

Weather 101



By: "Doppler" Dave Speelman
Chief Meteorologist

Mingo Falls: North Carolina's Hidden Giant

I recently went to Mingo Falls in late April - what a site! You should see it sometime in your lifetime. I compared it to what I know at Dripping Springs near Las Cruces.

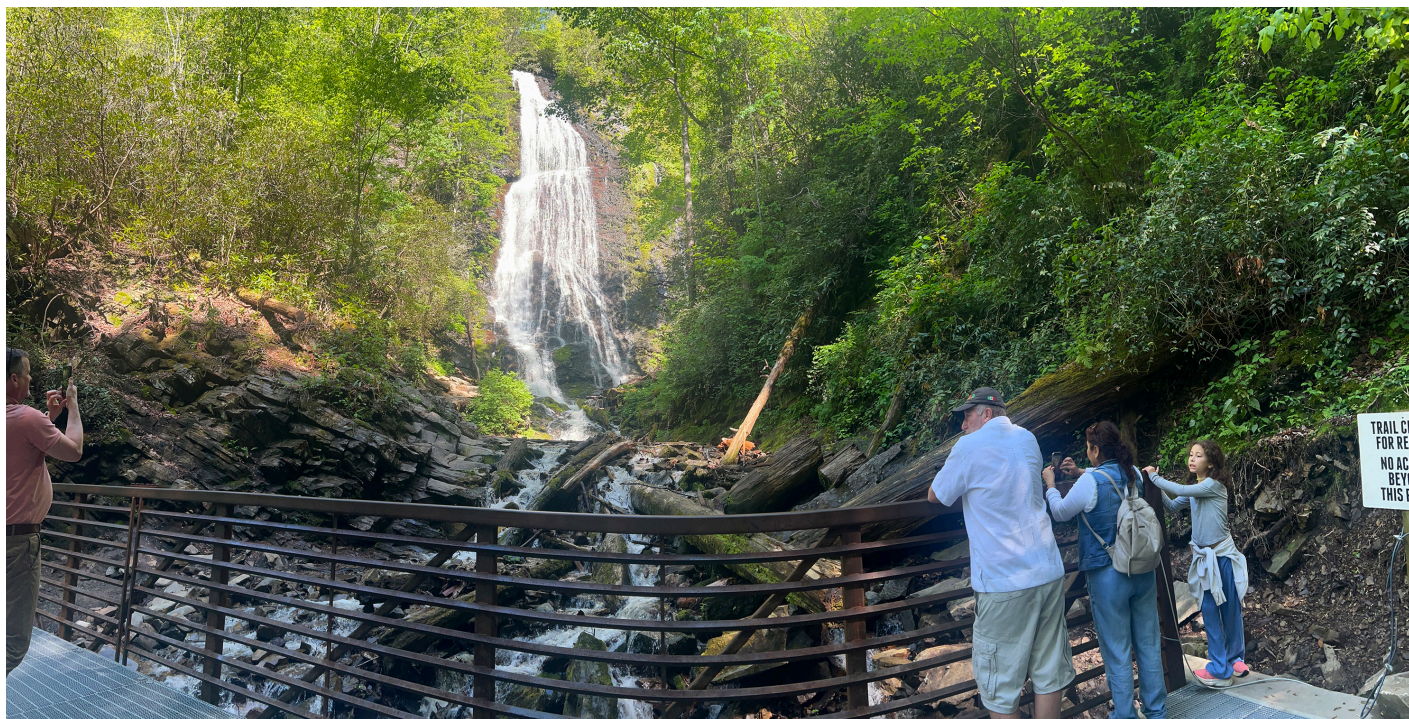
Mingo Falls is tucked away in the lush forests near Cherokee, NC. Mingo Falls is one of the most impressive waterfalls in the southern Appalachian Mountains. Although it sits just outside Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the falls often feel like part of the park's wild landscape—misty, green, and deeply connected to the culture of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Mingo Falls drops roughly 120 feet down a dramatic rock face, making it one of the tallest waterfalls in the region. The name "Mingo" comes from a Cherokee word meaning "Big Bear."

What surprises many visitors is how accessible the waterfall is. The hike is short—less than half a mile roundtrip—but it packs a punch. About 160 steep stairs climb through thick rhododendron and hardwood forest before the trail reaches a wooden viewing bridge at the base of the falls.

Despite the brief walk, the payoff is enormous. Water crashes over layered granite ledges and spreads into a wide white cascade before plunging into a rocky basin below.

The surrounding environment is part of what makes Mingo Falls special. Unlike many western waterfalls that cut through dry canyon walls, Mingo is wrapped in dense Appalachian vegetation. Moss-covered rocks, humid mountain air, and the constant sound of rushing water create a setting that feels ancient and secluded even when visitors are nearby.



Comparing Mingo Falls to Dripping Springs in New Mexico

While Dripping Springs Natural Area in New Mexico and Mingo Falls in North Carolina are both beloved hiking destinations, they offer dramatically different experiences shaped by their environments.

Dripping Springs sits in the rugged Organ Mountains near Las Cruces. Instead of a towering waterfall, visitors find a smaller spring-fed seep flowing from desert rock formations. The area is known more for its desert scenery, historic ruins, and wildlife than for a massive cascade. Trails there pass through arid landscapes filled with yucca, cactus, and pinon-juniper woodland.

Mingo Falls, by contrast, is all about water volume and vertical drama. The Smoky Mountains receive abundant rainfall, so the waterfall often roars with force, especially after storms. The forest surrounding it is cool and shaded, with thick plant life that feels worlds away from New Mexico's dry desert terrain.

Both places are memorable, but for different reasons. If Dripping Springs invites quiet reflection beneath desert skies, Mingo Falls overwhelms visitors with raw Appalachian power. Together, they reveal how water shapes landscapes—and experiences—in completely different ways across the United States.

Weather Trivia:

Where does Dripping Springs near Las Cruces get its water from?

- A. Aquifer and mountain streams**
- B. Mountain streams and rainfall**
- C. Rainfall and Aquifer**
- D. Rainfall and area wells**

Answer: B



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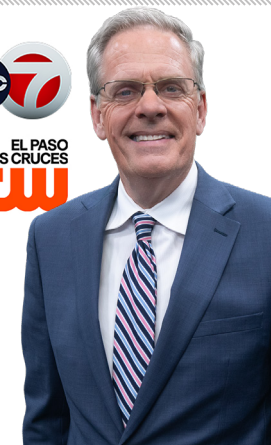


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"Doppler" Dave Speelman is the chief meteorologist at KVIATV in El Paso. You can watch his forecasts at 4, 5, 6 and 10 pm on ABC-7 (channel 6 cable). If you would like Doppler Dave to address (explain) any weather issues you can email him at Dopplerdave@kvia.com.