Haywood County is home to dozens of hikes of all kinds, from quiet creekside strolls to 6,000 ft summit views. A launchpad for your next outdoor adventure, this handy guide offers an overview of Haywood's most iconic trails, views, and waterfalls.

Look inside for everything you need before you head out, including helpful information about difficulty, trail length, elevation gain, and navigation.

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91 N. Lakeshore Drive, Suite 2 • Lake Junaluska, NC 28745