

# PATTISON STATE PARK

## Big Manitou Falls, Little Manitou Falls, Interfalls Lake, Black River

### Main Attractions

Waterfalls & scenic rapids on the Black River, Big Manitou Falls, Little Manitou Falls, Interfalls Lake.

### Distance

Waterfall viewing paths: 0.5 mile  
Big Falls Hiking Trail: 1 mile (out & back)  
Beaver Slide Nature Trail: 2.0 miles (loop)  
Little Falls Hiking Trail: 0.6 mile (point 2 point)  
*Logging Camp Trail: 4.7 miles (loop)*

### Total Elevation Gain

Big Falls Hiking Trail (out-&-back): 256 feet  
Beaver Slide Nature Trail (loop): 151 feet  
Little Falls Hiking Trail: (point-2-point, north to south): 83 feet

### Exertion / Intensity

Waterfall viewing paths: Very easy  
Beaver Slide Nature Trail & Little Falls Hiking Trail: Easy  
Big Falls Hiking Trail & Logging Camp Trail: Moderate.t

### Approximate Hiking Time

Up to 2 hours

### Trail Surface

Big Manitou Falls viewing paths are both paved & gravel.  
All other trails are packed dirt/gravel paths.

### Rocks & Roots

Occasional, often occurring on short, easy inclines

### Trail Terrain

Big Falls Hiking Trail has a long steep grade. All other trails & paved paths are mostly flat with gentle inclines, dips & rises.

### Assurance Markers

Yes

### Camping

Pattison State Park family campground offers 59 campsites. There are 3 backpack campsites on the Logging Camp Trail.

### Facilities

Staffed park office, picnic areas with grills & tables, swimming beach, parking areas, restrooms, drinking water, heated shelter, showers, concessions (vending machines), family campground, backpack camping.

### Trail Management / Ownership

Pattison State Park, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Tel: 715.399.3111

### Hours / Season

Open daily (year-round) 6:00 am to 11:00 pm

### Trail Access Fee \$

Yes, WDNR Vehicle Admission Sticker or Day Pass Required

### Pets

Pets are allowed on the trails but must be kept under control on a leash no longer than 8 feet . You must clean up after your pet.

### Directions

The park entrance is on State Highway 35, 9.1 miles south of the Highway 105 & Highway 35 intersection in Superior.

### Nearby Trails and Parks

The Logging Camp Trail is not featured in this guide but offers backpack camping near Little Manitou Falls. Amnicon Falls State Park & the Brule River State Forest are nearby.

## Trail Notes

### Pattison State Park

The most scenic features of Pattison State Park: Big Manitou Falls, Little Manitou Falls, rapids, and Interfalls Lake all occur on the Black River which flows through the park from south to north. Originating at Black Lake in eastern Minnesota, the Black River meanders for 22 miles before entering Pattison State park and immediately plunging over the 31 foot-high, Little Manitou Falls. The river then rumbles through the park in a long series of rapids and minor waterfalls before slowing and forming beautiful Interfalls Lake, a man-made lake created by a small damn at its northern end. Soon after Interfalls Lake, the river roars over the massive 165 foot-high Big Manitou Falls into a narrow and deep, rocky gorge. The gorge levels off considerably within a mile as the river continues north, leaving the park, and eventually entering Lake Superior.

Other attractions at Pattison State Park include: a large shady day-use/picnic area, a sandy swimming beach on Interfalls Lake, an historic bathhouse, 10 miles of hiking trails, a nature center, a recently renovated shelter with electricity, and a modern family campground with 59 campsites.

### Hiking Pattison State Park

The majority of visitors to Pattison State Park - especially first-timevisitors - visit the park solely to view Big Manitou Falls and Little Manitou Falls. However, if you're up for it, Wisconsin Trail Guide highly recommends that you try the combined 3.2 mile hike of the Beaver Slide Nature Trail and the Little Falls Hiking Trail. This hike will showcase the best features of the park: Big Manitou Falls, Little Manitou Falls, Interfalls Lake, & the scenic rapids on the Black River.

To start this hike, park your vehicle at the southeast end of the park's main parking-lot and walk to the Beaver Slide Nature Trail trailhead near the campground. Hike this loop-route in a clockwise direction and - at the south end of the Beaver Slide Nature Trail loop - walk the out-&-back hike of the Little Falls Hiking Trail (1.2 miles total) to visit Little Manitou Falls, and see several rapids and minor waterfalls along the way.

Finish the loop on the Beaver Slide Nature Trail by crossing over the small dam at the northwest end of Interfalls Lake, then go through the tunnel under Highway 35 to access the paved paths and scenic overlooks at Big Manitou Falls. To get back to your vehicle, go back through the tunnel and walk across the beautiful day-use area and check out the scenic views of Interfalls Lake.

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### Big Manitou Falls

On the Black River in northwestern Wisconsin, the 165 foot-high Big Manitou Falls are the fourth highest waterfall east of the Rocky's, equal in height to Niagara Falls on the U.S. / Canadian border. Big Manitou Falls roar through several drops over a high basalt escarpment into a deep and narrow, rocky gorge. Dense stands of red and white pines, cedar, and spruce surround the falls and cover the inner walls of the gorge. Below the falls, the river flows out of sight around a sharp bend, running north into the lower gorge. Eventually the Black River spills into Lake Superior just east of Duluth.

The escarpment that forms the waterfalls and the rocky walls of the gorge are remnants of two ancient geologic events. First, lava flows covered the surrounding region approximately 1.2 billion years ago. Then, a massive fracturing of the basalt bedrock occurred about 500 million years ago. This fracturing, or crack, is named the Douglas Fault, and starts on the floor of Lake Superior just north of Ashland and extends in a long westward arc to just north of the Twin Cities in Minnesota. The Douglas Fault is a thrust-fault, where the bedrock south of the crack was pushed up at a 50 to 60 degree angle over the bedrock north of the crack. Today, the fault-line is most visible where it crosses the riverbed several hundred yards down-river from Big Manitou Falls.

For visitors, this is a nicely developed and well-maintained scenic area with numerous overlooks and viewing platforms, several with unobstructed views of the falls from both sides of the gorge. All of the overlooks are connected by a small network of paved walking paths. A pedestrian bridge crosses the river just above the falls and below the highway, providing easy access to both sides of the gorge. Visitors will find the most complete views of the falls from the south overlook on the west side of the river.

A small, shaded picnic area with BBQ grills, picnic tables and restrooms sits near the falls, across County Highway B from the Big Manitou Falls parking lot.

### Big Manitou Falls Parking & Access

Two separate parking areas provide access to the paved walking paths and scenic overlooks at Big Manitou Falls. The first, and largest, can be reached by passing through the State Park's main entrance. This parking area offers access to: Big Manitou Falls (via a tunnel under Hwy 35), the Park Office, all of the hiking trails including the 3.2 mile loop-hike to Little Manitou Falls, the day-use area, Interfalls Lake beach and swimming area, concessions, the Nature Center and shelter, and the State Park Campground.

A second, smaller parking area is located just south of the main entrance on County Highway B. This parking lot is much closer to the paved paths and overlooks, which can be reached by walking across the County Highway.

### Big Falls Hiking Trail

The Big Falls Hiking Trail is a short trail that leads down into the river gorge several hundred yards below the falls. The trail is mostly downhill and passes through a forest of birch, maple, white pine, balsam fir, and hemlocks with frequent, dense undergrowth.

The trail ends beneath a tall cedar inside the lower gorge on the west bank of the Black River. Piles of loose rock make up the west riverbank while colorful, rock walls rise sharply from the river on the opposite side. You can walk along the river here when water levels are low, but watch your footing on the loose rocks! This is a scenic area, worth the short hike, but not as impressive as the waterfalls.

The trail is a hard-packed dirt and gravel path with occasional sand. Two small wooden bridges cross a pair of (usually) dry creek beds.

### Little Manitou Falls

This scenic waterfall is located about 1.5 miles upstream from Big Manitou Falls. At Little Manitou Falls, the Black River splits into two main channels as it drops 31 feet over a wide, basalt-rock ledge into a small basin surrounded by rocky walls and dense forest.

There are several excellent viewpoints of Little Manitou Falls featuring full frontal views. You may also view the falls from inside the shallow basin. Watch your footing as you descend the short, steep slope, and as you walk on the wet, loose, uneven rocks inside the basin.

Another short path takes you directly to the top of the waterfalls where you can literally walk on the rocks at the top of the falls. Exercise caution and common sense here! There are no fences or railings, and it is not recommended that you venture along the top of the falls. Also, please be respectful of other visitors who may be trying to take pictures from the viewing areas below the falls, they probably don't want you in their photos.

### Little Manitou Falls Parking & Access

The entrance for the Little Manitou Falls parking lot is on Highway 35, 1.0 mile south of the State Park's main entrance. Hikers may walk to the falls from the Interfalls Lake day-use area and the campground by hiking the Beaver Slide Nature Trail and the Little Falls Hiking Trail, a 3.2 mile loop-hike.

### Beaver Slide Nature Trail

This is a beautiful two mile loop-trail that if located anywhere else would probably be a destination trail on its own. Here it is overshadowed by the nearby presence of Big Manitou Falls and Little Manitou Falls.

The Beaver Slide Nature trail encircles Interfalls Lake and briefly follows along the Black River at the south end of the loop. There are several spots where you will have gorgeous panoramic views of Interfalls Lake with the best views located on the east side of the loop. A dense boreal forest surrounds the lake and river. Spruce, cedar, balsam fir and white pines are common whenever you're near water, while birch, maple, aspen, poplar and the occasional ash canopy the trail on drier ground. Dense patches of ferns often surrounds the trail.

The trailhead sign is below the bathhouse near the northeast shore of Interfalls Lake. The trail is packed gravel and dirt, and usually 3 to 5 feet wide. It is mostly level and generally easy to walk on. Most of the trail is flat with frequent dips and rises.

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The trail crosses numerous wooden footbridges over seasonal creek beds. There is also a very scenic boardwalk on a brief stretch of marsh next to the lake.

The south portion of the loop runs directly alongside the Black River on both banks. The river in this stretch is only about 30 feet wide with continuous rapids and riffles. Cedar, mixed pines, and spruce overhang the rocky riverbanks. The dense forest, scent of pine, and the soft sounds of the rushing water creates a very pleasant and intimate setting.

A wooden foot bridge crosses the Black at the south end of the loop. The north Trailhead of the Little Falls Hiking Trail is a few feet from the west end of the bridge. This trail leads upstream (south) to Little Manitou Falls.

### Little Falls Hiking Trail

The beautiful and popular Little Falls Hiking Trail is a short – 0.6 mile-long - trail along the Black River that connects the Beaver Slide Nature Trail with the Little Manitou Falls viewing paths.

This scenic trail runs directly alongside the river. Hikers will have easy access to view the rocky shoreline of the river and numerous rapids and minor waterfalls. Cedar, balsam fir, spruce, white pine, birch and aspen surround the trail and the river. Several wooden footbridges cross tiny streams and seasonal creek beds.

Please exercise caution whenever walking on wet boulders and loose rocks!

### Logging Camp Trail

This trail is not described in this guide. However this is an excellent loop-trail system for backpack camping. Three hike-in campsites are located near Little Manitou Falls. Contact the park HQ for more information and campsite availability.

### GPS - NAD83 / WGS84

BFHT01, Rocky Gorge - Black River	46.53931,-92.12508
BSNT01, Trailhead	46.53479,-92.11845
BSNT02, View of Interfalls Lake	46.53354,-92.11859
BSNT03, Logging Camp Trail	46.53150,-92.11820
BSNT04, Little Falls Hiking Trail	46.52695,-92.11982
BSNT05, Scenic View of Black River	46.53122,-92.12275
BSNT06, Tunnel under Hwy 35	46.53602,-92.12034
LFHT01, Little Manitou Falls	46.52200,-92.12694
BMF01, Big Manitou Falls Overlook	46.53643,-92.12206
BMF02, Big Manitou Falls Overlook	46.53665,-92.12255
BMF03, Big Manitou Falls Overlook	46.53615,-92.12340
BMF04, Big Manitou Falls Overlook	46.53688,-92.12360

*For best results, set waypoint arrival radius to a minimum of 50 feet*

### Driving Directions (Google Maps)



**Park Main Entrance**



**Big Manitou Falls Parking**



**Little Manitou Falls Parking**

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## Elevation Profile

