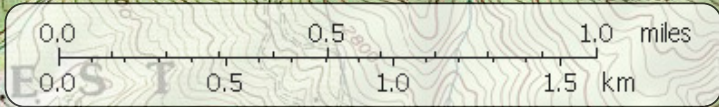


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Babel Tower - Pisgah National Forest, NC

| Length | Difficulty | Streams | Views | Solitude | Camping |
|---|------------|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 3.5 miles | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Hiking Time: 2 hours and 40 minutes with 50 minutes of breaks Elev. Gain: 1,515 ft Parking: Park at the Babel Tower Trailhead on Old NC 105. 35.91856, -81.91956 | | | | | |

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)

By Trail Contributor: Zach Robbins



Babel Tower is a popular destination in the Linville Gorge Wilderness and is one of the most heavily used official trails on the western side of the gorge. From Kistler Memorial Highway/Old NC 105, the trail descends through hardwoods and rhododendrons, descending 900 feet in 1.2 miles over rocky terrain. Babel Tower is a massive rock pinnacle rising over 400 feet above a giant horseshoe curve in the river. This impressive series of rock pulpits and cliffs serves as an unofficial dividing line between the snakelike north end of the gorge and the relatively straight southern course. The trail and the tower extend

hundreds of yards north from the Linville Gorge Trail junction and is ripe for exploration. Many scramble paths lead to outstanding cliffside views south of Table Rock Mountain hovering above the gorge. After you are done exploring Babel Tower, you may want to check out the river too. Head west (trail direction north) on the Linville Gorge Trail, which drops down to a great little spot with a waterfall and massive swimming hole surrounded by sheer rock walls. Replete with huge, flat bedrock, it is the perfect location to cool off during the summer.

Wilderness Regulations – Group size in the wilderness is limited to 10 persons. A free camping permit is required on weekends and holidays May through October. Permits are first-come, first-serve. You can pick up a permit at the ranger office near Linville Falls, or contact the Grandfather Ranger District office to reserve one in advance. No large mechanical devices are allowed in the wilderness, such as aerial drones. Trails in the wilderness are not blazed and signs at trail intersections are infrequent.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – Parking is available at the Babel Tower Trailhead beside Kistler Memorial Highway/Old NC 105. The Babel Tower Trail [240] (*no blaze*) heads north from the parking area through hardwood forests. Multiple campsites surround the first few hundred feet of the trail.
- ▶ **Mile 0.3** – The trail turns right away from a spring.
- ▶ **Mile 0.35** – Pass by a rock outcrop with open views of Linville Gorge. Across the gorge towards the southeast is Sitting Bear Mountain. You should be able to spot the rock formation known as the “Sitting Bear” on the right below the summit. The massive cluster of rocks towards the northeast above the river is Babel Tower. The trail descends moderately through hardwood forests mixed with azaleas and rhododendrons as you get closer to the bottom of the trail.
- ▶ **Mile 1.2** – The Babel Tower Trail continues straight through an angled cross intersection with the Linville Gorge Trail [231] (*no blaze*). The Babel Tower Trail dips to the right around a rock outcrop, passing through a campsite below the highest rock spires of Babel Tower. From here the trail stays on the left/west side of the highest points of Babel Tower. As you pass beneath rock overhangs, you should see occasional scramble trails leading up to the right. Look for the most obvious trail on the right that doesn’t involve scrambling, it leads to a campsite and overlook.
- ▶ **Mile 1.3** – Grassy campsite and cliff overlook from Babel Tower. The highest point of Babel Tower is immediately south but is only accessible by scrambling and climbing. This spot provides the best view southeast of Table Rock Mountain rising above Linville River. Back on the main trail, most people turn around here. However, the scramble trail continues north towards the tip of Babel Tower.
- ▶ **Mile 1.5** – The scramble trail ends near the northern tip of Babel Tower. You have a slightly different perspective south of the gorge, with many of the rock outcrops of Babel Tower on the right side of the view. Towards the southwest the highest point of Babel Tower is obscured by trees, and you can see the location of the parking area in a saddle between two ridges.
- ▶ **Mile 1.8** – If you would like to see the river, turn right on the Linville Gorge Trail [231] (*no blaze*) heading west (trail direction north). As you get close to the river, the condition of the trail gets progressively worse. Many blowdowns and deadfall have altered the course of the trail along this section.
- ▶ **Mile 2.0** – Turn right on a side trail that is typically marked with flagging tape. The descent from here is rough with huge boulders and large, slick blowdowns.
- ▶ **Mile 2.05** – The trail ends at a wide turn of Linville River. The river is funneled through a narrow chasm in the bedrock and drops over a ~10-foot cascade known as Babel Tower Falls. Downstream, sheer canyon walls rise above the river. A massive swimming hole lies at the base of the waterfall. This is a really nice area to take a break on the large bedrock beside the river. After you are done, turn around and hike back up towards Babel Tower.
- ▶ **Mile 2.4** – Turn right on the Babel Tower Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 3.5** – Hike ends at the Babel Tower Trailhead.