

A look at new zipline canopy tour at Amicalola Falls

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Amicalola Falls has one of the highest cascading waterfalls east of the Mississippi, boasting a 729-foot cascade. The park around the falls is also one of the few Georgia state parks with a lodge.

And now this popular spot to visit is offering a new zip line course called “Aerial Adventure Park at Amicalola Falls.”

The new outdoor adventure includes 11 zip lines providing a two-hour canopy tour of North Georgia. The course begins near the edge of the lodge but then ventures into pristine areas with lakes, mountain views with soaring bald eagles, red-tailed hawks and spectacular greenery. During the coming weeks, as leaves change color on the maple, blue spruce and hawthorn trees, the zip lines will offer a spectacular foliage tour.

The zip lines range in height from as little as 60 feet off the ground to as high as 250 into the air. The longest zip line is 2,000 feet. Coral Hospitality, which manages the Amicalola State Park and Lodge, has partnered with American Adventure Park Systems, which manages several zip line courses including Historic Banning Mills. Eleven zip lines and seven suspension bridges were recently unveiled at Unicoi State Park, which is also managed by Coral Hospitality.



VIP guests were given a guided tour of the new zip line course at Amicalola Falls State Park in Dawsonville Thursday as part of the grand opening. During the coming weeks, the zip lines will offer a spectacular fall foliage tour.
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About a year ago, Amicalola Falls State Park added new activities for the outdoor enthusiasts, including a 3-D archery trail with targets shaped like bears, deer and raccoons in the woods, GPS scavenger hunts and survivalist camps (camping outdoors without a tent or gear). At the time, Amicalola Falls State Park only offered a small zip line course for team building exercises for groups. But after a steady stream of visitors expressed interest in zip lining, Coral Hospitality decided to seize on the demand

for this form of adventure tourism. (See box for three more zip line excursions worth checking out in Georgia.)

Heath Carter, regional vice president of sales and marketing for Coral Hospitality, said all of these new offerings including zip lines are designed to not only give visitors to Amicalola a reason to make a day trip there, but also have them stay longer, perhaps even spend the night at the lodge.

On Thursday, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution got a first look (and experience) catching a ride through the trees during the grand opening of the zip lines at Amicalola. A tour guide spent several minutes discussing the course and how to enjoy the course safely. Zip liners use American Adventure Park Systems' patented QuickTrekker closed-belay system, which ensures a secure connection to lines at all times throughout the canopy adventure, rather than transferring connections.



The ride allows you to feel the exhilaration of gliding through the canopy in a safe, secure way. Closed-toe shoes are a must, as well as comfortable clothing. The course is designed for all levels including beginners. The minimum age is 8 (and a child must also weigh 80 pounds). But it was still plenty fast for this AJC reporter, a zip line novice. The aerial park also has three cable and wood suspension bridges that link the zip lines, offering a nice moment to take in the views.

VIP guests were given a guided tour of the new zip line course at Amicalola Falls State Park in Dawsonville Thursday as part of the grand opening. The course is a canopy to canopy experience with 11 zip lines. BRANT SANDERLIN / BSANDERLIN@AJC.COM



Tom Currens, course manager of the new zip line course at Amicalola Falls State Park in Dawsonville, makes it look easy. The course is a canopy to canopy experience with 11 zip lines. BRANT SANDERLIN / BSANDERLIN@AJC.COM



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A guest crosses a connecting bridge on the new zip line course at Amicalola Falls State Park in Dawsonville Thursday. BRANT SANDERLIN / BSANDERLIN@AJC.COM

Kelly Sundstrom contributed to this article.

IF YOU GO

Zip lining at Amicalola Falls State Park and Lodge

\$59 per person. Zip lining starts at 10 a.m. and last one goes at 4 p.m. seven days a week. Reservations required (either by phone or website).

Minimum age is 8 (along with an 80 pounds minimum weight requirement).

280 Amicalola Falls State Park Road, Dawsonville. 1-800-573-9656, www.amicalolafallslodge.com.

Fall Foliage Package

Coral Hospitality is offering a fall foliage package, called Elevate Your View, which gets you a one-night lodge stay and two zip line tickets starting at \$99. The Elevate Your View package is also available at nearby Unicoi State Park and Lodge, 1-800-573-9659. Mention or enter promotion code ZIPFALL2016 for the discount at both parks and lodges.

THREE MORE ZIP LINES WORTH CHECKING OUT

Screaming Eagle Zipline Tours at Historic Banning Mills

At Historic Banning Mills, you'll get to choose from six zip lining levels, from a one-hour tour to over eight hours of all-day zip line fun. Holding the Guinness World Record for having the longest and largest zip line canopy tour, the Screaming Eagle Zipline covers almost 10 miles of line and takes you through some of the most beautiful old-growth forests in Georgia. With its Closed Belay System, the Screaming Eagle Zipline provides you with a safe and secure zip lining experience.

Prices range between \$49 and \$149 per person. 205 Horseshoe Dam Road, Whitesburg. 770-834-9149, www.historicbanningmills.com.

North Georgia Canopy Tours

Learn about the forest life around you as you glide through the trees at North Georgia Canopy Tours. Their certified and eco-trained zip line guides take you through your choice of a two-hour or three-hour zip line tour while sharing information about the forest habitat, wildlife and history about the local culture and community. On your tour, you have the option to rent a GoPro camera for an additional \$35 to record your experience. Prices range between \$69 and \$89 per person. 5290 Harris Road, Lula. 770-869-7272, www.northgeorgiacanopytours.com.

Zip lining at Treetop Quest

The kid-friendly zip lines at Treetop Quest include everything from a Chick'Pea Course with a trampoline and obstacle course, to the medium and challenging obstacle courses with incorporated zip lines throughout. At this self-guided experience, you'll receive detailed instructions and equipment, then you're let loose on the lines to enjoy up to 2 1/2 hours of fun. With all the options at Treetop Quest, you're sure to find a little something for everyone in your family. Prices range from \$22 to \$49 per person. 4770 N. Peachtree Road, Dunwoody. 770-365-0356, www.treetopquest.com.