

FALLBROOK
FALLS TRAILTRAIL
SERIES

Fall Brook Falls is a short but rewarding hike in Tioga State Forest, offering big scenery in a small package. The trail is only about a quarter mile each way, leading to a beautiful two-tiered waterfall framed by hemlocks and a narrow gorge. Winter conditions can turn the easy walk into a slick challenge, as ice often coats both the parking area and trail. Beyond the main overlook, informal paths allow careful exploration toward the lower falls and nearby creek. The area was once home to the 19th-century coal town of Fall Brook, and observant hikers can still find stone foundations, cellar holes, and other quiet remnants of its industrial past hidden in the woods.

Fallbrook Falls Trail: Short, Sweet and Slippery

by Melanie A. Wood

Stepping out of the truck on a crisp winter morning at Fallbrook Falls, I expected scenic views and a peaceful walk in a winter wonderland. Instead, my introduction to Fallbrook Falls Trail began in the half-circle parking area, where I promptly slipped and landed on the icy ground before I even reached the trailhead. That moment set the tone for the hike. A short distance later on the trail, I found myself on the ground again, pulling myself upright only with the help of a kind and considerate tree. On a day like this, micro-spikes would have made all the difference.

Fallbrook Falls is located in the southeastern portion of Tioga State Forest, a vast woodland covering more than 160,000 acres in northcentral Pennsylvania. The name Tioga comes from the Seneca language meaning "meeting of two rivers," an appropriate description for a landscape shaped by flowing water, deep ravines, and long-standing history. Today, the forest is known for hiking, fishing, and exploration while still holding signs of its industrial past.

The trail to the main waterfall overlook is short, measuring about 0.5 to 0.8 miles round trip. Hikers will find the upper tier of Fallbrook Falls after just a few minutes of walking from the small gravel parking area along the road. The waterfall spills over rock ledges into a narrow gorge surrounded by hemlocks and hardwoods that frame the scene beautifully. In winter, the falls often become a frozen display of frigid water, ice and snow, though trail conditions frequently require extra caution and proper traction gear. When weather allows, hikers

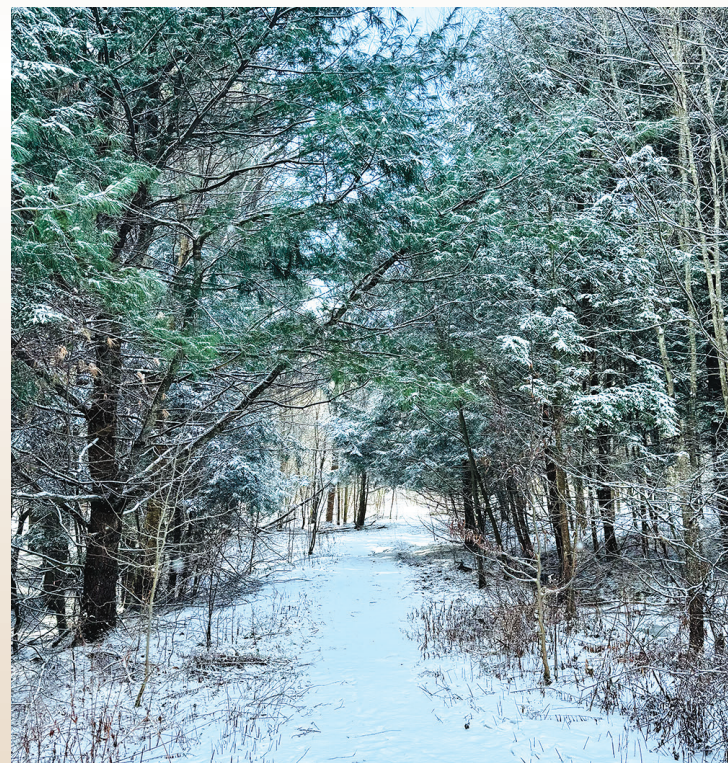
can continue beyond the main overlook toward Fallbrook Creek to gain a closer view of the lower falls. This route is informal and unmarked, involving uneven terrain and a steep descent. On this visit, the entire area was coated in ice beneath fresh snow, so I chose to admire the falls from above rather than risk a dangerous scramble.

The landscape surrounding Fallbrook Falls carries clear traces of human history. In 1858, a coal mining town known as Fall Brook was established after the discovery of semi-bituminous coal along the creek. The town grew rapidly with the construction of the Fall Brook

Railroad, which transported coal to markets in Pennsylvania and New York. At its peak, Fall Brook supported homes, boarding houses, shops, and hundreds of residents who worked in the surrounding mines.

By the late 1800s, coal production declined and the town was gradually abandoned. Today, stone foundations and cellar holes remain near the falls and along nearby informal paths. These remnants mark the

locations of former buildings and offer a quiet glimpse into the lives of those who once lived here. Some hikers have found scattered chunks of coal in the woods, subtle reminders of the industry that once fueled the area.



There are other informal routes and short paths in the area worth exploring. A short walk from nearby forest roads leads to the old Fall Brook Cemetery, the abandoned late 19th-century burial ground of the former coal town, now hidden in overgrown vegetation and fragile in state. These pseudo trails also provide access to additional foundations and depressions where buildings

Download maps for offline use or bring a GPS device if coverage is important to you.

Safety and season: Wear sturdy shoes and traction aids in winter and after rain. Ice, snow, and wet leaves can make ground conditions very slippery, as this hike clearly demonstrated. In warmer months, be aware of creek conditions and uneven ground if you explore beyond the main overlook.



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