

## Five Peaks Loop - Hanging Rock State Park - Danbury, North Carolina

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
10.1 mls	★	★	★	★	N/A
<b>Hiking Time:</b> 6.0hrs including 1 hr for breaks <b>Elev. Gain:</b> 2,080 ft <b>Parking:</b> Park at visitor center parking area 36.39484, 80.26557					

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Hanging Rock State Park, less than an hour from Greensboro and Winston-Salem, has some of the finest and most accessible hiking in North Carolina. The ancient Sauratown Mountains lie east of the Blue Ridge escarpment and although not high by normal standards, rise more than 1,000 feet above the rolling hills of the Piedmont. Eroded white quartzite cliffs are the defining feature of the park.

This hike will take you on the grand tour of all of the vistas in the state park, including the namesake Hanging Rock and Moore's Knob, the tallest peak in the Sauratown Mountains at 2,579 feet. You'll also get outstanding views from Wolf Rock, House Rock, Cook's Wall, and Hanging Rock Lake on this moderate hike that is easier than the distance suggests.

From Danbury follow NC-89 and NC-8 north to Hanging Rock Park Rd. You can park at either the visitor center or the upper parking lot at Hanging Rock Lake. The hike begins at the visitor center and goes clockwise to Hanging Rock first because this section can get quite crowded on weekend afternoons. If you want optimal photographic conditions and like to get the hardest climb out of the way, head counterclockwise to start with Moore's Knob.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – Hike begins at the visitor center parking lot. The Hanging Rock Trail (*orange circle blaze*) begins on the far left side. The trail is initially paved before transitioning to gravel. This is one of the most popular trails in the park.
- ▶ **Mile 0.6** – Junction with the Wolf Rock Trail (*blue triangle blaze*). Continue left on the Hanging Rock Trail for 0.7-mi to Hanging Rock. The trail climbs under the prominent summit on many stairs. Eventually the trail reaches the ridge and turns left towards the peak.
- ▶ **Mile 1.3** – Reach the summit of Hanging Rock, a huge series of rock outcrops jutting out on the west side of the mountain. From here you can see the visitor center far below. Moore's Knob and Cook's Wall Mountain are the prominent peaks directly west. You will also have great views north of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia, and the flatlands to the south. On clear days you can see in the south the downtown buildings of Winston-Salem and Greensboro. Along Hanging Rock there are many cliffs to explore. Be careful because a fall would be fatal. Turn around and head back to the junction with the Wolf Rock Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 2.1** – Go left on the Wolf Rock Trail (*blue triangle blaze*). The trail changes to a narrow dirt path and receives much less foot traffic.
- ▶ **Mile 2.9** – Reach Wolf Rock, a giant rock outcrop on the south side of the ridge connecting Hanging Rock Mountain and Cook's Wall Mountain. The primary view is south of the Piedmont and you can also spy House Rock along the Cook's Wall Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 3.2** – The Wolf Rock Trail ends at a junction with the Cook's Wall Trail at Wolf Gap. Continue straight on the Cook's Wall Trail (*white diamond blaze*).
- ▶ **Mile 3.6** – Junction with the Magnolia Springs Trail (*blue square blaze*). Continue straight on the Cook's Wall Trail for 1 mile to the trail terminus.
- ▶ **Mile 3.9** – Reach House Rock which is unlike the other rock outcrops in the park because the outcrop is very flat. The main views are south and also east of Wolf Rock and Hanging Rock. Continue along the Cook's Wall Trail which gradually ascends the mountain.
- ▶ **Mile 4.6** – The trail ends at Devil's Chimney, a rock outcrop with a view north of Huckleberry Ridge and Moore's Knob. On the left is a large cliff on Cook's Wall with your first view to the west of Sauratown Mountain and Pilot Mountain. Turn around to head back to the Magnolia Springs Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 5.7** – Turn left on the Magnolia Springs Trail (*blue square blaze*).
- ▶ **Mile 6.0** – Pass a spur trail on the right to Magnolia Springs (*no blaze*).
- ▶ **Mile 6.2** – Cross over East Fork Cascade Creek on 2 small bridges then reach the Moore's Wall Loop Trail. Turn left on the Moore's Wall Loop Trail (*red circle blaze*) heading west on a moderate ascent to Huckleberry Gap.
- ▶ **Mile 6.7** – Junction with the Tory's Den Trail (*blue circle blaze*) and Mountains-to-Sea Trail (*white circle blaze*) near Huckleberry Gap. Turn right heading north along the Moore's Wall Loop Trail/Mountains-to-Sea Trail (*red circle and white circle blazes*). The trail begins a steep 1.2-mile ascent up Huckleberry Ridge over a minor summit before dropping into a gap and ascending Moore's Knob. This is the steepest and longest climb of the hike. Once on Huckleberry Ridge you will have views through the trees and pass by multiple large boulders and stands of Catawba rhododendron which bloom mid-May.

- ▶ **Mile 7.9** – Reach the spur trails to Balanced Rock and Moore’s Knob observation tower. Moore’s Knob is the tallest peak in the Sauratown Mountains at 2,579 feet and features a huge, exposed cliff on the northwest side. The original fire tower has been refurbished as a lookout tower. Climb the stairs to get 360° views. You can trace most of the hike from east to south with the visitor center, Hanging Rock, Cook’s Wall Mountain and Huckleberry Ridge all clearly visible. Pilot Mountain and the Blue Ridge Mountains dominate the western and northern vistas. Continue following the Moore’s Wall Loop Trail south down the mountain. This section of the trail gets more foot traffic since it is a shorter distance from the parking areas. The descent is mostly on a wide gravel and dirt path with hundreds of steps.
- ▶ **Mile 9.0** – Rock crossing over West Fork Cascade Creek.
- ▶ **Mile 9.1** – The trail turns right briefly following the campground road before turning left descending steeply to Hanging Rock Lake.
- ▶ **Mile 9.4** – In the vicinity of a small crossing over East Fork Cascade Creek is a junction with the Fishing Access Trail (*no blaze*) on the left and the Chestnut Oak Nature Trail (*no blaze*) on the right. The trail continues east closely following the southern shore of Hanging Rock Lake.
- ▶ **Mile 9.7** – Pass by the boat house at the lake. Take a left on the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (*white circle blaze*) avoiding the sidewalk to the picnic areas and upper parking lot on the right.
- ▶ **Mile 9.8** – Stop at a fishing pier in Hanging Rock Lake with great views of Cook’s Wall and Moore’s Knob rising above the water.
- ▶ **Mile 9.9** – The Mountains-to-Sea Trail crosses the road on its way to the visitor center.
- ▶ **Mile 10.1** – Hike ends at the visitor center parking lot.