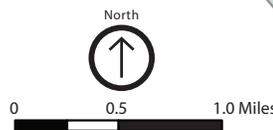
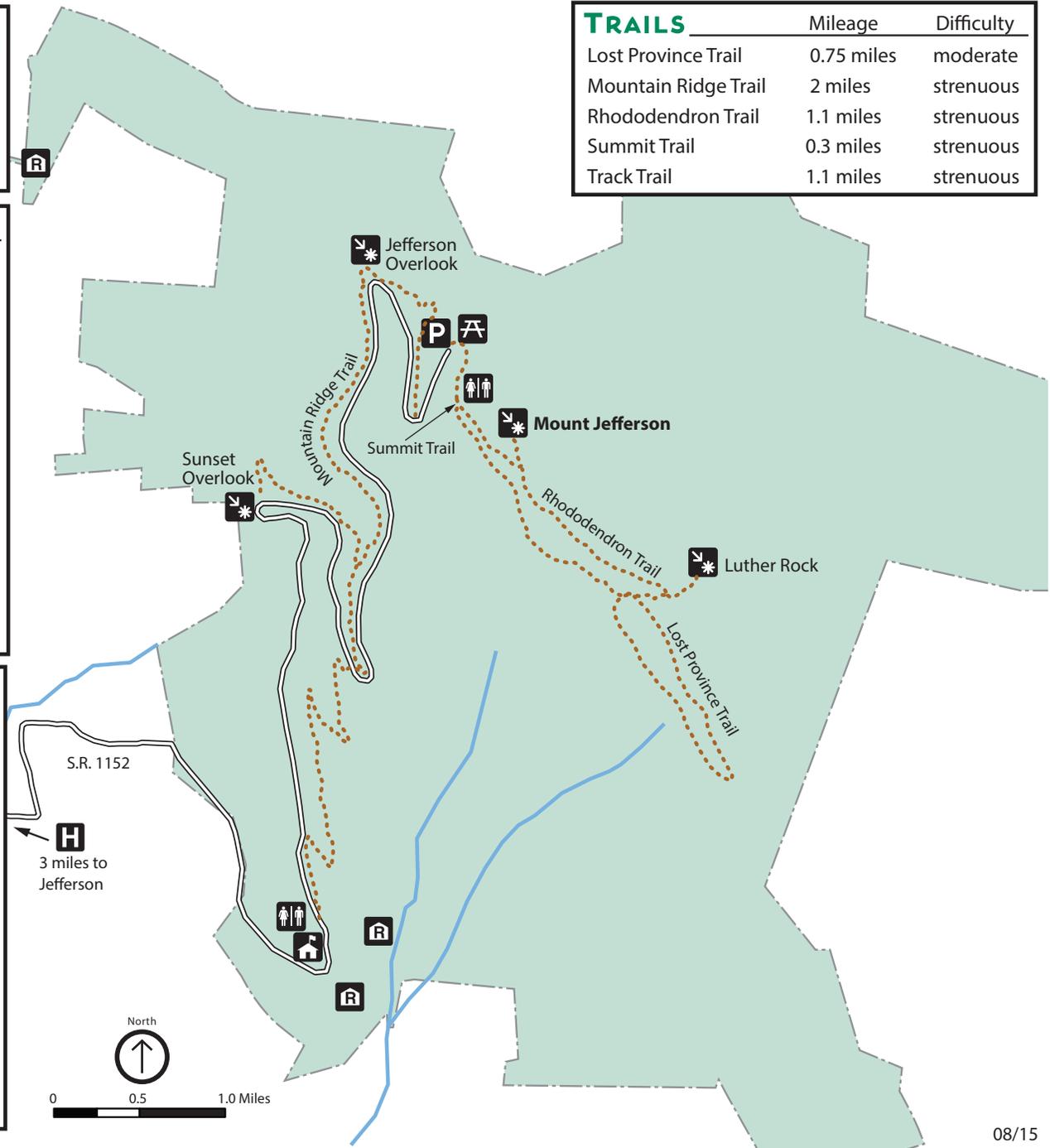
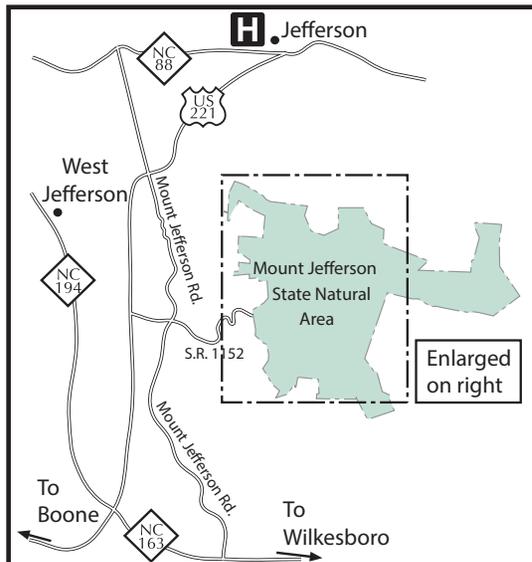


MOUNT JEFFERSON STATE NATURAL AREA

LEGEND

-  Hiking Trail
-  Hospital - Ashe Memorial 336-846-7101
- H** EMERGENCY - DIAL 911
-  Park Boundary
-  Park Office
-  Parking
-  Picnic Area
-  Point of Interest
-  Ranger Residence
-  Restrooms
-  Roads

TRAILS	Mileage	Difficulty
Lost Province Trail	0.75 miles	moderate
Mountain Ridge Trail	2 miles	strenuous
Rhododendron Trail	1.1 miles	strenuous
Summit Trail	0.3 miles	strenuous
Track Trail	1.1 miles	strenuous



Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Jefferson State Natural Area, NC

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
4.3 mls	★	N/A	★	★	N/A
Hiking Time: 2 hours and 15 minutes with 30 minutes of breaks Elev. Gain: 1,416 ft Parking: Park at the Sunset Overlook. 36.40173, -81.46991					

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)



By Trail Contributor: Zach Robbins

Mt. Jefferson looms more than 1,000 feet over the small towns of Jefferson and West Jefferson in the South Fork New River Valley. The state natural area (and National Natural Landmark) only covers the top half of the mountain but boasts outstanding views and impressive ecological diversity. Until 2015, the only hiking available in the park was a short 2-mile loop at the summit.

Recently the Mountain Ridge Trail was constructed, climbing from the park office past two wonderful overlooks on its way to the summit loop. This trail gives you the option to extend an otherwise short and easy hike, attaining the overlooks via foot rather than vehicle. Sitting at the northeast edge of the Amphibolite Range, the Mt. Jefferson State Natural Area has many great views of the region, most notably the craggy Three Top Mountain, Bluff Mountain, Grandfather Mountain, and Whitetop Mountain in Virginia. If you decide to bypass the longer hike for the short summit loop be sure to stop at the Jefferson Overlook for the best view in the park.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – Park at the Sunset Overlook. A large clearing beside the road offers excellent views southwest of the South Fork New River Valley leading to the distant Watauga Valley and Grandfather Mountain. Due west the craggy peaks of the Amphibolite Range, most noticeably Bluff Mountain and Three Top Mountain, loom high above the small town of West Jefferson.

The Mountain Ridge Trail Extension begins at the far end of the parking area beside the information board. Briefly climb away from the overlook before curving back to parallel the road staying a few hundred feet above.

- ▶ **Mile 0.3** – Wishbone junction with the Mountain Ridge Trail. Turn left here. The Mountain Ridge Trail heading right crosses the road and descends to the park office.
- ▶ **Mile 0.8** – Trail reaches the Jefferson Overlook. A rock pinnacle beside a stone gate offers outstanding views of the Amphibolite Range west and north. Due north Phoenix Mountain rises high above Jefferson while the tallest peaks in Virginia, Whitetop Mountain and Mt. Rogers, can be spotted in the distant northwest. Bluff Mountain, The Peak, and Three Top Mountain are the tallest peaks to the west. The South Fork New River snakes from the southwest to the fertile farmlands in the northeast, Grandfather Mountain still looms in the distance.

As of April 2015 the Mountain Ridge Trail had not begun construction between the Jefferson Overlook and the summit parking area. This GPS track shows a short walk along the road's shoulder to the parking area.

- ▶ **Mile 1.2** – Road ends at the parking lot for the picnic shelters and summit trails. Follow the main gravel path through the picnic area to start the Summit Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 1.3** – Pass by the terminus of the Rhododendron Trail on the right.
- ▶ **Mile 1.4** – T-junction with the Rhododendron Trail. Turn left to quickly summit Mt. Jefferson.
- ▶ **Mile 1.5** – Summit Trail ends at the communications complex at the top of Mt. Jefferson. There is a small window in the trees with a view north.
- ▶ **Mile 1.6** – Turn left to start the Rhododendron Trail. This beautiful trail follows a narrow horseshoe ridge with steep drop offs to the north. Along the way you will have occasional views of the outcrops along Luther Rock.
- ▶ **Mile 1.8** – T-junction with spur trail on the left to Luther Rock.
- ▶ **Mile 1.9** – Luther Rock is the high point of a thin, rocky ridge on the southeast slope of Mt. Jefferson. On each side of the ridge are fantastic views from cliffs looking southeast and northwest. Looking southeast you will see the rolling hills of the South Fork New River Valley leading to the edge of the Blue Ridge Escarpment. Phoenix Mountain rises above Jefferson immediately northwest with Whitetop Mountain and Mt. Rogers the tallest peaks in the background. The antenna crowns Mt. Jefferson across the horseshoe bowl while the distinct peaks of the Amphibolite Range mentioned earlier can be spotted to the left of the summit.
- ▶ **Mile 2.1** – Veer left to continue the Rhododendron Trail then immediately turn left onto the Lost Province Trail (*blue triangle blaze*) for an optional 0.6-mi loop through oak-chestnut forest.
- ▶ **Mile 2.7** – Lost Province Trail ends at the Rhododendron Trail. Turn left to head back towards the parking lot. This section of the trail is lined with rhododendrons.
- ▶ **Mile 3.1** – Rhododendron Trail ends at the Summit Trail. Follow the Summit Trail down towards the parking area and road to finish the hike.
- ▶ **Mile 4.3** – Hike ends at Sunset Overlook.