

NEWS

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Tennessee Overhill – Home to 50 Waterfalls

People are drawn to the southeast corner of Tennessee from near and far to explore the beautiful natural landscapes of the Tennessee Overhill region, a three county area that includes the southern half of the Cherokee National Forest. One of the major draws to this area is the many waterfalls located throughout the forest. There are over 50 waterfalls raging from five feet to 130 feet high. Some are easily accessible and others, due to their remote locations, require a hike.

Choosing which waterfall to see is the greatest challenge. The spectacular 90 foot Bald River Falls (GPS: 35° 19.44'N, 84° 10.357'W) can be seen from the bridge on Forest Service (FS) road #210 (a paved road just a few miles from Tellico Plains). Have your camera handy, because a photo from the bridge with the falls behind you will be one of your trip's favorites.

Located in Chilhowee Recreation Area, Benton Falls (GPS: 35° 8.428'N, 84° 35.766'W) is a 65 foot waterfall with water cascading down step-like rocks. The three mile round-trip hike is rated easy/moderate. From Ocoee Scenic Byway (Hwy 64), take FS road #77 to Chilhowee Recreation Area (\$3.00 day use fee). Trailhead can be found in parking lot.

Forty-five foot Coker Creek Falls (GPS: 35° 11.835'N, 84° 22.217'W) with a series of waterfalls/cascades ranging from eight feet to 20 feet high is a kayaker's and photographer's favorite. Stop at Coker Creek Welcome Center/Post Office on Hwy 68 to get directions. Hike is around 3 miles but you don't need to make the entire trip to see a waterfall. Rated easy/moderate.

Other lesser known falls are Turtletown Falls (GPS 35° 9.834'N, 84° 21.166'W) and Falls Branch Falls (GPS: 35° 20.634'N, 84° 17.172'W). Turtletown Falls is 40 feet high and flows over a large ledge then separates into two falls. A bonus waterfall, Lower Turtletown Falls, may be seen if you hike a little further downstream from the main falls. On Hwy 68 turn at Farner post office, cross the RR and turn left on Duggan Rd, bear left on Farner Rd. entrance to the falls, FSR #1166, is the first road on the right. Follow the dirt road for 1.5 miles down to the fall's parking lot. Trail is three miles roundtrip and rated easy/moderate.

Falls Branch Falls (GPS 35 20.634'N, 84 17.172'W) is an 80 foot waterfall located off the National Scenic Byway - Cherohala Skyway Hwy 165. At the Rattlesnake Rock Parking Area, hike about 100 feet (take the left fork) to the Falls Branch Trail #87. Once at the falls, follow the creek downstream to see several cascades. Roundtrip is about 3 miles. Rated moderate. Bonus: Located in a wilderness area, you can see a very impressive old-growth forest site with huge trees -poplars, buckeyes, birches, hemlocks, and black cherries.

Keep in mind, waterfalls are beautiful, but they are not to be climbed on. They can be dangerous, and in some cases people have been seriously injured while climbing on waterfalls. Avoid stepping into fast flowing water but if you must walk into a creek, be aware, moss covered rocks can be very slippery. Be sure to bring plenty of drinking water. Enjoy the experience while you are visiting and take a photo home to remember your trip.

The Tennessee Overhill has directions to most waterfalls in the southern Cherokee National Forest. Call 877-510-5765 for more information. Coker Creek Welcome Center has maps to Coker Creek Falls and Turtletown Falls. You may also check out the Cherokee National Forest website www.fs.usda.gov/cherokee. Visit the Overhill website at www.tennesseeoverhill.com/.

Finally, we invite you to post your waterfall photos on the Tennessee Overhill Facebook page.

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