SOUTHERN ESCAPES
LUXURY RELOCATION INTELLIGENCE



THE WEEKEND GUIDE · HIGHLANDS & CASHIERS

Two days on the plateau, *the way we would spend them.*

Where to stay, what to eat, a cliff walk above the gorge, and the one mile you can't skip, in the order we'd actually do it.

REPORTED BY DAMIAN HALL

HOURS, SEASONS AND FEES CHECKED NOVEMBER 2026

THE SHORT VERSION

The plateau, *at a glance.*

They call Highlands the Aspen of the East, and on a July afternoon you understand why. The town sits at 4,118 feet. NOAA's normal high for an August day there is 76 degrees, against 88.5 in Greenville, an hour and a half to two hours below. The air thins, the water runs cold and clear, and the evenings ask for a sweater.

The plateau is two villages joined by US 64, ten to twelve miles apart. Highlands is the walkable one, with the inn, the shops and The Bascom. Cashiers is the crossroads, greener and quieter, built around its Village Green. This is the weekend we hand friends who ask where to go up here: a day on each side, in the order that keeps you ahead of the crowds.

GETTING THERE About 1.5 hours from Greenville to Cashiers, closer to 2 to Highlands	ELEVATION Highlands 4,118 ft. Cashiers about 3,500 ft.
AN AUGUST AFTERNOON 76°F in Highlands, by NOAA normals	BEST MONTHS June through October. Color usually peaks Oct 11 to 20.
BOOK AHEAD Canyon Kitchen, and a room at Old Edwards Inn	PACK A jacket, even in August



A STREAM OVER ROCK IN THE BLUE RIDGE, AUTUMN

DAY ONE

Highlands, *start to finish.*

EARLY

Whiteside Mountain

Start on Whiteside while the trail is still quiet. The two-mile loop climbs to a 4,930-foot summit above a 750-foot cliff face, and the Forest Service rates it more difficult for the steepness, not the distance. The trailhead is off US 64 about five miles east of Highlands. Parking is $3 a vehicle and the lot is small, so be there early.

MORNING

Main Street and The Bascom

Come down into town. On Saturday mornings the Highlands Farmers Market sets up in Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park on Pine Street, eight to noon, most weekends of the growing season. Walk Main Street while the shops are opening, then cross the 87-foot covered bridge into The Bascom, the plateau's art center, where the galleries are complimentary. Mountain Fresh Grocery does breakfast and coffee if the morning needs a second cup.

AFTERNOON

The Cullasaja Gorge

Drive west on US 64 into the gorge. Dry Falls drops 75 feet, and a path takes you behind the curtain of water; the Forest Service charges $3 to park, or $15 for an annual pass that also covers Whiteside. Bridal Veil Falls is about two and a half miles west of town. The old loop of road beneath it is closed to cars now, but you can still walk behind the fall. The highway through the gorge is narrow and winding, so use the marked pull-offs.

EVENING

Dinner in Highlands

Two good answers. Madison's at Old Edwards Inn serves dinner from six to nine and is open to the public; book ahead. Or Oak Steakhouse, on the second floor of Skyline Lodge, which is Damian's own go-to on the plateau: the view, the charm, and a kitchen that shows up.



ROCK CLIFFS ABOVE THE FALL CANOPY ON THE CASHIERS PLATEAU

DAY TWO

Cashiers, *start to finish.*

EARLY

Silver Run Falls

Head four or five miles south of the Cashiers crossroads on NC 107. Silver Run is a forty-foot fall at the end of a walk of a few hundred yards, the easiest waterfall on the plateau and the best one to have to yourself before nine.

MORNING

The Village Green, then a real hike

Back at the crossroads, the Village Green is a 13.2-acre nonprofit park with walking paths, wetland boardwalks and a dahlia garden. For a proper hike, Gorges State Park in Sapphire has the Rainbow Falls Trail, a mile and a half each way, rated strenuous, with complimentary day use. For quiet, Panthertown Valley holds about 6,300 acres of national forest backcountry and more than 25 miles of trail; the Salt Rock Gap trailhead is east of Cashiers off Cedar Creek Road, and the Forest Service warns the access roads are rough.

AFTERNOON

Lake Glenville, from the water

Go north to Lake Glenville, at 3,494 feet one of the highest lakes east of the Mississippi. Four of its waterfalls, Mill Creek, Hidden, Norton and Hurricane, can only be reached by boat. Signal Ridge Marina rents them; call ahead for the season and hours at 828-743-2143.

EVENING

Canyon Kitchen

Close the weekend at Canyon Kitchen at Lonesome Valley in Sapphire, a dining room set inside a box canyon of granite walls. Dinner runs Wednesday through Sunday, five to nine, April through November, and reservations are required.

Where to stay

IN HIGHLANDS

Old Edwards Inn & Spa, Highlands. Forbes Four-Star for 2026, on Main Street, and the spa alone justifies the weekend. Madison's keeps serving lunch and dinner through the winter.

OR, IN CASHIERS

Hotel Cashiers. At 7 Slab Town Road in Cashiers, for a weekend built around the Cashiers side of the plateau.

OR, THE HISTORIC ONE

High Hampton. The century-old mountain estate outside Cashiers, with its inn and restaurants run by the Blackberry Farm team. The inn closes Monday through Wednesday from January to Memorial Day.

THE PLATEAU YEAR

When to go, *season by season.*

Spring
APRIL TO MAY

The waterfalls run at full volume and the season reopens around you. Canyon Kitchen starts dinner service in April, and The Bascom is back on full hours after its winter schedule.

Summer
JUNE TO AUGUST

The reason the plateau became a summer address: an August afternoon in Highlands averages 76 degrees. The Highlands Motoring Festival takes over Main Street for four days in June. The Highlands-Cashiers Chamber Music Festival runs through July and into August across both villages, and on Friday evenings from late May to early September, Groovin' on the Green fills the Village Green lawn with complimentary admission. Hike early; storms build over the ridges in the afternoon.

Fall
SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER

Peak color usually lands between October 11 and 20, earlier on the ridgetops, and the weather moves it every year. The Cashiers Valley Leaf Festival fills the Village Green the second weekend of October with about a hundred artisans, admission complimentary. Book October rooms well ahead. Canyon Kitchen serves through November.

Winter
DECEMBER TO MARCH

The quiet season, and the honest preview of what living here is like. Highlands lights Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park the Saturday after Thanksgiving and runs its Christmas parade down Main Street the first Saturday of December; Cashiers holds Lights on the Green the night after Thanksgiving. Many businesses shorten their hours until early March, so call before you drive.

Worth knowing before you go.

The waterfall parking areas fill by mid-morning on a fair-weather Saturday. Start early both days.

Keep a jacket in the car. The plateau runs well below the Upstate in every season.

US 64 through the Cullasaja Gorge is narrow and winding. Use the marked pull-offs, not the shoulder.

Highlands and Cashiers are ten to twelve miles apart on US 64. Give it more time than the map does.

Plateau hours are seasonal. In winter and early spring, call ahead.

THE HOME THAT FITS THE WEEKEND

If the weekend has you *doing the math.*

Up here the house is the easy part. The scarce thing is the door it opens. On the plateau, two homes with the same square footage can trade a world apart, because one comes with a club and the other does not, and most of the clubs up here publish nothing about what it costs to join.

The Highlands & Cashiers Field Guide scores the five communities that matter, and The Club Ledger tracks what each club on the plateau will and will not tell you about initiation and dues. Both live at southernescapes.com/locals/highlands-cashiers.

A weekend tells you whether you love the plateau. An Advisory Conversation tells you which side of it, which club, and what the move is worth.

SCHEDULE A CONVERSATION

Southern Escapes is the market intelligence platform of Damian Hall Group, operating under Blackstream | Christie's International Real Estate. Hours, seasons and fees were checked in November 2026 against each venue, park or agency; they change, so confirm before you drive. This guide is for informational purposes.