

# HORSEPASTURE HORSEPASTURE RIVER in GORGES STATE PARK, NC

The stars of "Gorgeous" State Park are the waterfalls along Horsepasture River. Rainbow, 130ft tall often displays the rainbows for which it is named; Turtle Back, known locally as "Bust Your Butt Falls", is used as summertime sliding board; Drift, further upriver is more serene, Stairway, down river, boasts four white water drops. All are bold and beautiful and surrounded by dramatic rockeries. Located in the Blue Ridge Escarpment, park rainfall averages over 80 inches per year and elevations rise 2,000 feet in only four miles. A stop at the excellent visitor center provides grand vistas.



The hike, to all four falls is 5.5 miles...some difficult, some easy, averaging moderate with about 800ft of climb. The well developed trail begins behind the Kiosk, winds down to the river, then heads upstream beyond the park boundary, then climbs...often stair aided...to the three upper falls. Explore Rainbow first, then Turtleback and Drift. Return to the rockery above Rainbow for lunch. Continue back tracking to where the trail first joins the river and continue downstream along rougher, less developed paths about a mile to Stairway. Keep right to short cut the return from there.

**DIRECTIONS:** (GPS: 35.089119, -82.951828)  
 Gather, pool and depart from KKEPA at 845A. From KKEPA head north on SC 130 /NC281. The entrance to Gorges SP is about 17 miles north of the SC11/SC130 intersection. Look for the Gorges SP sign on the right. Enter and follow the main road, past the new visitor's center, about a mile in, and continue to a second parking area on the right. The trailhead is behind the kiosk. There are potties in the parking area. No fees required. Expect to return around 2PM. **UPDATED Aug 2017**

