

OUTDOOR FUN & ADVENTURE

PANTHERTOWN VALLEY LOOP A

1 Day Hiking & Waterfall Exploration Itinerary

Nearby Town: [Cashiers, NC](#)

7.6 miles from “crossroads” (US Hwy 64/NC Hwy 107) in Cashiers

Elevation: 3,000+ Ft.

Matt’s Overview:

[Panthertown Valley](#) is a collection of over 6000 acres of Forest Service land at elevation that is referred to by some as the “Yosemite of the East”, due to its dome-like summits with pristine mountain streams flowing through the entire valley. A multitude of outdoor adventure awaits anyone who enters into this gorgeous valley like: [Hiking](#), [Biking](#), [Horseback Riding](#), [Fishing](#), [Camping](#), Rock Climbing and at least 11 different “natural communities” including the Appalachian Bog & Swamp Forest Bog to name a few. In this itinerary I specifically focus in on a handful of hiking and [waterfall](#) exploration opportunities (6 hiking trails & 3 waterfalls) to do within a day’s trip. Please know that there are backcountry campsites sprinkled about the valley and it is legal if you decide to stretch your 1 Day itinerary into multiple days and stay overnight. Also, please be aware that the trails and waterfalls in this itinerary are NOT marked or labeled by the Forest Service so it is critical to pay attention to the information here. Having said that, please do not let it discourage you from experiencing this wonderful area. I would encourage you to do a bit of research before taking it on and be sure to access the [Panthertown Valley Map](#) I have provided for a reference. This is a family friendly area and I would recommend bringing your teenagers here but would suggest leaving the younger ones with the babysitter.

Before you go checklist:

- Day Pack with some, if not all of our recommended [Day Hike Essentials](#) depending upon your level of activity at each POI
- Equipment you may want: camera, binoculars, handheld GPS, fishing equipment, towel/blanket, change of clothes/shoes
- A hiking buddy (the Panthertown Valley area is not well marked so it is recommended by “Stay And Play” that you not go alone)
- Tell someone where you are going and when you plan on being back
- Leave the “hustle and bustle” behind and step into one of nature’s vast playgrounds
- Download our [Panthertown Valley Map](#)

Notes of Importance:

There is one required creek crossing (ford) that you will have to navigate to access the [Granny Burrell Falls Trail #486](#).

[Panthertown Creek](#) isn’t deep here so crossing is easy, but it will require getting your feet and lower part of your legs wet. I included a towel and/or change of shoes in the “before you go checklist”, so you should be just fine. If you have time and plan on fishing at all, please be advised that you will need a valid N.C. license on hand (see WNC Fishing License Agents PDF also in this section). Also, the streams here are well populated with Native Appalachian Brook trout but are designated “Catch & Release” only. You can not possess trout or any live bait while fishing this area and you must use single-hook artificial lures only.

To get there:

From the main intersection of U.S. Hwy 64 and N.C. Hwy 107 in Cashiers, N.C. take Hwy 64 East (towards Brevard) for 2 miles to “Cedar Creek Road” on your left (crossing the small, Horsepasture River). Take Cedar Creek Road for 2.3 miles to “Breedlove Road” (S.R. 1121 or “State Road”) on your right. There will be a sign for Panthertown Valley at the stop sign. Take the right and travel 3.3 miles to the end of the pavement for Breedlove Rd and where the rough, gravel road begins. You can either park here (if you have a low or nicer car) or you can proceed on rough gravel/mud road to main parking area at entrance to the valley. After you reach the main parking area (via foot or vehicle) you’ll come to an Info Kiosk with a map of the valley in it and a gate across the trailhead. This is the [West Parking Area for Panthertown Valley](#).

A tip from Matt:

To find even more recommendations and detailed advice from our Local Expert, search the links throughout this itinerary. You’ll find individual POI info pages with: Knowledge that solidifies us as your “Local” guide, Highlights, Difficulty Ratings, [Interactive Map](#) with appropriate zoom level and more. All on www.StayAndPlayInTheSmokies.com.



DAY 1:

Part
1

Breakfast
West Entrance to Panthertown Valley
Panthertown Valley Trail #474
Salt Rock Gap

Part
2

Wilderness Falls Trail #490
Wilderness Falls
Deep Gap Trail #449
Frolictown Falls

Part
3

Deep Gap Trail #449
Granny Burrell Falls Trail #486
Granny Burrell Falls
Picnic Lunch

Part
4

Return Hike:
Granny Burrell Falls Trail #486 (remaining)
Mac's Gap Trail #482
Panthertown Valley Trail #474

A tip from Matt before you begin:

Be sure to print the two-page Panthertown Valley Map we have revised for your convenience. Make certain you correspond the trails and #s in this itinerary with the map we provide. You will also be able to view the map at the Info Kiosk located at the West Parking Area for Panthertown Valley. However, maps are not available at the trailhead to take with you. If you have a hand held GPS, visit each link in this itinerary for exact coordinates.

DAY 1:

PART 1

Breakfast
West Parking Area for "PV"
Panthertown Valley Trail #474
Salt Rock Gap

Start your day as early as possible to take in as much of this itinerary on Panthertown Valley you can. After a hearty breakfast and some coffee in Cashiers you'll be on your way to Cedar Creek Road, just 2 miles outside of town, and eventually to the West Entrance to "PV." From the Info Kiosk your hike will start on the Panthertown Valley Trail #474 and will head downhill (past the gate) for approx. 0.25 mile where you will look to the left for views of the Valley from "Salt Rock Gap." Take a seat on Salt Rock and take in the magnificent views with your camera and binoculars of: **Big Green Mountain** (to your right), **Little Green Mountain** (straight ahead just beyond the white pine thicket), **Black Rock Mountain** (rock outcroppings to your left), **Cold Mountain** (straight ahead) and **Big Pisgah Mountain** (straight ahead). This view has been likened to "Inspiration Point" in Yosemite National Park (California).

PART 2

Wilderness Falls Trail #490
Wilderness Falls
Deep Gap Trail #449
Frolictown Falls

After you enjoy Salt Rock you will need to back track for a couple of hundred feet to “Wilderness Falls Trail #490.” The trail is located on your left heading back the way you came for Salt Rock Gap. Like I mentioned before, the trails in PV are unmarked so you’ll need to pay close attention to find the sometimes “faint” trail. Wilderness Falls Trail leads you out and down through some nice hardwood forests for approx. 10-15 minutes. Remember to stay on the main trail by avoiding any smaller side trails you may encounter. At approx. 10-15 min, you come to an opening on a rock face. You can hear the cascading water from Wilderness Falls here. You can either go out to the right and get to the top of the falls (this can be dangerous if you get too close to the edge) for a unique view by bush-wacking a little OR you can head down and to the left of the falls (fairly steep) to the bottom for an awesome view looking up the rock face of the 60 foot falls. To get the best vantage point for this view, you’ll have to navigate around and onto some boulders at the base of the falls. Be careful, if the water has been splashing on them, they WILL be slippery. Pick up the trail below the falls again and continue for approx. 15-25 min. The trail follows the creek off and on again and eventually works it’s way down to where it ends at and intersects with the much wider and well worn “Deep Gap Trail #449.”

When you reach the end of Wilderness Falls Trail at the junction with Deep Gap Trail (remember, no signage), you will need to go right for approx. 50 feet and this will put you at the top of “Frolictown Falls” on Frolictown Creek. We do not recommend trying to get close to the top of these falls due to danger, difficulty of access and the potential to harm endangered plant life. To get the best view of the small but gorgeous falls, you will need to go back to the left and down one of two short side trails that will be on your right side of Deep Gap Trail (same side as falls). I suggest taking the second one you come to on the right from being at the top of the falls. It will lead you to the base of the falls where you’ll have a chance to take a nice picture, have a snack and to hydrate with some of the water you brought along. Do not try to drink the water here without treatment or boiling it first. Even though the water may look drinkable you are putting yourself at risk of becoming sick if you drink it.

Now that you’ve seen two of the three waterfalls on your adventure, you’ll do a little more hiking before you reach one of my favorite places to hang out in Panthertown Valley, “Granny Burrell Falls.”

PART 3

Deep Gap Trail #449
Granny Burrell Falls Trail #486
Great Wall Trail #489
Granny Burrell Falls
Picnic Lunch

From Frolictown Creek & Falls you will need to head back and past where Wilderness Falls Trail intersects [Deep Gap Trail](#). Deep Gap Trail #449 is designated as a Horse, Bike and Hike trail within the “PV” so you may see some other folks using this trail for things other than hiking. You will head up hill on this trail for only a few minutes until you come to a fork in the trail. One trail bears left and slightly up hill, this is the continuance of Deep Gap Trail, avoid it. Instead, take the trail to the right and down hill, this is the “Granny Burrell Falls Trail #486.” This trail heads slightly down the hill and levels out when you get to Panthertown Creek in approx. 15 minutes or so. Here is where you will need to “ford” (cross) the creek. Take your time crossing here. The last time I was here the water was only about shin deep (this can fluctuate depending upon what time of year) and the cross was cold but very easy. I took my shoes and socks completely off for the cross. On the other side I simply sat down and used my towel to dry off. The trail picks back up here but you will only hike for another 50 feet or so until you will need to take the obvious trail on your left, “Great Wall Trail #489.” This trail follows the right side of Panthertown Creek and can be rather muddy in spots. You will need to navigate around some exposed roots here. At approx. 5 minutes you will start to hear the creek rushing below the trail and you will start to notice several side trails on your left and down to the creek as you go. Feel free to explore this area by taking some of these short access trails to the creek. There is a nice cascade that flows into a long pool just above Granny Burrell Falls. Once you check out the creek a little bit, continue on down the trail to even more side trails to the left until you find the one that takes you out onto the rock face beside Granny Burrell Falls. The falls are actually a long cascade that drops into a nice splash pool. The creek continues to slide over even more rock and eventually into a bend in the creek that creates an awesome “lagoon-like” area to hang out at. There is space on the rocks to hang out on and plenty of shallow water for the entire group to splash around in. I would suggest having a picnic lunch here. Spread your towel or blanket over some of the rock face and soak up some sun while you relax. You can try your luck at fishing here, go for a swim or just close your eyes and relax to the sounds of the creek tumbling over the rocks. Take your time and enjoy this area before you start your return hike.

PART 4

Great Wall Trail #489
Mac's Gap Trail #482
Panthertown Valley Trail #474

Once you have enjoyed the Granny Burrell Falls area head back to the Great Wall Trail #489 and head left/downstream for another 5-10 minutes along the creek bank and the remaining portion of the trail. The trail along the creek portion gives you a chance to peer into the clear water and see a few trout. The last time I was here I did just that and saw three native Brook Trout cruising along. Here you're almost to where the trail intersects a wide "Mac's Gap Trail #482." You will need to go left at this intersection and over Panthertown Creek via the bridge you'll see to the left. Continue through the "meadow-like" setting, bearing left and avoiding side trails for another 10 minutes or so until you come to a four-way intersection of trails. Take the left here, this is Panthertown Valley Trail #474 and is nice and wide. This is the same trail you accessed Salt Rock Gap from when you started out today. From here you have anywhere between 45 minutes to 1 hour of hike remaining depending upon your pace. The hike is relatively flat at first then gradually climbs up towards Salt Rock. You will pass another fork in the trail on your way up (this is the start of Deep Gap Trail) and on your left, avoid it and continue up the hill. Once you pass Salt Rock Gap (now on your right) and overlook you'll know where you are at. Simply continue up the hill and back to the parking area/entrance.

Matt's final thought:

I really love this area of our mountains. I recommend it to anyone who loves to get out and hike/explore our forests because there are so many exploration opportunities to take in. As with any other recommended journey we suggest, please be conscious of your surroundings while out and about. Please "pack-out" what you "pack-in" as far as trash, etc. goes. And if you see any litter while you are out, please consider picking it up and putting it in your pack so we all can continue to enjoy our mountains in their purest form. I hope you have a great day in Panthertown Valley!

Where to eat breakfast in Cashiers:

Your Business Here

123 Main St.
Hometown, NC 45678

Where to get supplies in Cashiers:

Your Business Here

123 Main St.
Hometown, NC 45678