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National Edition

America's best waterfall hikes

The journey to a mountain's summit has long served as a metaphor for the process of surmounting obstacles to reach a goal. The journey to the base of a waterfall, on the other hand, is just really, really pleasant.

And this week, we feel like something pleasant. So we broke out the guidebooks, called some friends, and rounded up the three best waterfall hikes in the lower 48.

Oregon's Trail of Ten Falls

The Trail of Ten Falls in Oregon's [Silver State Park](#) is sort of like Led Zeppelin IV—all hits, no filler. The 8.7-mile loop through Oregon's dense temperate rainforest passes by 10 waterfalls (duh), and weaves behind three of them.



The most famous of the falls is the 177-foot South Falls, which is surrounded by lawns, picnic tables, facilities, and a playground. A nearby swimming hole includes a sandy beach and is a great place to stop for lunch.

If you go: Dogs are not permitted on the Trail of Ten Falls, but horses and mountain bikes are welcome. A shorter (3 mile) loop is also available, and overnight tent and RV sites are available in the park. A day use pass costs \$5.

Virginia's Cascade Falls



Whenever we chat with members of the *hikerati* (you know the type), we find ourselves defending the value of short day hikes. And whenever our stated position is met with scoffs or sidelong glances, we bring up Virginia's Cascade Falls.

The 69-foot falls are found at the far end of a four-mile round-trip hike that connects two trails: "Upper" and "Lower." The pools below the falls are open to swimming, diving, and dogs... making them sort of a backcountry pool party.

If you go: The parking lot for the falls is about four miles outside Pembroke

on Cascade Drive. You'll have to pay a \$3 day use fee, and you'll want to get there early (it's popular, like we said). Most hikers approach the falls by the Upper Trail and return by the scenic Lower Trail. Leashed dogs are allowed.

Arizona's Havasupai Trail

We've saved the best for last. And also the toughest. And the longest. And generally the most extreme in every way. The **10.5 mile Havasupai Trail** connects Supai, Arizona to Havasu Falls, and combines high temperatures, steep terrain, and breathtaking scenery to gain the top spot on our waterfall hike bucket list



The tallest of the Havasu Falls (pictured above) falls 190 feet into a large pool of clear, blue-green water. This pool is open to swimmers (they all are), and offers a welcome respite from the heat of the canyon. So don't forget your suit.

If you go: The falls are best visited in September and October. Plan to do the trip as an overnight backpacking trip, and to spend a day or two exploring the waterfalls. You'll need to get a camping permit from the Havasupai tribe in advance (the falls are on a Reservation), or rent a room in the Havasupai Lodge for

\$145 (sleeps four). Complete reservation/fee details are [available online](#).