



Mingo Falls – Cherokee, NC

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
0.3 mls	1★	5★	N/A	1★	N/A
Mingo Falls					
Hiking Time:	30 minutes with 10 minutes of breaks				
Elev. Gain:	155 ft				
1.0 mls	3★	5★	N/A	2★	N/A
Including Upper Mingo Falls					
Hiking Time:	45 minutes with 10 minutes of breaks				
Elev. Gain:	640 ft				
Parking:	Park at the Mingo Falls parking area. 35.53401, -83.27627				

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)



By Trail Contributor: Zach Robbins

The spectacular Mingo Falls is located in the Qualla Boundary of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, just outside of the Oconaluftee Visitor Center of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Mingo Creek drops dramatically into the Raven Fork Gorge over two waterfalls in succession. The first, Mingo Falls, is over 150 feet tall and one of the finest in the state. The second, Upper Mingo Falls, is just above the main falls but virtually unknown to the public and requires some route-finding. This is an excellent quick hike for any visitors staying in Cherokee or Bryson City.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – Follow the long set of stairs from the parking lot towards Mingo Falls.
- ▶ **Mile 0.1** – At the top of the stairs go straight for Mingo Falls shortly ahead.

Upper Mingo Falls is a beautiful double-drop waterfall hidden above Mingo Falls. There is an unofficial trail at the top of the stairs to the left above the boulder. The usage path climbs 0.3-mile steeply to the base of the upper falls. **Use extreme caution if you decide to hike to the upper falls, as there are a myriad of unmarked usage paths and exposed rock faces close to Mingo Falls where a fall would be fatal. Do Not venture out onto the rock faces.** This trail is unknown to almost all visitors, so if you take it you are likely on your own.

These directions go to the base of the upper falls:

- ▶ **Mile 0.25** – After a switchback the trail encounters a Y-junction, continue right heading towards the creek.
- ▶ **Mile 0.3** – At a Y-junction turn left on the trail going uphill. Avoid any trail leading right downhill, these can only lead to trouble. You'll soon pass by a broken chain-link fence and then you'll have to scramble over a large rocky section. Resist the temptation to scramble for a better look from the open rock, if you fall it will be fatal.
- ▶ **Mile 0.4** – The trail ends at Upper Mingo Falls. The lower 10-foot drop is obscured by trees and is not worth the steep bank scramble. The upper 20-foot drop is a beautiful freefall broken by small ledges and surrounded by lush vegetation.
- ▶ **Mile 0.55** – Turn left at the Y-junction from Mile 0.25.
- ▶ **Mile 0.7** – Back on the main trail turn left towards Mingo Falls.
- ▶ **Mile 0.75** – The trail ends at a bridge over Mingo Creek at the base of Mingo Falls. The creek plunges 150 feet in an amphitheater characterized by exposed ledges and encroaching foliage.
- ▶ **Mile 1.0** – Hike ends at the Mingo Falls parking lot.