

Seven Ponds Nature Center

North Georgia: Waterfalls and Wildflowers

April 6th-11th, 2025



Northeast Georgia is a magical place in the springtime. The Blue Ridge Mountains are covered in shades of green as deciduous trees begin unfurling their bright, new leaves, and evergreens stand tall with deep green needles. The soundtrack of the season is provided by water tumbling down waterfalls and flowing into the creeks that run alongside trails bracketed by wildflowers. Warblers hop along tree branches, black bears lumber through the undergrowth, salamanders hide under logs, and raptors take to the skies. The Cherokee people called this place home long before settlers moved into the area, and many of the places we will visit still carry their names. North Georgia had a significant gold rush twenty years before the famous California gold rush, and we will be staying at the heart of this historical period. Springtime brings warmer temperatures in the 60's and 70's during the day. This trip is a wonderful opportunity to explore the natural and cultural history of the mountains!

Trip Itinerary

Sunday, April 6 – Trip participants should travel to Georgia on their own, arriving at Holiday Inn Express & Suites Dahlonega - University Area Dahlonega by late afternoon. Our hotel is within walking distance of the shops and attractions of Downtown Dahlonega. Check-in begins at 3:00 p.m. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. and have a short meeting with introductions before walking to dinner together. Please let one of the Trip Leaders know if you cannot make this meeting.



Monday, April 7 – Breakfast will be from 8:00 a.m.- 8:45 a.m. We'll meet in the lobby at 9:00 a.m. and head to our first destination located just a short walk from our hotel. The **Dahlonega Gold Museum** is a Georgia State Historic Site that tells the story of the country's first gold rush. The building boasts many historic items from this time period and is itself an old courthouse. Participants will have the opportunity to wander through the displays and learn about what life was like back in the 1800s.

After our time at the museum, we'll take a short drive over to an old mine. **Consolidated Gold Mine** is the

only underground mine tour in the city. A guide will take us 200 feet underground and lead us through the history of the mine, as well as what a miner's life looked like at the height of the gold rush. The tour also includes a chance to try our hand at gold panning. We'll have our picnic lunch before continuing to the next destination.



After a morning spent in the past, we'll step back into the present with a trip to the tallest waterfall in the state at the heart of **Amicalola Falls State Park**. "Amicalola" is a

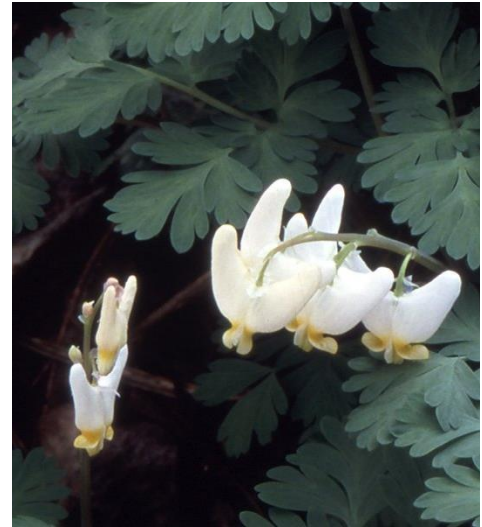
Cherokee word that translates to "tumbling waters". The Interpretive Building and Visitor Center was recently upgraded and has plenty of information on the surrounding flora and fauna. It is known for its abundance of frogs, snakes, and salamanders. While not officially part of the

Appalachian Trail, thru-hikers flock to Amicalola to unofficially begin their journey on the Approach Trail which is located near the entrance of the park. There will be two options for participants to see the falls. For those up for the challenge, approximately 600 steps will take us straight up to the waterfall. This trail is rated **strenuous**, but has many opportunities to pause and enjoy the scenery. Participants wishing for a lighter afternoon hike will have the option to drive to the top and walk to the edge of the waterfall. Either way you get there, the top provides a stunning view of the surrounding mountains. We'll have dinner before returning to the hotel.

Tuesday, April 8 – Breakfast will be from 8:00 a.m.- 8:45 a.m. We'll meet in the lobby at 9:00 a.m. and carpool to **Sosebee Cove**. This is a beautiful, easy walk through a forested, north-facing cove and is known for its abundance of native wildflowers. Here we will search for trillium, bloodroot, dutchman's breeches, and other spring ephemerals.

A short jaunt up the road brings us to **Vogel State Park**, the second oldest state park in Georgia. Lake Trahlyta is nestled between some of the tallest peaks of the Blue Ridge Mountains which will provide a nice backdrop as we walk around the lake and down to Trahlyta Falls. This trail is an easy walk and comes in at a little over one mile in length. The group will have lunch around the lake before we head to our next destination.

Our last natural history stop of the day will take us to a truly special place, the highest peak in Georgia. **Brasstown Bald** rises 4,784 feet above sea level. On a clear day visitors can see four states: Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Participants will take a shuttle bus to the top where we will explore a mountaintop natural science & history museum and an observation deck that offers a spectacular 360° view of the surrounding area. We'll walk the trail back down to the parking lot and be on the lookout for blooms and wildlife. We'll have dinner before returning to the hotel.

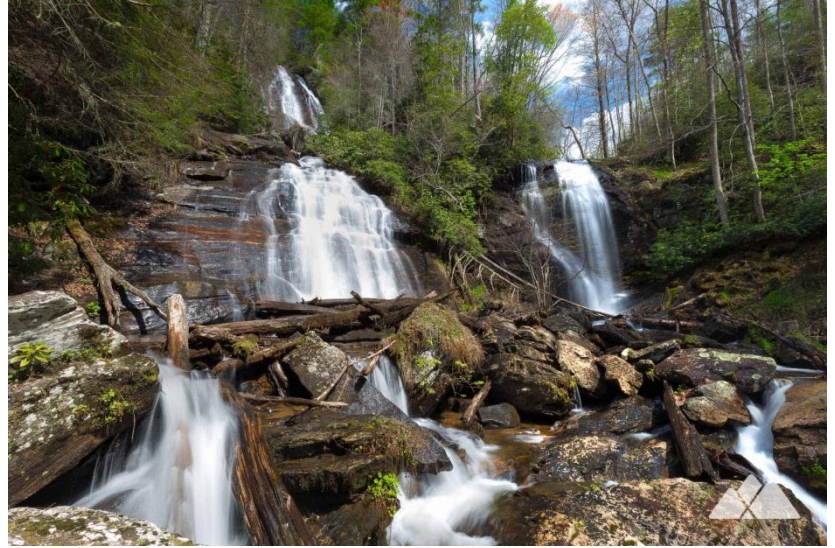


Wednesday, April 9– Breakfast will be from 8:00 a.m.- 8:45 a.m. We will leave the hotel at 9:00 a.m. and head towards **Tallulah Gorge State Park**. We will first explore the Jane Hurt Yarn Interpretive Center where we can learn about park history and any plants and animals we may see on our hike. The gorge drops nearly 1,000 feet into the surrounding landscape and provides an excellent look at many different waterfalls. On our hike we'll look for blooming mountain laurel, ferns, and carpets of fringed polygala. Hawks and vultures soar above the gorge on clear days while warblers bob around in the trees below. Participants will have two different options to see the spectacular gorge. The first option is a trail that takes us down about 300 steps, across a bridge directly over Hurricane Falls, up about 300 steps, and a walk back along the rim that is relatively flat. Participants will also have the chance to hike down and back up an additional 275 stairs for another view of Hurricane Falls. This trail is rated **strenuous**. The second option is a leisurely 3-mile trail that follows both the north and south rim of the gorge, offering many spots to pause and take in the waterfalls below and the scenery above. This trail is rated moderate due to exposed roots and rocks. Both groups will eat lunch along the trail. We will then make our way back to Dahlonega where participants will have a bit of time before dinner to explore the downtown area.



Thursday, April 10 – Breakfast will be from 8:00 a.m.- 8:45 a.m. We will leave the hotel at 9:00 a.m. and head towards **Smithgall Woods State Park**. This park is known for its birding opportunities and at this time of year we should find warblers, kinglets, hawks, and lots of other species. Our walk will take us under a covered bridge and down through a wetland. We'll take it slow this morning and have lunch before heading to our next destination.

Anna Ruby Falls is a North Georgia gem. A short, but steep trail will lead us to the base of twin waterfalls. Smith Creek, created at the base of Anna Ruby Falls where Curtis Creek and York Creek meet, flows into Smith Lake which is a main attraction of **Unicoi State Park**. This state park was once a Civilian Conservation Corps Outdoor Recreation Experiment Station. Here we'll explore the shore of the lake, now more commonly known as Lake Unicoi, and take a walk under large pines, eastern hemlocks, and budding redbuds. We'll have dinner in Helen before heading back to the hotel.



Friday, April 11 – The group will have memories of the mountains and wildflowers in their mind as we head our separate ways.

Trip Leaders

Carrie Spencer is an experienced naturalist who enjoys sharing her knowledge and love of the natural world with others. She has led many trips, and is excited to explore North Georgia with each and every one of you.

Madison Christol is a naturalist and native Georgian who grew up exploring all the state has to offer. She is overjoyed to share the magic of the mountains with the group.

Accommodations

For all five nights we will be staying at Holiday Inn Express & Suites Dahlonega - University Area Dahlonega. Their address is 32 E Main St, Dahlonega, GA 30533 and phone number is 706-707-8000. The hotel is located in downtown Dahlonega and participants are encouraged to explore the area in their free time. The charming town is home to a unique general store, a delicious fudge shop, and many local souvenir shops.

Transportation

Participants will travel to Dahlonega on their own. Participants may want to carpool to Dahlonega with other members of the group. A list will be provided for those who wish to arrange transportation with someone. We can also supply travel information to Holiday Inn

Express & Suites Dahlonega - University Area. Once we are in Dahlonega, drivers will be expected to assist with transportation of group members during activities and will be reimbursed for days of driving. We will have radios in most of the vehicles in order to communicate directions and natural history information as we travel around the area during the tour.

Meals

On this tour, dinner on Sunday to breakfast on Friday morning are included in the tour fee. Breakfast is a continental breakfast provided by the hotel. Lunch will be a picnic lunch brought along to eat in the park. We will plan on eating dinner together at the various restaurants in and around our stops. We will have a cooler available in the leader car to keep beverages and other items cold

Equipment

One suitcase per person should suffice, plus a day bag for carrying your lunch, field guides, rain gear, refillable water bottle, sunscreen, and other items on hikes. Either boots or tennis shoes are fine for hiking, depending upon your preference, as long as they are sturdy, well broken in, and without a smooth sole. Bring clothes which can be put on and taken off in layers. It can be very warm in North Georgia, but spring weather is unpredictable and will include cooler temperatures. Additional equipment to consider includes binoculars, camera, hat, sunglasses, notebook, wildflower and bird field guides, and hand lens.

Smoking

We ask that smokers refrain from smoking in vehicles and in all situations where non-smoking participants are in close proximity.

Preparing for the Trip

A pre-tour information packet, including wildflower and bird checklists will be sent out to all participants prior to the trip.

Trip Fee

The fee for the trip is \$1,350.00. This includes a double-occupancy room for 5 nights in downtown Dahlonega, GA, all meals from Sunday night dinner to Friday morning breakfast, all park entry fees, a Gold Mine tour, leader fees, and pre and post trip information. For those wishing for their own room, the single supplement fee is \$330.00 and is based on the availability of the hotel. Please email mchristol@sevenponds.org or call the nature center at (810) 796-3200 if you are interested in a single supplement. To register for this trip, please visit <https://sevenponds.org/field-tours/>

The deposit for this field tour is \$300.00. **Full payment is due March 1st, 2025.**

Cancellation Policy

In the event of cancellation, refunds will be made according to the following schedule. If cancellation occurs by February 1st, 2025, a full refund including deposit will be made. If cancellation occurs between February 1st and March 1st, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the trip fee will be refunded. If cancellation occurs after March 1st, we will only be able to provide a refund for the portion of the trip fee which is recoverable by Seven Ponds.

Additional Information

If you have questions or need additional information please contact Madison Christol at Seven Ponds Nature Center, 810-796-3200 or mchristol@sevenponds.org.