

Route 20 Waterfall Roadtrip

Experience the Heart of New York on an Epic Waterfall Adventure!

by John Haywood

Since 1926, U.S. Route 20 has run through the heart of the United States, from the Pacific Northwest to New England. The 372-mile stretch that spans east to west across New York State, much of which is designated a scenic byway due to the sweeping views and roadside sights, has a lot more to offer than just scenic vistas. As you travel through Central New York and the Finger Lakes Region, antiques shops, restaurants, breweries, vineyards, and waterfalls, all line this historic route!

We'll follow Route 20 from Albany to Buffalo as it traces across the state, and past a number of fascinating places. Bustling Main Streets, reminiscent of a Rockwell scene, beautiful parks, and restaurants and breweries with delectable menus, offer a well-rounded experience for any traveler. Add a touch of history and entertainment, and you're on your way to discovering just a sample of what makes New York an amazing place to visit!

To learn more about "America's Main Street" and some of the wonderful towns along the way, read this article from [Visit Central New York](#). [The Must-See Towns of Scenic Route 20](#).

The best parts of this roadtrip, of course, are the waterfalls!

Click each waterfall name or location that appears in green for more information. (Keep in mind, some driving north and south, away from route 20 will be necessary.)

[Albany](#) - Whether you're starting or ending in the state capital, you're sure to find plenty of entertaining things to do here. The [New York State Museum](#), guided tours, arts and entertainment, shopping, outdoor activities, and ample food and drink await!

[The Narrows](#) - Just a couple miles north of Albany, and on the eastern side of the Hudson River, you will find the [Narrows Cascade and Heritage Trail](#) in the City of Troy. This five-mile trail system follows two prominent creeks that are home to a number of waterfalls.



Bozen Kill Falls at Christman Sanctuary: One of the many falls found there.

[French's Falls](#) - This 8-foot cascade is one of three waterfalls that form across the Normans Kill just after the large dam of the Waterliet Reservoir.

[Christman Sanctuary](#) - 30-foot Bozen Kill Falls is the star attraction here while a number of other cascades form downstream along the trail.

[Dugway Falls](#) - 40-foot Dugway Falls can be found on the outskirts of Sharon Springs, heading North on Main Street.

[Canajoharie Falls](#) - This 45-foot cascade is one of several in [Wintergreen Park](#) in Canajoharie.

[Judds Falls](#) - This 135-foot monster forms, practically at roadside, on the Canajoharie Creek in Cherry Valley.

[Cooperstown](#) - It's not just about baseball! Historic buildings, cruises on the lake, state parks, museums, Winter Carnivals, and plenty of shops to browse, are all part of what makes Cooperstown a year-round destination.

[Frostbite Falls](#) - This waterfall can be found at the [Albert J. Woodford Memorial State Forest](#), just off of Route 20.

[Oriskany Falls](#) - This 20-foot waterfall forms at a dam on Oriskany Creek in the heart of town.

[Good Nature Brewing](#) - Per their website... "Our Brewery features a family-friendly tap room with a unique farm-to-table kitchen and spacious Beer Garden." That says it all! If you're a fan of good brews, check out [Brew Central](#) for information on Central New York breweries, wineries, pubs, and more. Visit their [Brewfinder](#) page for an interactive map of top-notch Central New York food and beverage locations, as well as tourist destinations.



[Chittenango Falls](#) - This 167-foot, two-tiered gem is found in [Chittenango Falls State Park](#).

[Delphi Falls](#) - Another Central New York favorite! This county park contains two waterfalls of 52-feet and 65-feet that form on East Branch Limestone Creek. The 65-foot lower falls is the star here.

[Pratts Falls](#) - This 137-foot beauty is found at [Pratts Falls Park](#) in Pompey. A small donation is requested on entry.

[Tinkers Falls](#) - This 45-foot cascade forms on Tinker Creek at the Labrador Hollow State Nature Preserve.

[Carpenters Falls](#) - This 76-foot plunge waterfall forms at the [Bahar Preserve](#) in Moravia.

[Guppy Falls](#) - This 20-foot cascade forms on an unnamed stream and is found along one of the trails in the [Skaneateles Conservation Area](#).

[Skaneateles](#) - A nice stop along the route is the Village of Skaneateles. Situated along route 20, this picturesque village is home to dozens of shops and eateries. A perfect place to walk the streets and take in all it has to offer. [The Bluewater Grill](#) is a great place to grab a bite. For dessert, head over to [Patisserie](#).



Cowsheds Falls at Fillmore Glen State Park

[Fillmore Glen](#) - This New York State Park hosts a number of waterfalls, including [Cowsheds Falls](#).

[Wolcott Falls](#) - A 25-foot waterfall found in the aptly named Wolcott Falls Park and is easily accessed

[Finger Lakes Welcome Center](#) - Located at the northern end of Seneca Lake, in Geneva, the Finger Lakes Welcome Center offers information for a host of activities. From places to stay, to places to visit and things to do, you can find it here.

[Seneca Mills Falls](#) - This easily accessible 45-foot cascade forms on the Keuka Lake Outlet along the [Keuka Lake Outlet Trail](#).

[Barnes Creek Gully](#) - Several waterfalls form on this creek found at [Onanda Park](#). The last waterfall is a 50-foot cascade.

[Honeoye Falls](#) - 20-foot Honeoye Falls forms on Honeoye Creek at the site of a small dam.

[Paper Mill Falls](#) - This 10-foot cascade forms on the Conesus Lake Outlet at the site of an old paper mill.

[Letchworth State Park](#) - This “Grand Canyon of the East” is home to over a dozen waterfalls Including the well-known [Upper Falls](#), [Middle Falls](#), and [Lower Falls](#). The park is a little further off Route 20 than the others, but how do you not stop there?!

[Glen Iris Inn](#) - While enjoying the scenery and experiences of Letchworth State Park, visit the Glen Iris Inn which is located inside the park. Serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner, for the hungry explorer, the Inn also offers accommodations for stays.

A Cross Roads! Nobody will blame you for creating your own detour to the north to Niagara Falls State Park. (Go ahead, we won't tell)

[Buffalo Zoo](#) - A perfect spot for a break before wrapping up, or kicking off, this roadtrip! See everything from mammals, amphibians, birds, and more! While making your way



Middle Falls at Letchworth State Park

around, stop for a snack or one of the many experiences.

[Eternal Flame Falls](#) – This unique 30-foot waterfall houses a natural gas spring that can be lit to produce a constant flame.

For more New York State waterfalls, visit our interactive [NYS Waterfall Map](#).

To learn more about tourism in New York, visit the [I Love NY website](#).

Take the challenge (or enjoy a great waterfall guide)! Take part in one of our waterfall challenges, the [Adirondack Fifty Falls Waterfall Challenge](#), [Finger Lakes Region Waterfall Challenge](#), and the [Dig The Falls NYS 100!](#)

PLEASE NOTE: All properties should be considered posted and/or private property unless you have specific knowledge otherwise. Access to any waterfall or natural area of any category is a privilege and can be revoked at any time for any reason. Respect landowner rights, speak out should you witness anyone doing otherwise and educate everyone willing to listen about good environmental stewardship and the Leave No Trace (LNT) ideology.

Safety

Some waterfalls have a reputation for being dangerous. While terrain and trail conditions can make any waterfall hazardous, ALMOST every accident at waterfalls can be avoided. By following a few pointers and exercising diligence and common sense, a trip to a waterfall can be a lasting memory rather than a tragedy.

Waterfalls, by their very nature, are a draw for people to climb on, swim near, or jump from. If you decide to jump (please—never dive!) into an inviting pool at a waterfall, it is imperative that you first check out the water for unseen objects. Trees, branches, and other debris can wash downstream and become lodged under the water's surface, creating an unseen and deadly hazard. Large trees, boulders, and even debris like rope or netting can ensnare someone, with disastrous consequences.

When water levels are high and waterfalls really get going, there will be not only be an increase in the power of the current, but an increase in foam and aeration (air bubbles in the water) as the water shoots down into the pool from above. This aerated water does not afford the same resistance that swimmers are used to when they try to pull themselves up or out.

Increased water circulation and the force of the onrushing current can also push swimmers

into or under underwater ledges, giving no chance for escape. Many swimmers have perished because they underestimated the power of moving water. Do not swim when conditions even look dangerous. Chances are, they are.

Do not get too close to the edge of the waterfall's precipice. Too many people have fallen to their deaths by trying to get a better look or by getting that photo or selfie. **NO PHOTOGRAPH OR "SELFIE" IS WORTH YOUR LIFE.**

If signs are posted, pay close attention and do not go where they tell you not to. They are there for a reason. Just because you may see others doing things that they shouldn't be doing doesn't mean it's allowed. Instagram stardom doesn't count if you're dead.

Be mindful of your surroundings. If you are in a gorge or area with high walls, look around for potentially hazardous objects that might fall. Nothing should be discounted here.

Boulders, trees, and blocks of ice can break loose from above and come crashing down. When in doubt, make the safe call.

Crossing high and/or turbulent water should only be done if you are properly equipped to do so and have an exit plan if you should get swept off your feet.

Wear proper footwear; something with good traction and support that will help prevent slipping. If visiting a waterfall in the winter, wear micro-spikes or other traction devices to keep you from slipping on ice.

Wear proper clothing at all times. When wet, cotton and denim will remain damp for prolonged periods, potentially leading to hypothermia (a dangerous cooling down of the body), even in moderate weather.

Always carry a flashlight, headlamp, or other form of lighting in case your hike goes on longer than you had planned, and it gets dark. Don't rely on a cell phone flashlight.

Always respect posted and private property, and practice "carry in, carry out" with any trash you may have made from wrappers or bottles.

Take note that many of these hikes would be considered "difficult" or "moderate" to the average hiker. Participants should be aware of their own abilities, and of the risks associated with outdoor activities. Preparation is vital.

Those who plan on hiking to any of these waterfalls should make the necessary preparations and consult the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) website at www.dec.ny.gov for bulletins, weather alerts, and other important information.

Using drugs and/or alcohol is not recommended when visiting waterfalls, as impaired abilities can lead to accidents.

Tell'em:

Print

[Tweet](#)



[Share on Tumblr](#)

Telegram