

What is That: Legend behind Jump Off Rock?



Jump Off Rock is a scenic overlook in Laurel Park known for its panoramic views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The free public park surrounding this granite outcropping is ringed with trails that lead hikers through the cool surroundings of shaded woods.

But what might not be obvious to the casual observer is the legend behind this popular landmark.

It is haunted, they say — if not by an Indian maiden who legend says flung herself to her death on the rocks below, then by the legend surrounding her death.

The Indian legend has been passed down for many, many moons.

According to the tale as retold by the Henderson County Tourism Development Authority, “Over 300 years ago, a young Cherokee Indian chief fell in love with a fair Indian maiden. They often met on top of the rock ledge overlooking the valley below. When the young chief was called to war, the maiden promised him that she would wait for his return from their favorite rock ledge.

“When the maiden received word that her young Indian chief had been killed in battle, she climbed to the edge of the rock and jumped off,” according to TDA's website,

www.historichendersonville.org/jump_off_rock.htm. “Tribal hunters found her broken body below. Indian legend has it that on moonlit nights, you can see the ghost of the maiden on Jump Off Rock.”

If you're not looking for ghosts, but do enjoy nature, “there are three hiking trails at Jump Off Rock,

varying in length and difficulty,” according to the TDA.

The Blue Trail offers casual wanderers an easy hike of about eight minutes. The Yellow Trail is moderate in difficulty and takes around 15 minutes to complete. The Red Trail that leads trekkers down a rock staircase into a thicket is the most difficult and takes longer to finish, according to the TDA site.

Jump Off Rock lies five miles west of downtown Hendersonville, in the town of Laurel Park. The overlook offers views of many peaks including Jeter Mountain, Hebron Mountain and Mount Pisgah.

To get to the overlook from downtown Hendersonville, follow Fifth Avenue West, which becomes Laurel Park Highway, until the road dead ends at Jump Off Rock. The park is open daily from sunrise to sunset.

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