

Chasing Waterfalls of the Hudson Valley

by Donna McCabe

My quest to visit 100 New York State waterfalls as part of the #NYSWaterfallchallenge has me heading to the eastern part of the state. Since I live in northern Niagara County, I need to make the most of my trips and try to squeeze in as many locations as possible given drive times and how long the trek to see the waterfall would take. The plans for this trip were pretty aggressive in that I wanted to visit seven waterfalls. The most I'd ever done in one trip was five, but that was one day. This trip was going to be a weekend so seven seemed pretty doable.

After grabbing my copy of Waterfalls of New York State and looking at the map for the Hudson Valley Region, my planning began. There are quite a few places to visit in the area, some of them are an hour or more apart while others are relatively close. I chose to start at the waterfall closest to me then work my way southeast. We got pretty close to the bottom of the state but then turned north and drove parallel to the Hudson River. As with any plans I make, I keep an eye on the weather. Since we were heading into the mountains, this was my biggest concern. Thankfully we had gorgeous weather for Saturday and on Sunday we had some rain and fog but it made for some great pictures!

Our first visit of this trip was to Buttermilk Falls in South New Berlin. As we were driving up the hill, we could hear the water but couldn't see it. After a bit of back tracking, we found an area to see the falls but there was no safe way to get a good view. Back to the road we went and then spotted a small deer track into the wooded area. Choosing to follow that led us right to the creek and from there it was a bit of creek-walking to get a full view of this beauty.



We crossed over the creek, played a bit of limbo with a fallen tree, then crossed back over further upstream with the hope of getting closer to the largest portion of this waterfall. We managed to get to a certain point but, after that, the stone was just too slippery for my liking. Even with hiking boots and poles, I knew a fall would happen and it was too early in the day for that. I had more waterfalls to see! Our timing in seeing this one was perfect because the sun hadn't hit it fully so most of the area was in the shade and just right for capturing pictures. Eventually, we retraced our steps to head out and back up to the road. Checking the map, we had about a 90-minute drive to our next location which was in the Cherry Ridge Wild Forest ... Russell Brook Falls.

If you take Rt. 206 through Colchester, NY, you'll come to Morton Hill Road which will lead you back into Cherry Ridge Wild Forest. It's here, off a seasonally accessible road that you'll find Russell Brook Falls. While there is a parking area at the top of the trail that leads to the falls, we parked at a small area where Morton Hill Road meets Russell Brook Falls Road and walked in about a half-mile. We passed a few camping sites on the way and then heard the falls.

DIG THE FALLS

You can see the upper portion of Russell Brook Falls from the road or climb down a bit to see it more full-on and also get a look at the lower falls from the top. Once you're back on the road, it's not much further until you come to the parking area & kiosk at the head of the trail. This is State land but there are no park rangers so take a moment to sign into log book.



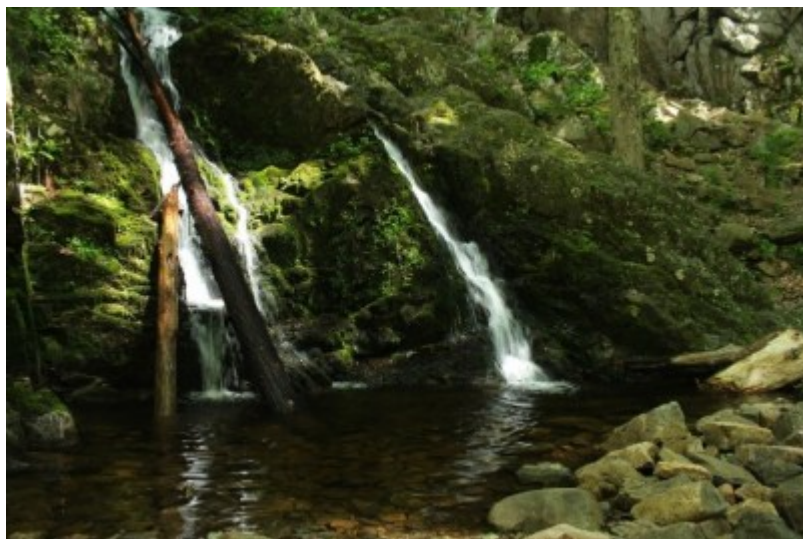


Take the trail across a small bridge and you'll see a worn-in path that leads you to the creek and a spot where you can climb down to access the base of the falls. We spent plenty of time here checking out both sides of the creek and getting different views of the falls. Another family came along and, since we had the falls to ourselves for a while, we headed out to give them some time to enjoy it on their own. Besides, more falls await!

Our third stop was the furthest point south and just over an hour away. We were headed to Southfields to see Fitzgerald Falls. A cool part of this is it's actually on the Appalachian Trail. Follow the trail just under a half-mile and you'll come to the falls. We had some decent water flow but I've seen other pictures where this is flowing pretty heavily. The NY/NJ Trail Conference built steps where the trail runs up the right side of the falls. Be sure to climb to the top to check out the view.

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Chasing Waterfalls of the Hudson Valley: Part 1



Our last stop of the day had us heading to the north to see Awosting Falls located in Minnewaska State Park Preserve. Since this is located in a NY State Park, there is an admission fee per vehicle of \$10. The park is currently working through phase 1 of its improvement plan and, even though there's some growing pains during construction, you'll

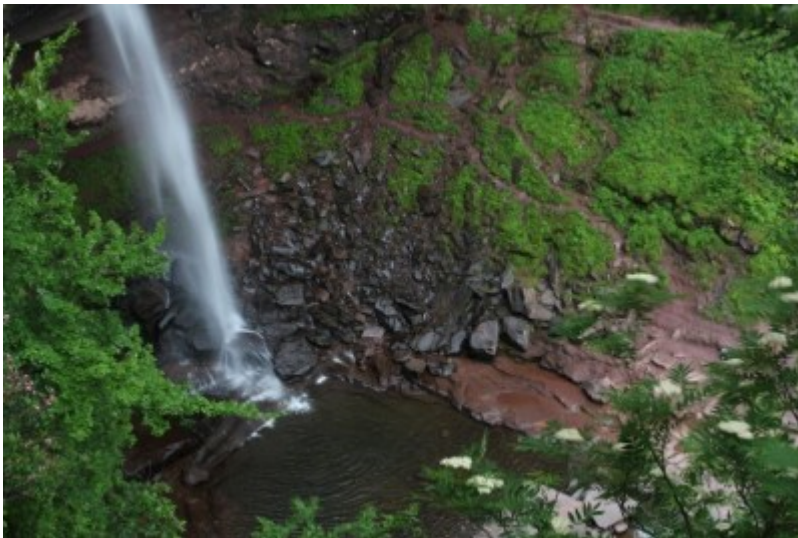
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see improvements that have already been made. There are signs directing traffic to a parking area for guests who want to view the falls and attached to this parking area is a new gravel trail that leads visitors to the top of Awosting Falls. The views from up here are amazing and not to be missed. Keep following the gravel path as winds its way down the escarpment and soon you'll have a full view of the falls. We had lots of company enjoying the view with us - even a couple having their engagement pictures taken. The skies were clouding up a bit so we headed back up to the parking area to be on the road to our overnight lodgings which were another hour north.



Looking at the forecast for the rest of the night and the following day, it showed pretty consistent rain and that would not be fun to hike in. We were staying overnight pretty close to where our planned stops were for the following day, and knowing our next stop would bring my waterfall count to 50, I convinced my husband to visit the upper trail of Kaaterskill Falls just in case the rain was too much to be out hiking in and we would have to head home. Thankfully we drove out of the rain and found the parking area & falls overlook trail very easily. The view from the platform was of the upper portion of the falls only but it was

spectacular.





All the surrounding mountains just added to stunning scene. We were tempted to take the trail down and get closer to the falls but by this time we had already been going for 12 hours and it was going to be getting dark soon. We called it a day ... a very amazing day! ... and headed out of the park for the night. We needed to rest up for day 2 of our adventure! That makes 5 waterfalls for the trip so far ... stay tuned for part 2 to find out if the rain curtailed our trip or if we keep going and make it to 7 waterfalls!

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