

AMNICON FALLS STATE PARK

Waterfalls

Main Attractions

Waterfalls and rapids on the Amnicon River: Upper Falls, Lower Falls, Snake Pit Falls, Now & Then Falls. Superior Sandstone cliffs, covered Horton Bridge.

Distance

0.8 miles, loop and out-&-back segments

Approximate Hiking Time

30 minutes

Trail Surface

Mostly wide & level dirt path

Rocks & Roots

Occasional, often occurring on short, easy inclines

Exertion / Intensity

Very easy

Trail Terrain

Mostly level, a few gentle slopes

Total Elevation Gain

< 100 feet

Assurance Markers

No, but none are really necessary

Camping

The Amnicon Falls State Park campground is located is within easy walking distance of the waterfall trails. There are 36 campsites.

Facilities

Staffed contact station / park HQ, concessions (summer), picnic areas with tables & grills, drinking water, restrooms, covered shelter, child play areas, campground.

Trail Management / Ownership

Amnicon Falls State Park, Wisconsin DNR
Tel: 715.398.3000

Hours / Season

Open year-round from 6am to 11pm

Trail Access Fee \$

Wisconsin State Park Vehicle Admission Sticker is required.

Pets

Pets are allowed on the waterfall trails but must be kept under control on a leash no longer than 8 feet long. Pets are not allowed in the picnic areas. You must clean up after your pet.

Directions

On US 2, 0.8 miles west of the intersection with Hwy 53, turn north on to County U. Drive north on County U for 0.3 miles to the park entrance.

Nearby Trails and Parks

The Thimbleberry Nature Trail - 0.75 miles long - lies inside the Amnicon Falls State Park. The trailhead is near the campground loop entrance. Enquire at the Contact Station for map and info.

Pattison State Park is 20 miles to the west and features Big Manitou and Little Manitou Falls. Copper Falls State Park is 75 miles to the east, near Mellen.

Trail Notes

The Amnicon River drops more than 200 feet in half-a-mile within the boundaries of the Amnicon Falls State Park. Most of the river in this stretch is either rapids or waterfalls, surrounded by picturesque rock formations, massive boulders, & towering pine trees, from the park's main road-bridge downstream to Upper Falls. Beautiful Superior Sandstone walls surround Lower Falls.

A series of small and intimate picnic areas are scattered along the river overlooking the rapids above Upper Falls, each with one or two picnic tables and a bbq grill. Tall red & white pines often provide plenty of shade with pine needles covering the ground.

Upper Falls and Lower Falls

The river splits into three channels inside the Park. Most of the flow goes down the center, main channel where the two largest of the four named waterfalls occur. The main channel actually plunges over three falls in rapid succession. The first falls are the smallest of the three and are not named. The second and third falls are named Upper Falls and Lower Falls and are the main attractions of Amnicon Falls State Park.

At **Upper Falls** the river narrows slightly and plunges more than twenty feet over a series of ledges into a small rocky gorge. From the main parking area, cement steps lead down to a viewing platform inside the gorge with excellent frontal views of the

waterfalls. Visitors will also find excellent views of Upper Falls from rocky ledges on both sides of the river, and from a covered wooden bridge (Horton Bridge) that crosses the main channel below Upper Falls.

Soon after passing under the Horton Bridge the river plunges over **Lower Falls**. Lower Falls is roughly the same height as Upper Falls but is considerably wider, and a little more impressive. The falls are essentially a river-wide waterslide over granite and basalt slabs that spill into a wide gorge with high walls made of Superior Sandstone. This is a very unique and scenic place. The best views of Lower Falls are from a wide, flat ledge on the north bank of the river below the falls (where the river bends west).

Horton Bridge

The Horton Bridge is a uniquely designed, fifty-five foot covered bridge that spans the Amnicon River between Upper and Lower Falls. The bridge sits less than twenty steps from the main parking area and offers excellent views of Upper Falls and the scenic sandstone canyon below Lower Falls. The bridge provides access to a beautiful, pine-covered island where visitors will find a trail that leads to Snake Pit Falls.

Interestingly enough, the Horton Bridge originally had no roof and was built nearby where a county highway crossed the river.

AMNICON FALLS STATE PARK

Waterfalls

The bridge was moved here in 1930, had a roof installed in 1939, and was once the site of parties and social events thrown by the locals.

The bridge was designed by inventor Charles Horton who was a brief resident of Superior in 1897 and 1898 before settling in La Crosse, WI. His unique bridge design called for the use of arched support beams as well as hook clips instead of rivets and bolts. He claimed this made the bridge cheaper, stronger and easier to build. This style of bridge became known as a "Horton" or "Bowstring" bridge. Only six bridges of this type still exist today, the other five are located in the Van Loon Wildlife Area near La Crosse, WI.

Now and Then Falls

The road passes over a small stone bridge as you drive - or walk - north through the picnic areas along the east side of the river to the waterfalls parking area. The bridge crosses a tiny (east) channel of the Amnicon that only flows when river levels are high. If water is flowing under the bridge then **Now and Then Falls** are running.

Now and Then Falls are usually a few, small, dripping cascades over a rocky ledge into an intimate pool surrounded by six to ten foot-high rock walls. A short trail leads from the main parking area, past the restrooms, to a scenic viewing area which directly faces the falls. Downstream, the narrow fork runs through a miniature gorge that most visitors tend to ignore, but is worth checking out if you have time.

Snake Pit Falls

The narrow, west channel splits off the Amnicon River halfway between the first (east) fork and Upper Falls. The channel passes under a small footbridge just below the fork, and runs through a beautiful rocky streambed and several small drops before plunging over Snake Pit Falls. At Snake Pit Falls the water spills over an uneven ledge and drops about ten feet into a pool inside a rocky bowl. The flow then takes a 90 degree turn to the west and plunges over a second, slightly higher cascade into a narrow, winding gorge with high granite walls. The gorge ends about fifty yards below the falls and the channel soon rejoins the main flow of the Amnicon River.

There are several excellent viewpoints of Snake Pit Falls, from above, the side, and facing. However, there are no handrails and the footing is occasionally hazardous as pine needles often cover the rock ledges overlooking the falls and the small gorge below the falls, so please watch your step.

This second fork forms a small, scenic island where hardwoods and conifers stand atop tall granite and sandstone cliffs along the western and northern edges. Visitors may access the island via two bridges. First, is over the Horton Bridge which crosses the main river channel between Upper and Lower Falls, and the second is over a small, stone footbridge which connects the island to a parking area and several picnic spots along the west bank of the river. The island also provides decent views of Upper and Lower Falls.

Driving Directions (Google Maps)



Amnicon Falls SP Entrance