

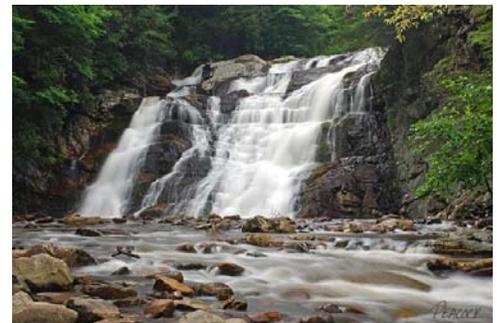
# MILLIGAN COLLEGE ACTIVITY GUIDE

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Here are some suggestions of things to do and places to visit that are within an hour's drive of Milligan College. Approximate travel times from campus are in parentheses.

## Important Safety Tips and Precautions before you set out...

- **Wear appropriate shoes!** Tennis shoes are adequate for most hikes. Hiking boots are preferred. Just don't wear sandals, clogs, or flip-flops!
- **Waterfalls.** WARNING!!! Every year people have fallen to their deaths or drown (many others are seriously injured) at some of the waterfalls listed here. If you visit them, please be careful and use common sense! Stay far away from the top of the falls (wet, mossy rocks are very slippery) and do not attempt to jump or dive into the pool at the base of the falls (besides the jagged rocks under the surface, churning waterfalls have the power to pull people under).
- **Carry water.** If you're going to hike more than ½ mile – it's a good idea to bring along some water. Never drink out of streams or lakes - Water sources can be tainted with viruses, bacteria, and pollutants.
- **Carry proper clothing.** The mountains are susceptible to unpredictable fluctuations in weather. Warm sunny days can become cold and rainy in a matter of minutes. Carry a rain poncho; you can buy the small folded-up ones for \$1. Remember that even though it might be 70° F at Milligan, it could be 55° F on Roan Mountain. (In addition to the extra clothes, carry some first aid stuff, trail mix/snack, a lighter, and pocketknife.)
- **Use sunblock.** You will need this if you'll be hiking across mountain balds or through mountain meadows. Also, wear a light-colored baseball cap for protection from the sun.
- **Vegetation.** There are many species of rare plants in this area. Please be very careful not to trample or pick vegetation while exploring!
- **Poison ivy.** Poison ivy is everywhere in these mountains, so you should learn how to identify it. Wear jeans for deep woods hikes.
- **Insects.** Use insect repellents to ward off mosquitoes, gnats and ticks.
- **Snakes.** There are only two kinds of poisonous snakes that live in these mountains: copperheads and timber rattlesnakes -- learn how to identify them. There are some things you can do to avoid an unexpected encounter with a snake:
  - ❑ Use caution in rocky and creekside areas where snakes are most commonly found; do not remove stones or logs.
  - ❑ Do not step or put your hand into places you can't see.
  - ❑ If you come across a snake, let it be. Even bites from non-poisonous snakes contain bacteria and require medical attention.



Laurel Falls

**Laurel Falls** (45 min.) This 55' waterfall is arguably the most beautiful waterfall in northeast Tennessee. But it's not the easiest to get to. The 1.2 mile trail is level for much of the way, but the last quarter mile goes straight down. They've done an amazing job putting in stone steps all the way to the bottom, but it's still a difficult descent and a strenuous hike going back up. A good pair of hiking boots with ankle support are recommended -- and on a hot day, a bottle or canteen of water. **Directions:** Hampton, TN is located between cities of Elizabethton and Roan Mountain on Highway 19E. Once in Hampton, turn north onto route 321/67 toward

Mountain City. Drive 0.8 miles and turn right immediately in front of the Citizen's Bank onto Dennis Cove Road. Take this incredibly curvy and steep road for exactly 4 miles to a parking area and trailhead on your left. From here, begin your hike on the main trail on your left (which is actually the Appalachian Trail -- look for the white slashes on the trees).

**Coon Den Falls and Dennis Cove Falls** (45 min.) Coon Den Falls is a unique 50' horsetail- shaped waterfall, located very close to the trailhead to Laurel Falls (above). While the hike is short (1/2 mile), it's fairly steep. You pass a smaller waterfall on the way up (covered with fallen trees), but just a little further and you arrive at the main attraction. Dennis Cove is remote and beautiful – and while the falls are somewhat small, getting to them is a fun adventure. **Directions:** Drive to the trailhead of Laurel Falls (see directions above). The trailhead to Coon Den Falls is on the same road, just 1/2 mile further. There is no established parking area for Coon Den, so be on the lookout on the right side for blue slashes and a small brown trail sign. The Dennis Cove trailhead is a little further on up on the road (approx. 0.2 miles) to the right of the bridge and is well-marked. If you get to the Dennis Cove campground, you've gone too far. Park in the gravel parking area next to the bridge. After parking and walking in a 1/2 mile or so, you reach the first of three creek crossings. These are *very challenging* in periods of high water – it's safest to simply wade across. The good news is that there's very little elevation gain from the parking area to the falls. After a brief hike following the third crossing, a short, unmarked trail to your right will lead down to the 10' waterfall, the main 25' upper falls is a little ways further on the main trail. These are great places for a summer swim!



Watauga Lake

**Watauga Lake** (30 min.), a 6,430 acre, 16 mile long lake, was created in 1948 when the TVA completed construction of the Watauga Dam. Swimming is available at Shook Branch and Watauga Point Recreation Areas. From Shook Branch you can also access the Appalachian Trail and hike three miles to the dam itself – it's a moderately difficult hike, but offers many scenic views of the lake. **Directions:** From Elizabethton, take 19E to Hampton, TN, turn north onto Highway 321/67 towards Mountain City. Drive 3.2 miles to the trailhead at Shook Branch Recreation Area (on your left); Watauga Point is approximately two miles further on your left.



The Blue Hole

**The Blue Hole** (40 min.) is one of the most visited waterfalls in the Tri-Cities area –it's actually a series of four small waterfalls (with a combined drop of 45 feet) outside of Elizabethton, TN. A very fun place to explore – and a good place for a summer swim! (But do not jump from the rocks above!) **Directions:** From Elizabethton, take Route 91 (Stoney Creek) for approximately 10 miles, turn left on Panhandle Road, continue for approximately 1 mile to parking area on left. A short trail leads down and around to the falls.

**Roan Mountain** (1 hr.) Want to really experience the Appalachian Mountains? On Roan, you'll find the Appalachian Trail and breathtaking vistas. If you park at Carver's Gap (which straddles the TN/NC state line) you can hike up to Round Bald, one of a series of three grassy mountain tops that are called balds because they are barren of trees -- they offer stunning views in all directions. If you turn right at Carver's Gap and continue driving up the mountain, you'll come to the Rhododendron Gardens, the old Cloudland Hotel site, and a trail which

takes you to a stunning mountain overlook. **Directions:** Travel through Elizabethton, taking Route 19E past Hampton to the town of Roan Mountain, turn right onto Route 143 and travel 12.8 miles to the TN/NC state line (a.k.a. Carver's Gap). On your way up the mountain, you'll pass through the Roan Mountain State Park. Eventually, you leave the state park and enter the national forest. The Appalachian Trail, which crosses Carver's Gap, goes up Round Bald to your left. Turn right to go up to the top of the mountain (a small fee is required of each vehicle).



Elk River Falls

**Elk River Falls** (1 hr.) is awesome and amazingly accessible. It is undoubtedly the easiest waterfall to visit in the area. It is also one of the most powerful – it seems each summer a young person drowns after jumping from the top. If you visit, teach your group to appreciate the power of the churning produced by a waterfall of this size.

**Directions:** Take 19E to Elk Park, NC (just over the border from Roan Mountain, TN), turn north onto Old Mill Road, and after 1/4 mi. turn north again onto Elk River Road. Take this for approx. 4 miles until the road dead ends at the falls. It's a short and somewhat steep 400 yard descent to the base of the falls.

**The Beauty Spot** (1 hr.) lives up to its name. It's the grassy 'bald' where the Appalachian Trail passes over the Unaka Mountain in Unicoi County. With its majestic, panoramic mountain views, it's a favorite place to catch a sunset. The road to the Beauty Spot is gravel and a bit rough. A vehicle with higher clearance is recommended (SUV, truck or van). If you follow the trail up to the top of the grassy bald and then follow the AT (follow the white slashes) to the left down into the woods for one mile, you'll reach another beautiful grassy meadow (lots of summer wildflowers!). **Directions:** From I-26 take the Erwin Main Street Exit (#36), at the end of the ramp turn east toward town and you will immediately arrive at a stop light. Turn right onto Rt. 107 and drive 1/2 mile, turn left at stop light onto Rock Creek Road (Rt. 395) -- continue on for 6.6 miles to TN/NC line (called Indian Grave Gap). [The sign welcoming you to NC has been stolen, so be sure to watch your odometer. The state line crosses at the top of this mountain gap, so if you find yourself heading downhill, you've gone too far!]. At Indian Grave Gap take the unmarked gravel road to the left. After about 10 minutes (2 miles) you'll come to a fork, stay right and you will immediately arrive at the Beauty Spot.

**Sill Branch and Pine Ridge Falls** (1 hr.) these two falls are located in close proximity to each other – both are fairly easy, short hikes (each about 0.6 of a mile). Sill Branch is the taller, more spectacular of the two falls. Both are best visited after a good rain – in dryer times of the summer they tend to become just a trickle. **Directions:** Take I-26 to the Erwin/Jonesborough exit #37. At the end of the ramp, turn right and take State Route 81/107 west for 6.5 miles, stay on Rt. 107 by turning left and continue for 5 more miles. Turn left on Clark's Creek Road and drive 3.1 miles (the last 1.7 will be gravel) into the Cherokee National Forest to a parking area on the left. A small sign will indicate the trailhead for Sill Branch Falls (when the trail forks, stick to the left). The trailhead to Pine Ridge Falls is another 0.2 miles further on Clark's Creek Road on the left.



Sill Branch Falls

**Sycamore Shoals State Park** (10 min.) This is the closest park to Milligan – it offers a nice walking trail along the Watauga River and a replica of the frontier fort that once stood here. It is on your left as you drive into Elizabethton. Go to <http://tennessee.gov/environment/parks/SycamoreShoals/index.shtml> or call 423-543-5808.

**Warrior's Path State Park** (30 min.), located just outside of Kingsport, TN, has just about everything you can imagine in a park: golfing, swimming, fishing, boating, camping, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, picnicking, as well as playgrounds, tennis and soccer facilities. The website contains directions to the park along with a detailed park map... <http://tennessee.gov/environment/parks/WarriorsPath/> or call (423) 239-8531.

**For more information**  
or to discover other destinations  
check out Appalachian Treks at  
<http://appalachiantreks.blogspot.com/>

**Bays Mountain** (30 min.), just outside of Kingsport, is remarkable -- containing a huge lake (boat rides available), nature habitats (wolves, owls, hawks, turtles, otters, bobcats, deer, raccoons, and snakes), planetarium, and 25 miles of trails. The \$3-per-car entrance fee is well worth it. Go to [www.baysmountain.com](http://www.baysmountain.com) for directions and schedule or call (423) 229-9447.

**Wetlands Water Park** (30 min.) - <http://www.wetlandsjonesborough.com/> or call (423)753-1561.

## Other suggestions – perfect for a rainy day...

**Bristol Motor Speedway** (30 min.) is the most popular track in all of Nascar and one of the largest stadiums in the US (seats 160,000). They give a great tour of the track, the luxury skyboxes and the dragway. It's inexpensive and lots of fun, even if you're not a race fan! Groups need to call to schedule tour: (423) 989-6960 or go to [www.bristolmotorspeedway.com](http://www.bristolmotorspeedway.com) for more information.



**Gray Fossil Museum** (20 min.) located in Gray, TN is a new museum which contains prehistoric artifacts and exhibits. The price of admission is right: FREE! That's the price for a self-guided tour of the permanent exhibits. Guided tours are economically priced. Go to [www.grayfossilmuseum.org/](http://www.grayfossilmuseum.org/) call (423) 439-3659. **Directions:** From I-26, take exit 13 (Gray), turn left onto Route 75 and travel for 1.8 miles. The museum is on your left. Open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.



**Fun Expedition** (15 min.) - <http://www.funexpedition.com/> or call (423) 929-2FUN.

**Johnson City Mall** (15 min.) - <http://www.mallatjohnsoncity.com/> or call (423) 282-5312.

**Appalachian Caverns** (30 min.) - <http://www.appalachiancaverns.com/> or call (423) 323-2337.