

DIG THE FALLS

Central New York Waterfall Day-Trip

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All photos by Donna McCabe

When our anniversary comes around every year, my husband & I take a day off work and make plans to spend the day together. This year, we made it a day of waterfalls and it turned out to be a fantastic day! While my original plan was to hit up six waterfalls, we only managed to make it to five (LOL). We took our time enjoying each stop so it just means we'll be making plans for another trip!



Chittenango Falls



Chittenango Falls

Our first stop was Chittenango Falls State Park. I have seen so many pictures of this falls and couldn't wait to see it in person. The first view of the falls from Rt. 13 is an amazing one and made me all the more excited to explore inside the park. Since this is a New York State Park, there is typically an admission fee per vehicle but, since we were visiting in early October, the park was free to enter. There are a few short trails within the park but we headed for the Gorge Trail which takes you down to a bridge that crosses over the creek and allows you to see the falls straight on. You'll notice some "Restricted Area" signs indicating there is no access to the creek bed and surrounding area due to an endangered species that lives there which is the Chittenango amber ovate snail. The spray zone of the falls is the only place it calls home so please be respectful and stay in the designated areas.

After a hike up the other side of the gorge and a picnic lunch, we were off to our next waterfall Pratt's Falls located in Manlius which is only a 20-minute drive from

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Chittenango.



Pratt's Falls Entrance



Pratt's Falls

This park, which is part of the Onondaga County Parks system, is a nice little gem. Not overly large but with plenty of parking and a well maintained trail to the falls, you'll want to plan a visit here. One thing to be aware of is the trail has a lot of stairs. If that might be a challenge for you, there are a couple of overlook points at the top of the falls. Following the trail to near the bottom of the gorge offers a full height view of this falls and I think this was my favorite one of the day because it was just so beautiful. The white of the water really stood out against the darker green of the leaves. The small fishing lake near the entrance to the park keeps this waterfall flowing year-round.

Up next and only 20 minutes or so away is the Labrador Hollow Unique Area where you'll find Tinker Falls. Parking is across the road from the path you'll take and is very easy to find. Meander along the creek on the wide & well-defined path until you reach the base of the falls. If you're adventurous, climb the very small stairs to the right of the falls and you can go behind the falling water. What an amazing view this was! We spent a bit of time here exploring the area behind the falls and the creek bed. I just wanted to keep taking photographs at Tinker. More than once my husband would say "haven't you taken enough pictures?" Ummm, no! ... but I had to stop because more falls await!



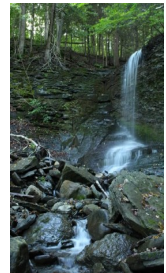
Tinker Falls



Tinker Falls

Our fourth stop of the day was at Bucktail Falls located in the town of Spafford. More of a challenge to find than anything, this waterfall is on private property but the land owner allows public access. As a guest on their land, be respectful by keeping your visit short, don't leave any trash and pick up any you might come across.

My biggest take-away (other than the count of images on my camera) from visiting five waterfalls in one day is how unique they all are.



For a small waterfall, this one packs a lot of beauty. I could have spent quite a bit of more time here but didn't want to linger too long as there are some homes close by and we didn't

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want to be a nuisance. This visit is a quick in & out but definitely worth your time to seek out.

What ended up being our last stop of the day was Carpenter Falls in Skaneateles. This trail gave us the biggest challenge of the day. The only maintenance of any kind for this trail is done by those who walk on it. Overgrown with weeds at the beginning, you'll soon find yourself on some very steep 'trail' over tree roots and other challenging terrain. While not steep in elevation, the side slope down to the creek is what makes this one





require your full attention. Hiking boots are recommended for this one. I didn't have mine at the time and there was more than one incident of slipping and sliding. Once we got to the falls though, I fully appreciated the effort it took. Nothing gentle about this one as the water falls straight down. Standing there, you'll feel the mist and hear the water crashing to the bottom. So much power in this one! Other visitors left trails to climb behind the falls, but I didn't feel safe doing the same. My husband went a bit farther than me but my visit was complete from where I stood. Exploring more along the creek bed would have been fun, but we decided to head back to the trail since we wanted to hit up one more waterfall. Once back at our car and after cleaning ourselves up a bit, we talk about the last stop on our list. Given the time of day and how long it would take to get to that location, we decided to make Carpenters our last stop and save the other waterfall for another day. My biggest take-away (other than the count of images on my camera) from visiting five waterfalls in one day is how unique they all are. No one is the same as any other. Some are wider or taller or have a heavier water flow. Some are gentle and some are downright forceful but they are all truly beautiful. Central New York has some spectacular waterfalls.

Plan your trip to get out and explore them!

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