

Sumter National Forest

South Carolina

Winding Stairs Trail



Southern Region, USDA Forest Service

Date: 3/26/2004

Highlights

A 75-foot waterfall tucked away along this moderate, 3.5-mile trail helps make the Winding Stairs Trail one of the finest beginner trail in northwest South Carolina. If you start at the northern trailhead at the Cherry Hill Recreation Area, this meandering path is an easy hike because it drops 1,100 feet over its length. If you are looking for a more demanding hike, start at the southern trailhead on Tamassee Road (FS 710). Either way, this is a great hike for beginners. Follow rust colored blazes through a hardwood forest, encounter a multitude of wildflowers, and cross small creeks, all within sight or hearing of the West Fork of Townes Creek. The forest is mainly oak with an understory of buckberry and blueberry; fall colors here are particularly striking. Deep Ochre, red, and yellow fill the woods and provide a gorgeous habitat for thrushes, warblers, and indigo buntings in addition to deer and wild hogs. You will eventually enter a dry, open pine grove that gives way to a smaller path that leads to Miuka Falls. Oddly, just before the switchback to the falls, the Winding Stairs Trail makes its sole departure from Townes Creek, possibly the only point you won't hear the water. The path to the falls is not totally obvious, especially in winter and early spring, so keep your eyes opened. Continuing from Miuka falls, you eventually come to the southern trailhead on Tamassee Road.

Surrounding Area

Cherry Hill Recreation Area, Oconee State Park, Burrells Ford Campground

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Directions: To the northern trailhead:

From Walhalla, drive west on SC 28 for 7.5 miles and bear right onto SC 107. Drive 8.8 miles to Cherry Hill Recreation Area on the right. The trailhead is on the right (east) side of the highway, just south of the entrance to the recreation area.

To the southern trailhead: From Walhalla, drive west on SC 28 for 7.5 miles and right onto SC 107. Drive 5.8 miles and turn right onto Tamassee Road (FS 710). Drive 2.5 miles to a small parking area and trailhead on the left, just before a bridge crossing Townes Creek.

Camping: Primitive camping is allowed, but campsites must be greater than 50 feet from streams and trails, and greater than ¼ mile from roads.

Difficulty level: easy

Length: 3.5 miles

Season: Year-round

Surface type: Dirt

Trail Blazes: Rust

Travel Time: 2 hours

For More Information

Andrew Pickens Ranger District

112 Andrew Pickens Circle

Mountain Rest, SC 29664

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Hours: Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

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