

Georgiana Falls Trail

Location : *Just below the Indian Head Profile, south of Franconia Notch.*

Distance, parking area to:

Lower Georgiana Falls .8 mile

Upper Georgiana (Harvard) Falls 1.3 miles

Altitude gain: 600 feet (to altitude 1600 feet).

Difficulty: MODERATE.

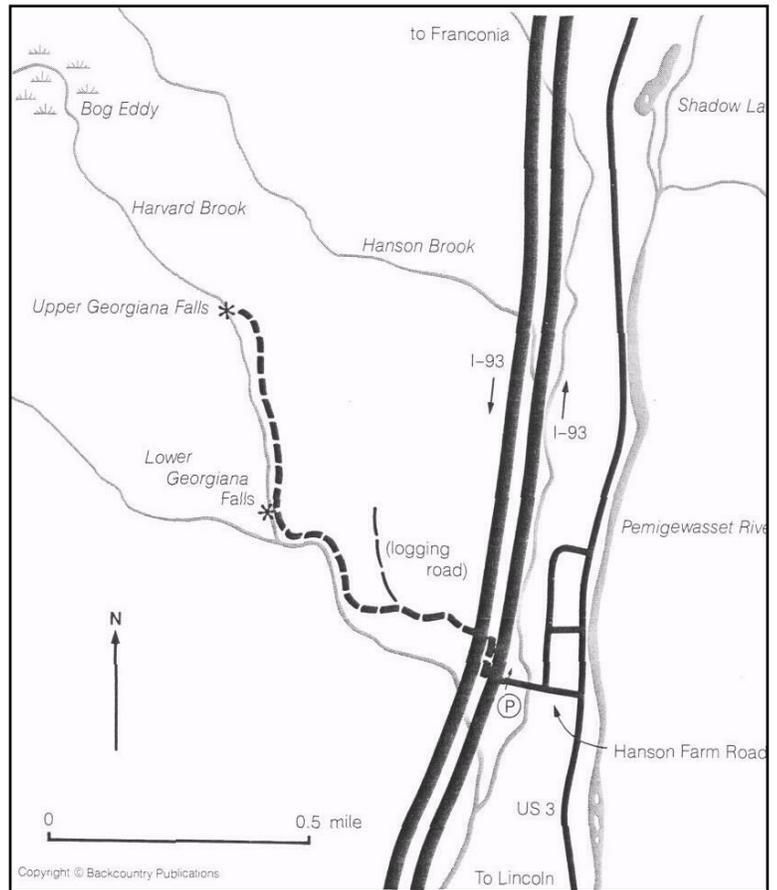
The Trail to the Falls :

The first path to Georgiana Falls was cleared in 1877. Earlier in the present century the Forest Service maintained the Bog Pond Trail past Georgiana Falls. Today no official trail is maintained, but a good footpath still climbs alongside Harvard Brook up to the falls. To begin the hike to Georgiana Falls you must first find Hanson Farm Road, which turns off of the west side of US 3 in North Lincoln, across from the Longhorn Restaurant. For orientation, the location is between Exit 33 on Interstate 93 and Exit 34A (for the Flume) on the Franconia Notch Parkway. Northbound drivers on 1-93 can get a wide-angle preview

of Georgiana Falls—a narrow white ribbon splitting a verdant expanse of undulating hillside—by scanning the ravines south of the Indian Head cliff from the top of the long hill above Exit 32 (one exit south of North Lincoln). The footpath starts at an unmarked gravel parking area at the end of Hanson Farm Road, 0.1 mile west of US 3. Walk through the gate in the chain-link fence on the west side of the parking area and follow the dirt logging road through a pair of tunnels under 1-93. About 0.3 mile beyond the highway, and 100 yards after crossing a metal culvert, you will reach a small grassy clearing where the path cuts into the woods on the left. Watch carefully, because the turn here is easy to miss. (The logging road continues climbing up to the right.) From this point red blazes mark the way.

Once off the logging road, you will find that the scenery changes to pretty-forest-with-tumbling-brook. The path is quite easy to follow as it parallels Harvard Brook upstream for 0.3 mile through a mixed company of trees. Soon you arrive at the base of an open gray ledge encrusted with lichen and moss. The path climbs one flight of blazed rocks past some small introductory cascades to a broad shelf at the foot of lower Georgiana Falls. According to a local fisherman who passed us on his way to Bog Pond to try his luck on the brown trout, most visitors stop at this point and turn back, not realizing that the main waterfall is higher up the trail. According to the old Appalachia article, hikers were making the same mistake a century ago!

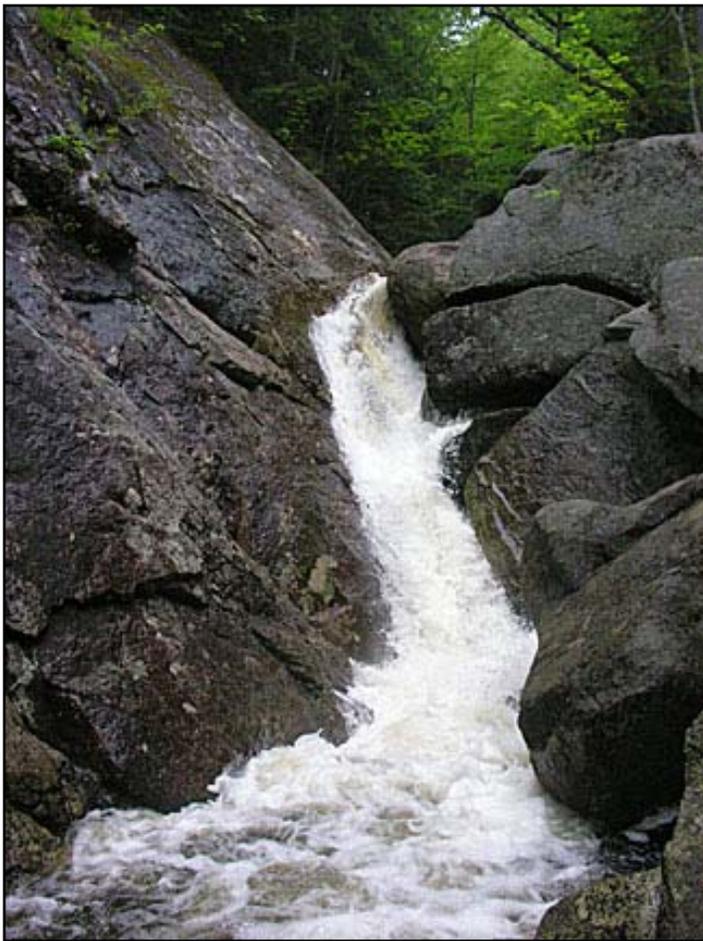
Above the pool the blazed trail steepens considerably as it ascends through the woods to the right of the brook, with obstructed views. As an alternative to following the trail you can climb right up the ledges (if they are dry) to enjoy the line of cascades that runs nearly 0.5 mile from the bottom pool to the cliffs at Georgiana Falls. The last leg of this climb, however, is too sheer to negotiate without rejoining the footpath, which itself has some tricky footing. After maneuvering up a steep, wooded slope the path emerges atop a bluff that faces directly into the midsection of the main waterfall. The path continues only a short distance farther. It descends a gully by the side of the falls and then mounts the corner of the cliff wall to the slabs above. Beyond this point the brook flattens out on broad, open ledges punctuated by smaller cascades. There is no longer any semblance of a trail, but one can bushwhack upstream with little difficulty. A tract of marshy flatland called Bog Eddy is 0.75 mile farther up Harvard Brook. Bog Pond is



another 1.25 miles and 500 feet higher still. A long set of thin cascades—formerly called the Upper Falls—can be found about 0.5 mile below Bog Pond. In *Walks and Climbs in the White Mountains* (1926), Karl Harrington devoted a full chapter to describing in great detail the entire hike up Harvard Brook, despite the fact that his photos show hardly a trickle of water at the Upper Falls! One is tempted to agree with Isabella Stone that "few visitors would care to go so far."

The Falls :

Lower Georgiana Falls consists of a sheet of cascades draped across a wide ledge 30 feet high. Near the bottom of the cascade a large cleft boulder stands sentry above a tea-colored pool that is cupped in a broad shelf of bedrock. The rock here was described a century ago by Professor Huntington, the state geologist, as a breccia of gneiss, hornblende, and other silicates cemented by a light feldspar paste. Translated, this means that the tough ledge rock is embedded with a fascinating variety of minerals. It is also a very inviting ledge for brookside scrambling, and its sunny southeastern exposure creates a pleasant environment for a waterfall picnic. Ascending the ledge one flight up from the bottom pool, you can see the brook gush through a chute that undercuts a bank of ledge before sliding into a second fine pool. Farther on, the waters have etched a narrow channel down the base of a large, steep slab. As you climb higher, the hemlock forest closes in more tightly on the ledge. Soon you reach a small, boulder-strewn pool at the foot of another narrow cascade. High above, a slender reed of whitewater angles across the dark forest backdrop. This is Georgiana Falls, from afar farther up at the bluff you will be gazing straight into the heart of the falls with a full frontal view. The brook slides directly toward you over a sloping ledge before plunging down a sheer cliff into a deep, narrow chasm at your feet. Down in the confined basin the turbulent waters make a



sharp right turn and embark on their long descent to the bottom pool. Beyond the bluff the footpath drops into a gully before climbing the corner to the top of the cliff. The gully offers an altogether different perspective on the waterfall: a close-up side view looking down the narrow basin and out across the Pemigewasset valley to the south.

The flat stretch of brook above Georgiana Falls is quite safe to explore, but the precipitous formation itself is not a good place for sporting. It is instead a visual and spiritual playground, offering the rugged geometry of rock and brook, the complex dynamics of the falls, and the tranquil valley panorama beyond.

When the brook runs high Georgiana Falls is quite a spectacle, with powerful currents surging across the full face of the steep cliffs. Viewing the falls from the bluff at such times, one can almost imagine how a small fish must feel looking into the baleen of an approaching Whale's jaw. When the brook is low the falls are less commanding, but then there are better opportunities for exploring the ledges above and below.