

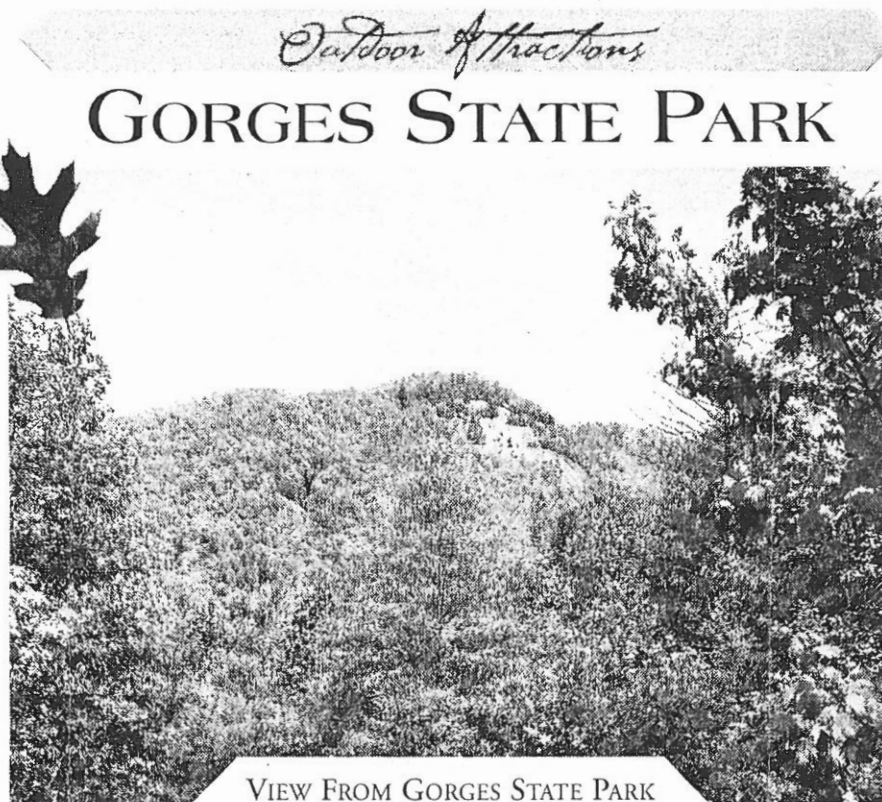
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Gorges State Park in southwestern Transylvania County contains wild lands full of exotic plant and animal life, waterfalls, and its namesake, deep gorges.

On April 29, 1999, the state of North Carolina purchased 10,000 acres of land north of Lake Jocassee from Duke Energy Corporation, 7,000 acres to be designated as a state park and 3,000 acres of gameland to be managed by the Wildlife Resources Commission. Gorges State Park, the first state park west of Asheville, was dedicated on Sept. 3, 1999, by Governor Jim Hunt.

Plunging waterfalls, rugged river gorges and sheer rock walls create spectacular scenery. This region was lumbered early in the 19th century but has never been heavily settled. Today, the area is a wilderness, where people can hike rugged trails and enjoy being surrounded by nature. The park offers many recreational opportunities for families, including hiking, fishing, camping, horseback riding, bird watching and picnicking.

The park has one of the greatest concentrations of rare and unique



species in the eastern United States, including the Oconee Bells (or Shortia),

found only in deep gorges, around waterfalls and on granite domes in the

park. Its nearest relative lives in China and Japan. Another rarity is the Gorge Moss, found in only six places worldwide. Three of these sites are in the gorges, two are in South Carolina and one is in China.

Animals are also abundant in the park due to rich vegetation and healthy habitats. Visitors can expect to see all kinds of animal life, including black bear, white-tailed deer, turkey, trout, ruffed grouse and other birds. The lands have been hunted for decades, but hunting is not allowed in the state park. The neighboring gamelands do allow hunting.

With many bodies of water crossing the Jocassee property, fishing is a favorite sport. Fishermen can catch native speckled trout as well as rainbow and brown trout. A North Carolina fishing license is required for fishing, and all regulations for these waters should be followed. (See the fishing story in this magazine for more information.)

The Auger Hole is a popular area with locals where the Bearwallow Creek and Toxaway River meet, forming a deep gorge that is said to look like an auger hole from certain angles.

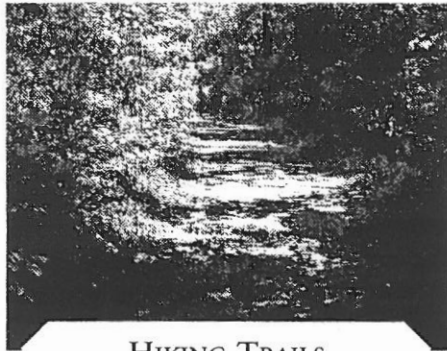
We see Western North Carolina from a slightly different point of view.



As the supplier of medical imaging systems to hospitals and radiology facilities in this area, we get a pretty good glimpse of the community.

Know what we've discovered? Agfa Medical Imaging has the good fortune to be

In the past year, Gorges State Park has created a parking lot off of NC 281 South that can hold 75 cars and several buses. This lot provides access to several hiking trails with picnic tables, information displays and temporary restroom facilities. A 3/4 mile nature trail loop, marked with white blazes on tree trunks, is an easy hike with very few hills. Another easy trail, marked in red, leads up to an observation deck at an eleva-



HIKING TRAILS

tion of 3,100 feet and back, a three-mile round trip. From the overlook, hikers can see most of the park, as well as Jocassee, Keowee and Hartwell lakes in South Carolina.

A second parking lot on Frozen

Outdoor Attractions **GORGES STATE PARK**

Creek Road opened on July 16, 2001, and provides access to equestrian and bike trails as well as foot trails. Park information displays and picnic tables are available here also. The Frozen Creek lot offers access to the Auger Hole Road, an old logging road that is now a multi-use trail for hikers, mountain bikers and horses. Another trail from the Frozen Creek lot leads to the Foothills Trail, an 85-mile trail maintained by Duke Energy Corporation that runs between two South Carolina state parks and passes through Gorges State Park. Camping is allowed along the Foothills Trail. For those interesting in hiking the Foothills Trail, the Foothills Trail Conference produced a "Foothills Trail Guide." Contact the Foothills Trail Conference by calling (864) 467-9537.

Visitors to Gorges State Park should only park in the lots. Though old guide books may indicate that parking is available along the highway, there is no

longer any roadside parking allowed. Cars parked along the highway will be ticketed by the highway patrol, sheriff's department or park rangers.

Please help protect the rare species located in and near streams and waterfalls. Stay on designated trails. Many rare plants live on thin soils and wet rocks and are vulnerable to damage from climbing, scrambling or scraping. Horses and mountain bikes are allowed only on designated trails, and unlicensed off-road vehicles are prohibited.

Near Gorges State Park is the Horsepasture River, designated as both a State and a National Wild and Scenic River. Though not actually in the park, southwestern Transylvania County is also home to a number of waterfalls, including the Upper and Lower Whitewater Falls on the Whitewater River, and Rainbow Falls on the Horsepasture River.

The Toxaway arm of Lake Jocassee is

located inside the park, but no boat access to the lake is available from park lands. Boat access to Lake Jocassee is available through Devil's Fork State Park in South Carolina.

GORGES STATE PARK INFORMATION:

OFFICE LOCATION:
INTERSECTION OF U.S. 64 AND
N.C. 281 SOUTH

HOURS:
OPEN MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY
FROM 8 A.M. TO 8 P.M. IN SEPTEMBER,
8 A.M. TO 7 P.M. IN OCTOBER, AND
8 A.M. TO 6 P.M. IN NOVEMBER
THROUGH FEBRUARY.

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