

Discover Gooseberry Falls: A Self-guided Tour to Gooseberry Falls State Park

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For Group Leaders, Teachers, and other Interested Folks

This guide is designed to give you a brief look at the park's natural and historical resources.

I recommend that you stop at the **visitor center** first (allow 15-30 minutes), and then take either the shorter ADA accessible (or non-ADA if you use stairs) **"Waterfalls Walk"** to see the Middle and Upper Falls (allow 30-40 minutes) **OR** take the non-ADA accessible **"Falls View Loop"** to see the Middle, Upper, & Lower Falls (allow 45-90 minutes). Along the way, you can view outdoor signs highlighting area natural and historical resources by the Gateway Plaza.

I highly recommend spending some time exploring on the **Picnic Flow** (allow 15-30 minutes) as well since it is one of the North Shore's best examples of a well-exposed, hardened lava flow. It's located on the Lake Superior shoreline and is a nice area to have a sack lunch, if you brought one. However, since the local climate is moderated by Lake Superior (generally temps are 10°F cooler during spring/summer), you may want to bring a light jacket or sweatshirt since it can be breezy along the lakeshore. From the visitor center you can either walk (allow 20-30 minutes via the River View trail) or drive (allow 5 minutes).

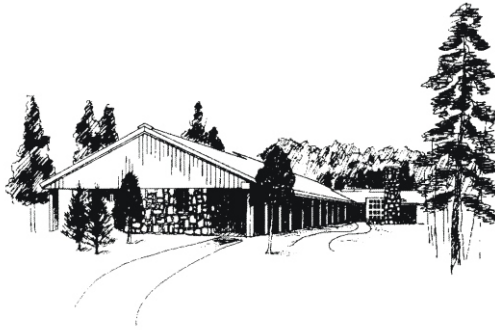
A Minnesota State Park vehicle permit is not needed to park in the rest area parking lot. However, if you choose to drive to the lakeshore/Picnic Flow areas, a vehicle permit is needed (purchase daily or annual vehicle permit at park).

If you have any questions, contact the park naturalist at: carly.hawkinson@dnr.state.mn.us (218)834-3855 ext. 227, Gooseberry Falls State Park, 3206 Hwy. 61, Two Harbors, MN 55616.

For more park information, photos, and official park maps, see our website at: www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/gooseberry_falls/index.html



Discover the Gooseberry Falls State Park Visitor Center



Inside the **visitor center** you will find a theater, interpretive displays, trail center, nature store, modern bathrooms, vending machines, park offices, and travel information.

Feel free to wander into the **theater** to see an entertaining 13-minute “*Lake Superior: The Greatest Lake*” video, which features some interesting fun facts about this Great Lake and a quick introduction to area geology. This program is followed by an 11-minute “*Minnesota’s North Shore: A Constellation of Parks*” video, which briefly highlights the North Shore and park history as well as provides a glimpse to Tettegouche, Cascade River, and Grand Portage state parks. The videos are shown without interruption throughout the day during summer and on weekends during fall, winter, and spring. If they aren’t showing when you arrive, simply stop at the front desk and ask to see them.

Four other 5-minute videos are shown without interruption throughout the day in the **interpretive display area** on the 2 big-screen TVs. They are “*Welcome to Gooseberry Falls State Park*,” “*Gooseberry through the Seasons*,” “*Lake Superior Watershed: A Raindrop’s Journey*,” and “*The Legacy of the CCC Boys*.” Also in this area, you will find several displays, four touch screen kiosks that highlight the park and North Shore area history, geology, plants, animals, and more!

Before you leave the **display area**, be sure to look at the park topographic model for an introduction to North Shore geology and how waterfalls are made. (Three lava flows make the Upper, Middle, & Lower Falls, which collectively are known as the main falls. On this display, four rock samples show lava flow anatomy – frothy, bubble-like flow tops with solid, bubble-less flow bottoms. You will be able to see a flow top and flow bottom by the main falls.)



Just **outside** the visitor center, be sure to look at the “**River, Lake, Falls and Forest**” **nature art** column. This special 100+ year-old fir timber column has plant and animal images that were hand cut out of recycled copper, aluminum, and brass. Each side represents a habitat in the park – over 50 animals and lots of plants can be found!



Gooseberry Waterfalls Walk

There are two different routes outlined below, both walks are recommended when **no snow** is on the ground (because the only maintained, winter walking trail is to the Upper Falls). Please use caution at all times during the walk; be aware of outdoor safety hazards. Use, modify, or ignore the stops/activities as you see fit.

The **“Waterfalls Walk”** is a shorter route that highlights the Middle and Upper Falls; this route can be ADA accessible if you use the ADA trail segment instead of the stairs (allow 30-45 minutes). The **“Falls View Loop”** is a non-ADA accessible longer route that highlights the Middle, Upper, & Lower Falls (allow 45-90 minutes.) Both walks begin with #1-7 below – see map for routes.

1. Outside Visitor Center by Art Column. Spend a few minutes looking for critters hidden on the “River, Lake, Falls, & Forest” Nature Column. Each side represents a different habitat found in the park.

Follow trail to Middle Falls, stop when the large “castle” wall comes into view by trail “y” intersection.

2. “Castle in the Park.” The “castle” was built in the 1930s by a group of young men (ages 17-23) known as the “CCC Boys.” The “castle” is a retaining wall, built to prevent soil under the highway from eroding away.



Follow trail down to Middle Falls (or for ADA trail, follow the switchback route.)

3. Middle Falls Viewing Platform. Enjoy Minnesota State Parks’ most visited waterfalls.



Look for the hardened lava flow top and bottom characteristics on the “rock island” (just to right & front of platform). The “frothy” flow top is easily eroded compared to the “gas bubble-less,” hard-to-erode flow bottom. This erosion helps to create waterfalls.

Notice the cave? Sometimes caves are made when fast-moving water erodes the flow tops &/or the softer minerals that had filled in some of the hardened flow top’s gas bubbles. At one time, the Gooseberry River filled the entire gorge and valley! This ancient, glacial river carried debris that helped to scour the rock, leaving behind caves and waterfalls.

After viewing falls, take stairs leading up (or backtrack on the ADA trail until you get to the “y” intersection) and follow trail to Upper Falls.

4. Upper Falls Viewing Area. If you are wondering . . . why is the water brown? Where does the river begin? Where does the river end? (Answers are on Gateway Plaza “Mysteries of the Gooseberry River” sign. The next stop.)



Walk back under the bridge (on trail you originally took) until you come to a set of stairs on your right. Climb the stairs leading all the way up to the Gateway Plaza. (Or for ADA trail, follow trail back almost to the visitor center and then take the accessible trail – allow an extra 5 minutes).

5. At Gateway Plaza. Find “Mysteries of the Gooseberry River,” “Ancient Lava Flows & Mile High Ice,” “Having Fun on the North Shore,” “How the Park Got Its Name,” & more! (Signs not up November - March.)

6. Walk across Bridge. This is a must do! This spot provides a panoramic view of the Gooseberry River gorge and valley. On a clear day, check out the horizon . . . you can see the world's largest freshwater lake by surface, Lake Superior, and the Wisconsin and Sand Island (one of the Apostle Islands) shoreline, which is about 30-40 miles across the Lake! Look for ships or ore boats on this Great Lake, too.

Continue on trail, which loops down & around, to the suspended walkway (under bridge).

7. On Suspended Walkway. Note open area behind the Upper Falls and just to the left. This is where the "CCC Boys" who built the park in the 1930s lived. Their camp even had a library, which was called "Gooseberry University."

CCC Camp by Upper Falls



Imagine. As many as 200 young men at a time were living in this camp. There was a hustling, bustling of activity as they built stone and log buildings throughout the park, created hiking trails, roads, a sewer system and a campground. After a hard day of work, they relaxed by playing camp sports or other popular leisure activities of the day. Imagine . . . that's what the Civilian Conservation Corps scene would have looked like from 1934-1941!

8. From suspended bridge walkway: Choose one of the two routes – see map.

✦ If doing the shorter **"Waterfalls Walk,"** continue crossing bridge; turn left (continue under bridge) and follow trail back to the visitor center.

✦ If you are doing the longer **"Falls View Loop,"** turn around and backtrack (on the trail you originally took to get under the bridge) until you come to the first unpaved path on your right. Follow this path along the east side of the Gooseberry River.

9. Waterfalls Comes into View. Look at waterfalls ledge and tiers. Notice the natural geometric (pentagonal column) design that was created as the lava flow cooled.

10. Trailside Bench. This is a good place to sit down and listen to the sound of water or catch a whiff of air. Quite often song birds are active in this location, too.

Continue on trail (stopping at various spots to view falls) to river bottom.

11. Small footbridge over river. Depending upon time of year, trout (spring) and salmon (fall) ascend the North Shore rivers to spawn (reproduce/lay eggs). During this time, it's possible to see fish swimming under the foot bridge or in the "pool" of water by the base of the Lower Falls.

Continue on "Falls Loop" trail until you get to the second, longer footbridge. Cross this footbridge (look for migrating fish), turn right and follow "Falls Loop" boardwalk trail up to the Middle Falls.

12. Middle Falls Viewing Platform. Time for a final look at the falls.

Follow trail back to the visitor center.



Middle & Lower Falls

