

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

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 ½ 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 1/2 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

Note that this observatory is privately owned and operated by the Astronomy Club of Asheville, and prior approval is required to access it. It's located at 4,130 feet above sea level.

Grassland Mtn. Obs. is a 50-minute drive from downtown Asheville.
(There are bathrooms and a warm room at this site!)

→ **2892 Grassland Pkwy., Marshall, NC 28753** →

[See Map](#)

[See Observatory Web Page](#)

Don't use a web mapping service, like Google Maps, for directions, as you will most certainly get lost!

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.
3. Proceed on Hwy. 25/70 for another 1½ 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. You are now on **Grassland Parkway**.
6. This gate will require a temporary entrance code that will be provided by the club during the week of the observing session.
7. Proceed through the gate and follow the signs for about 2.8 miles up the mountain along Grassland Parkway (about a 2,000 foot climb) to the “Lodge” and eventually to the “Observatory”.
8. As you proceed up Grassland Parkway, there are only 2 turns to make. **Turn 1:** About one mile beyond the gate house, make a distinct right turn. It's the first road intersection. **Turn 2:** Proceed farther up the steep climb of Grassland Parkway about another mile, and take a left turn where the road splits (Ts) into two 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 Grassland Parkway.

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Directions to Lookout Obs. on the UNC-Asheville Campus

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

Registration is typically 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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