

What to Do with A Free Afternoon at Wildacres?

Here are a few ideas for things to do on your free afternoon, ranked by effort and distance:

Leaving: Most of these adventures involve driving on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Turn right as you leave the Wildacres grounds, and go 0.7 mile. You will see the Parkway on your left with a short lane connecting you to it. You are at Gooch Gap at milepost 336. Mark this with breadcrumbs for your trip back.

1. **Do Nothing!** Find a good book and a rocking chair and enjoy the afternoon and the view.
2. **Walk around the property.** There are asphalt trails encircling the buildings for a low effort walk.
3. **Walk in the neighborhood.** There are trails beyond the property. Ask at the desk for a map.
4. **Shop at Little Switzerland.** Turn right on the Parkway to Little Switzerland at milepost 334. There are several craft stores and a used book store.
5. **Visit the Museum of North Carolina Minerals.** Turn right on the Parkway to exit 331 at Highway 226. The museum is at the bottom of the ramp on 226 next to the Parkway. The exhibits focus on the geology and mining in the area.
6. **Drive the Parkway.** Cruise up or down the Blue Ridge Parkway. Stop at the overlooks. Get out of your vehicle, enjoy the view, and admire the wildflowers.
7. **Visit the Orchard at Altapass.** Call first to determine if open: 828-765-9531. Turn right on the Parkway to milepost 328.3. This is a historic apple orchard featuring orchard products.
8. **Spruce Pine.** Take the Blue Ridge Parkway right to milepost 331 and take the Highway 226 exit. Turn right onto Highway 226 to head to Spruce Pine. There are several interesting craft stores. Take the lower level road along the railroad tracks to walk among the shops.
9. **Visit an arts center.** The Penland School of Crafts is located off Highway 226. Take the Parkway right to milepost 331 and exit onto Highway 226. Turn right coming off the Parkway ramp to head to Spruce Pine. Follow 226 through Spruce Pine, and go 2.8 miles on Highway 226 after it leaves Highway 19E. Turn left from 226 onto Penland Road. Go about 1 mile on Penland Road, and make a sharp right at their sign. There is a Gallery at the School with work by the faculty for sale. In addition, many of the faculty members have private galleries at their homes. Ask at the School Gallery for a map.
10. **Visit an artist's gallery.** This area is filled with artists of all media who have private galleries at their homes. Look for maps in the Reception Building.
11. **Visit Crabtree Falls.** Follow the Blue Ridge Parkway south to milepost 339.5. There is a 2.5 mile loop trail to the Falls. This is a 70 foot falls which is quite photogenic. This hike is not for those unsteady on their feet or unable to climb several flights of stairs.
12. **Visit the Folk Art Center.** This is on the Parkway near Ashville at milepost 382. It is 46 miles from Wildacres. Since you cannot drive fast on the Parkway, it can be a long round trip. Consider a visit on your way home. The Center showcases traditional Appalachian skills at weaving, quilts, woodworking, and pottery.

Returning: Take the Parkway to Gooch Gap at milepost 336. Turn off the Parkway, and take the first right to return to Wildacres. If you get lost, we will drink your share of the wine.