

Astronomy Club of Asheville Observing Sites

Below is a list of the more likely observing sites used by the club. Sometimes we even choose an observing site that is not on the list below. We notify club members and the community of our chosen monthly observing site via our club Yahoo group, on our website and at the club indoor meetings.

Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP) sites:

Always check the BRP [road conditions website](#) for the latest road closures: If needed, select the “Asheville” tab on the left side of the web page so it takes you to our region of the BRP, and the rest is obvious.

(click on the links for directions)

1. [Mt Pisgah trailhead](#) parking lot – MP 407.6 (about 19 miles south of Asheville)
2. [Stoney Bald Overlook](#) – MP 402.6 (about 14 miles south of Asheville)
3. [Tanbark Ridge Overlook](#) – MP 376.7 (about 12 miles north of Asheville)
4. [Craggy Dome Overlook](#) – MP 364.1 (about 25 miles north of Asheville)

Other sites:

5. [Lookout Observatory](#) on the UNC Asheville campus
6. [Grassland Mountain Observatory](#) – Little Pine valley area of Madison County
7. [Mill Ridge](#) in Madison County – near Hot Springs

Directions to Mt. Pisgah trailhead [SEE MAP](#)

Mt. Pisgah is at milepost 407.6 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. This is south of Asheville and 14 miles south of the Highway 191 (Brevard Road) entrance. It is about 2/10ths of a mile south of Buck Springs Tunnel.

Those of you in Candler: Hwy 151 is faster (but you know where Mt. Pisgah is anyway). Those of you in Brevard: Hwy 276 is faster (but you also know where it is).

Coming from the north, if you pass the Pisgah View Inn, you've gone almost a mile too far.

Be sure to follow the branch road to Mt. Pisgah as far as it goes (about 1/3 mile). It doesn't stop at the first overlook. We observe at the 2nd parking lot, just beyond the second overlook.

Latitude: 35d 25m 05s North Longitude: 82d 44m 53s West

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Directions to Stoney Bald Overlook

Stoney Bald Overlook is at milepost 402.6 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. This is south of Asheville and 9 miles south of the Highway 191 (Brevard Road) entrance. This is also about 3 miles north of the intersection of Highway 151 with the Blue Ridge Parkway.

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Directions to Tanbark Ridge Overlook [SEE MAP](#)

The Tanbark Ridge Overlook is located along the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP) just 5 miles north of the Folk Art Center. Along the ride you will pass Craven Gap (where Town Mountain Road and Webb Cove Road intersect the BRP) just 1/2 of a mile before you arrive at the Tanbark Ridge Overlook. Driving north along the BRP, the overlook is on your right just north of mile marker 377.

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Directions to Craggy Dome Overlook

The Craggy Dome overlook is located along the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP) about 18 miles north of the Folk Art Center. It is just ½ of a mile north (past) the Craggy Gardens Visitor Center.

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Directions to Mill Ridge in Madison County

This is a very small observing site with limited parking; it's located in Pisgah Nat'l Forest. 4-wheel drive vehicles are recommended. Simple directions to Mill Ridge:

1. US 19/23 for 8.6 miles towards Weaverville, take exit 19A.
2. US 25/70 for 23 miles towards Hot Springs.
3. Right turn at "Mill Ridge" sign, then bear left.
4. Go about 1 mile to the site.

Detailed directions to Mill Ridge: [SEE MAP](#)

1. Take US 19/23 north from Asheville towards Weaverville. About 8.6 miles from Interstate 240, take exit 19A onto US 25/70.
2. Take US 25/70 towards Hot Springs. After 21 miles (and immediately after a steep, curvy downhill section), stay on US 25/70 as it takes a left turn over Big Laurel Creek, while Hwy 208 continues straight. After this left turn, the road goes 2 miles up a long hill.
3. Just before the crest of the hill, take a right turn where it says "Mill Ridge" and "Rich Mountain." FYI: if you miss this turn and go straight a couple miles, you are in Hot Springs.
4. Follow this road on around to the left and across (over) the road you were just on. You will cross over Hwy. 25/70 on a one-lane bridge. The road turns to dirt after the bridge. Follow this road for less than 1 mile to the site. (The road splits at .6 miles: go right & you will pass a wooden "Mill Ridge" information sign on your left.)

Latitude: 35d 54m 01s North Longitude: 82d 47m 24s West

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Directions to Grassland Mountain Observatory in Madison County (there is a warm room and real bathrooms at this site!)

Note that this observatory is privately owned and operated by the Astronomy Club of Asheville and requires prior approval to access it.

[SEE MAP](#)

[SEE WEB PAGE](#)

1. From Asheville take I-26 west for about 8 miles to exit 19A (Marshall, Hot Springs). At the end of the exit ramp veer right onto Hwy. 25/70 and drive for approximately 11 miles.
2. You should then see an Ingles grocery store on your right. The next traffic light will have the entrance to Madison High school on the right and a Family Dollar store on the left.
3. Proceed on Hwy. 25/70 for another 1 1/2 miles. At that point, there will be a “Blue Heron Whitewater” sign on your left and a short left turn lane onto Little Pine Road.
4. Turn left and drive down Little Pine Road for about 8 miles.
5. You should then see a large wooden horse barn on your left, and, across the road on your right, you should see a small gatehouse building; turn right off Little Pine Road and approach the entrance to the Preserve at Little Pine.
6. This gate will require a temporary entrance code that will be provided by the club the week of the observing session.
7. Proceed through the gate and follow the signs for about 2.8 miles up the mountain (about a 2,000 foot climb) to the “Grassland” and eventually to the “Lodge”.
8. As you proceed up the road, there are only 2 turns to make. The first turn comes a quick 150 yards past the point where the short one-way road-split re-unites. Turn right at this first intersection, and then, farther up the long climb, take a left where the road splits (Ts) into 2 choices. Remember that you should be climbing the whole way; so any significant downhill travel means you made an incorrect turn.
9. The Observatory is located just past the Lodge at the end of the gravel road.

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Directions to Lookout Observatory on the UNC-Asheville campus

The Astronomy Club of Asheville is a partner in the use and operation of Lookout Observatory.

Registration is required to attend events at Lookout Observatory. Upon registering, a confirmation email will be received with explicit parking and shuttle instructions, including any last-minute changes or event announcements.

Find the observatory at the north end of the [campus map](#). While there is no public parking at the observatory site, attendees will check-in at the upper Reuter Center parking lot (P10) and ride shuttles the short distance to and from the observatory. See the Astronomy Club of Asheville's [website home page](#) during the week prior to an event for any specific details pertaining to the star gaze.

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