

Take a Hike in Hickory Nut Gorge

Chimney Rock State Park is glad that you are interested in hiking the Hickory Nut Gorge. Below are some suggested trails that you can explore before or after you enjoy shopping and grabbing a bite to eat in Chimney Rock Village. Additional hiking information for Rutherford County may be found at the Lake Lure Welcome Center, located just over a mile east of the Park at 2932 Memorial Highway in Lake Lure.

Bearwallow Mountain

Bearwallow Mountain is just 10 miles from Chimney Rock and the Hickory Nut Gorge. It is a 1 mile trail constructed by volunteers and takes hikers to a bald summit at 4,232 foot elevation with panoramic views.

Directions: From the Park's entrance, turn left onto Highway 64/74A toward Bat Cave. Continue along US-74A West for 11 miles. Turn left on Bearwallow Mountain Road. Drive 2.1 miles to the top of the ridge and park on the side of the road (where the pavement starts) near the gate in front of a dirt road (please don't block the gate). Note that this road will remain a gravel/dirt road for some time.

Buffalo Creek Park

One of Western North Carolina's newest trail systems has opened at Buffalo Creek Park, near the town of Lake Lure. The park features purpose-built trails which consist of a short connector trail to a loop. After a brief warmup, hikers or bicyclists will experience a stout climb that gets them 500 feet up the mountain but intermediate descents mean you earn about 1,000 feet of total climbing. Midway through the trail, there's a smooth traverse that takes you through a large boulder field that attracts climbers and the rare Green Salamander. The trail has an average grade of 9 percent with short sections of 15-20 percent, making it a true outdoor challenge.

Directions: From the Park's entrance, turn right onto Highway 64/74A toward Lake Lure. Continue on Highway 64/74A for 9 miles as the road winds around the lake. Along this drive, you'll pass the Lake Lure Marina, LakeHouse Restaurant and Highlands Kitchen & Bar. From Highway 64/74A, turn left on Bill's Creek Road for 4 miles. Turn left on Buffalo Creek Road as it passes the golf courses and condominiums of the Fairfield community. Turn right at the sign for Rumbling Bald Resort and Wyndham at Fairfield Mountains, cross the small bridge, continue for 1.6 miles. The park entrance will be on your left.

Dittmer-Watts Nature Trail

Dittmer-Watts Nature Trail Park encompasses 10 interconnecting trails totaling 3.3 miles of natural surface trails of varying difficulty over rolling terrain. The trails are wide, family-friendly, dog-friendly and well-marked. This park offers a more intimate exchange with nature through a woodland hike experience.

Directions: From the Park's entrance, turn right onto Highway 64/74A toward Lake Lure for 5 miles. Turn right onto Highway 9, LakeHouse Restaurant will be on your left. Dittmer-Watts Nature Trail is on the left across from Ingles.

Eagle Rock Access and Trails

Eagle Rock in the Hickory Nut Gorge area is part of the new 8.6-mile Weed Patch Mountain Trail. The new trail connects with the Buffalo Creek trails in Lake Lure, making it a one-way, 10-mile bike or hike adventure. You'll gain almost 3,000 feet in elevation, so it's a strenuous hike.

Directions: From the intersection of Highway 64/74A and NC9 in Bat Cave, drive 2.2 miles on NC9 and turn right on Shumont Road. Drive 4 curvy miles to the end of Shumont Road. The gate at the access is open to all visitors during regular park hours. There are only eight parking spaces at Eagle Rock access, so be prepared to make alternate plans if the parking area is full when you arrive. Please do not park on private property or block any gates.

Florence Preserve

Florence Preserve is located between Chimney Rock and Gerton. It consists of a fairly extensive network of trails that wind throughout the preserve. A couple of sections are tied together with gravel roads. None of the trails are officially named, but they are usually referred to by their trail blaze color.

Directions: From the Park's entrance, turn right onto Highway 64/74A toward Asheville. Continue on US-74A West for 6.3 miles. Florence Preserve will be on the right at 3836 Gerton Highway in Gerton, NC.

Morse Park Trails

Morse Park is a wonderful place for a flat walk or run. You can use the Lake Lure Town Center Walkway, located near the trail, to access the Flowering Bridge and Lake Lure's beach. The Park features beautiful views of Lake Lure and vistas of the mountains of Hickory Nut Gorge and plenty of space for picnicking and enjoying quality family time.

Directions: From the Park's entrance, turn right onto Highway 64/74A toward Lake Lure for 1 mile. Morse Park is located on the left, next to the Town Hall and marina.

Parking: Paved parking lot near the Visitor's Center at 2932 Memorial Highway, Lake Lure.

Rocky Broad River Walk

The River Walk runs parallel to Main Street in Chimney Rock Village, with easy access to restaurants, mini-golf and gem mining and offers fantastic views of the Rocky Broad River and Chimney Rock Mountain.

Directions: Once parked in Chimney Rock Village, hikers can access the short trail using the paths located beside the Old Rock Café and Bubba O'Leary's Outfitters.

Rumbling Bald Trail

The Rumbling Bald trail is a loop that meanders through a beautiful hardwood forest along the south face of Rumbling Bald Mountain, revealing huge boulder fields and the base of the cliff areas. This is also a well-known area for bouldering, rappelling or rock climbing (climbing permit needed). The parking area for this trail is located off Boys Camp Road at the west end of the Flowering Bridge between Chimney Rock and Lake Lure. Once at the trailhead, follow the orange trail blazes through the bouldering areas, past the cliff base and back to the parking area.

Directions: From the Park's entrance, turn right onto Highway 64/74A toward Lake Lure. Follow Highway 74A for .75 miles. At the intersection just before the large bridge over the Broad River, turn left onto Boys Camp Road. See parking for the Flowering Bridge on your right. Follow Boys Camp Road for approximately 1.5 miles. The entrance to the Rumbling Bald Climbing Access Area will be on the left.

Parking: Visitors may park in the designated parking area located off Boys Camp Road. Cars should not be parked along the entrance drive, on the grass or along the wooden bollards.