

Black Mountain News

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6 Georgia state parks for adrenaline junkies

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Road Trip



(Photo: Harris Hatcher/SPECIAL TO BMN)

A New Year is a great time to challenge yourself, so why not amp up the adrenaline this year? From hiking and running mountains, to climbing trees, zip lining and night paddling, you can test your adventurous spirit in these Georgia state parks not far from Black Mountain.

Trail half marathon at Vogel State Park

Trail runners train at Georgia State Parks because of the unmatched scenic views and the well-maintained trails. The Coosa Backcountry Trail at Vogel State Park (GaStateParks.org/Vogel) is a 12-mile loop that features about 2,100 feet of elevation gain. Two serious mountain climbs over Coosa Bald and Slaughter Mountain add to the challenge, as the route intersects with the Duncan Ridge Trail for part of the loop. Runners

pass over creek crossings, hop over rocks, and run through lush, thick forest throughout the loop.

Trek to the depths of Tallulah Gorge State Park

At 1,000 feet deep, hikers can explore the bottom of Tallulah Gorge (GaStateParks.org/TallulahGorge) by tackling 600 metal steps and crossing a suspension bridge that sways 80 feet above the ground. Once hikers are on the gorge floor, they can rock-hop across the boulders and explore the hidden gorge floor cave. Be sure to obtain a gorge floor permit from the Interpretation Center before making the 2.5 mile round-trip journey.



A suspension bridge in Tallulah Gorge State Park sways 80 feet above the gorge. (Photo: SPECIAL TO BMN)

Tree Climbing at Panola Mountain State Park

Tree climbing is not just for kids anymore. No matter your age, the introductory tree climbing program at Panola Mountain State Park (GaStateParks.org/PanolaMountain) teaches participants how to use a rope and harness to ascend into a 200-plus-year-old Southern red oak. Climb, swing and scramble up to 30 feet off the ground. Events are hosted throughout the year at Panola Mountain.

Zipline through the mountains at



Beautiful views surround zipliners as they make their way through Amicalola Falls State Park. (Photo: Harris Hatcher/SPECIAL TO BMN)

Amicalola Falls State Park & Lodge

Experience the rush of adrenaline and fly through the air on Amicalola Falls' Zip Lines (AmicalolaFallsLodge.com/Adventures/Zip-Lines). Zip through the park's forests and test balance on suspension bridges that vary in height and length throughout the zipline course. During the course, admire the panoramic views of the surrounding mountains while zipping across the valleys.

Night paddling at Stephen C. Foster State Park

Paddle at one of the darkest places in Georgia, Stephen C. Foster State Park (GaStateParks.org/StephenCFoster), designated by the International Dark Sky Association as an "International Dark Sky Park." Night paddling is exclusive to the park's ranger-led trips, that can be found here. Watch as the last light of day fades into the dark night, leaving only the twinkling light of stars and the moon to guide the way through the Okefenokee Swamp. Look for alligator eyes glowing from your flashlight, take in a full moon or perhaps the Milky Way and enjoy a relaxing paddle in the swamp.

Caving at Cloudland Canyon State Park

Go underground, get muddy and experience a wild cave with guided tours of Cloudland Canyon's caves. Gear up with helmets and flashlights and let the Georgia Girl Guides (GeorgiaGirlGuides.com) lead adventurers through the dark tunnels and limestone formations of Georgia's caves. Tours last anywhere from one to four hours.