

Your comprehensive guide to Georgia's state parks

Mary Caldwell – For the AJC

11:53 a.m. Thursday, March 30, 2017 [Atlanta Parks and Trails](#)



Amicalola Falls is Georgia's tallest waterfall as well as the tallest cascading waterfall in the Southeast.

There's never a wrong time of year to visit one of Georgia's nearly 50 state parks, each of which has its own unique character.

Whether you'd like to hike, fish, appreciate towering waterfalls or explore caves, you'll be able to do it at Georgia state parks far and wide.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources manages the parks and recommends these [25 things to do while visiting](#). And while you're there, you may want to make it an overnight or weekend trip, since you'll find accommodations that range from campsites to [yurts](#) to lodges.

'Must-visit' state parks



The Len Foote Hike Inn in Amicalola Falls State Park. Contributed by Len Foote Hike Inn For the AJC

The following are five of Georgia's "must-visit" state parks:

Amicalola Falls, 280 Amicalola Fall State Park Road, Dawsonville. 706-265-4703.

Amicalola Falls State Park is known for amazing views of its namesake waterfall, which, at 729 feet, is Georgia's tallest. It's also the tallest cascading waterfall in the Southeast. Amicalola can appeal to almost everyone, since it can be enjoyed in a variety of ways, depending on your comfort level. To view the falls, visitors can choose an easier pathway or a more difficult trail. If you'd like to stay overnight, accommodations range from a campground to rustic cottages to a mountain-top lodge.



Smith Creek below Anna Ruby Falls located in Unicoi State Park, White County, Ga. grady allen

Unicoi, 1788 Highway 356, Helen. 706-878-2201.

If you want to be active, you'll find plenty to do in Unicoi State Park's 1,050 acres. Fish for bream or trout at mountain streams, or rent a kayak or canoe to take out on Unicoi Lake. Guided tours are also available to help you explore the Lake Trail and see the fault line that the park rests on, as well as a large formation that contains fool's gold. Twelves miles of hiking trails are available, or you can take a quicker tour via zipline canopy. At the end of the day, rest in a "barrel" cabin or at the lodge.



Cloudland Canyon State Park includes interesting scenery such as deep canyons and wild caves. [gastateparks.org/For the AJC](http://gastateparks.org/For%20the%20AJC)

Cloudland Canyon, 122 Cloudland Canyon Park Road, Rising Fawn. 706-657-4050.

This state park is known for its interesting scenery, which includes waterfalls, canyons that are a thousand feet deep and wild caves. Case Cave requires rappelling about 30 feet down into the cave, where you'll be able to explore about three miles of passageways, including a lake. You don't need ropes to explore Sitton's Cave, which has formations such as stalactites that you'll see as you travel along the muddy banks of its underground river.

Caves can be dangerous environments without the proper equipment and knowledge, so unless you're an experienced spelunker, you should take a guided tour.



Hiking around Vogel State Park's 22-acre lake is a popular activity. gastateparks.org/For the AJC

Vogel, 405 Vogel State Park Road, Blairsville. 706-745-2628.

Vogel is located at the base of Blood Mountain and is a popular spot to leaf-peep in the fall. It's also home to a 22-acre lake, complete with a beach area where you can relax in the summer. Hikes range from an easy loop that leads to Trahyta Falls to a more challenging 13-mile backcountry hike.

Many facilities in the park were built by the Civilian Conservation Corp. during the Depression, and you can learn more about this history with the story of the "CCC Boys" at the park's museum.



A life-size statue of Franklin Delano Roosevelt is located at Dowdell's Knob in F.D. Roosevelt State Park. [gastateparks.org/For the AJC](http://gastateparks.org/For%20the%20AJC)

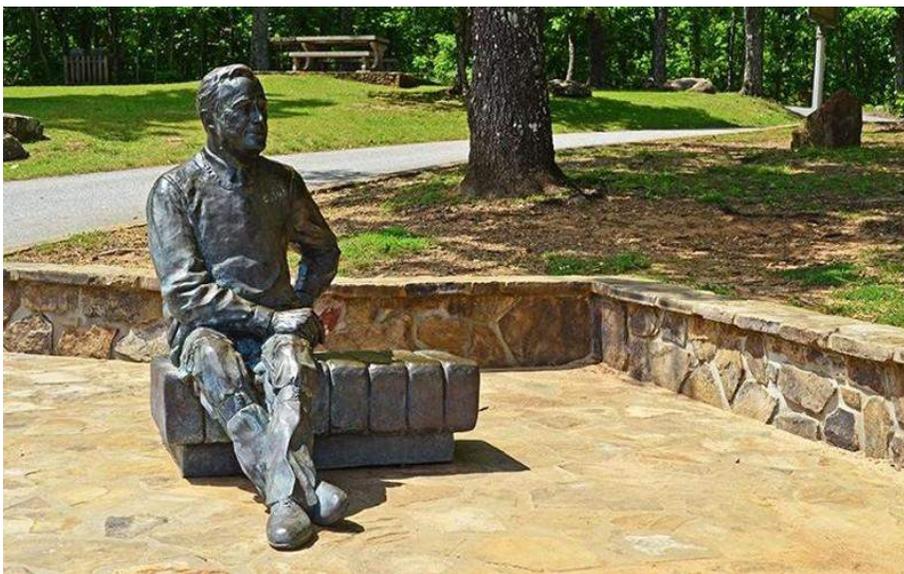
[F.D. Roosevelt](#), 2970 Georgia Highway 190, Pine Mountain. 706-663-4858.

Georgia's largest state park comprises over 9,000 acres near Pine Mountain. You can find a life-size sculpture of FDR at Dowdell's Knob in the park, where he sometimes enjoyed a picnic on his frequent visits to this part of the state.

The park also has a pool that was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps as well as 42 miles of hiking trails.

[6 Georgia state parks for adrenaline junkies](#)

Other parks worth the trip



A life-size statue of Franklin Delano Roosevelt is located at Dowdell's Knob in F.D. Roosevelt State Park. [gastateparks.org/For the AJC](http://gastateparks.org/For%20the%20AJC)

High Falls, 76 High Falls Park Drive, Jackson. 478-993-3053.

Towaliga River in High Falls State Park is known as one of the state's top spots to catch hybrid and white bass, and the park is home to the tallest cascading waterfall south of Atlanta.

Red Top Mountain, 50 Lodge Road SE, Acworth. 770-975-0055.

Located on 12,000-acre Lake Allatoona – only 45 minutes north of Atlanta - this park is known for its water sports, including water skiing, fishing and swimming. It also has 15 miles of forested trails.



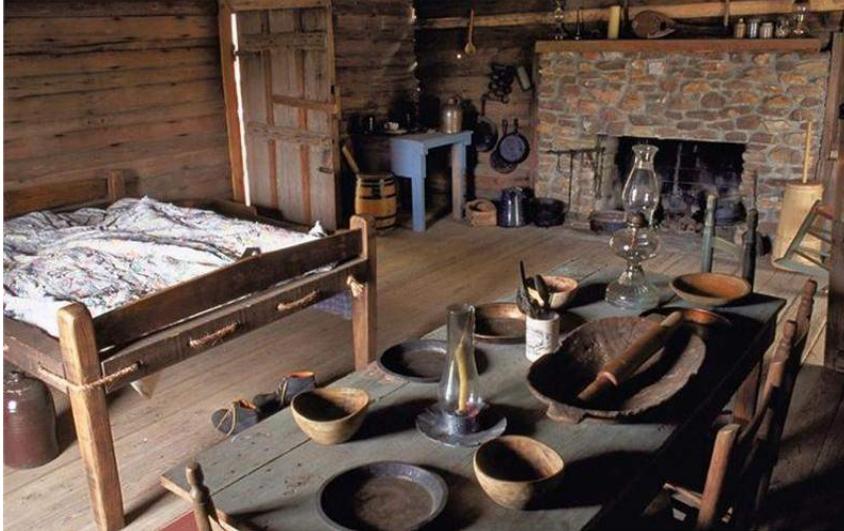
Skidaway Island State Park borders Georgia's intracoastal waterway. [gastateparks.org/For the AJC](http://gastateparks.org/For%20the%20AJC)

Skidaway Island, 52 Diamond Causeway, Savannah. 912-598-2300.

Skidaway borders the intracoastal waterway, so expect to see terrain such as salt marshes and wildlife including fiddler crabs.

General Coffee, 46 John Coffee Road, Nicolls. 912-384-7082.

Learn about the state's agricultural history through Heritage Farm, which has log cabin, a tobacco barn, cane mill, farm animals and more. Its cypress swamp land is an ideal habitat for rare plants and wildlife such as gopher tortoises.



Heritage Farm at General Coffee State Park lets visitors learn about the state's agricultural history. [gastateparks.org/For the AJC](http://gastateparks.org/For%20the%20AJC)

What to know before you go

State park visitors pay \$5 daily, and if you visit the parks frequently, you can buy a ParkPass for \$50, which is good for 12 months and exempts you from the daily fee.

You can also check a ParkPass out from your local public library with a library card, similar to the way you'd check out a book. Demand can be high for these passes, however.

If you have a particular interest – such as mountain biking or paddling – [state parks have several clubs](#) including some that offer discounts or incentives.

For more information or to view an [interactive map of state parks](#), visit gastateparks.org. While you're there, check out Georgia Department of Natural Resources recommendations for [hidden gems](#) to look for during your park visits.