

Photographing the Waterfalls of Lester Park



View of Gunderson Falls just below the Stone Bridge

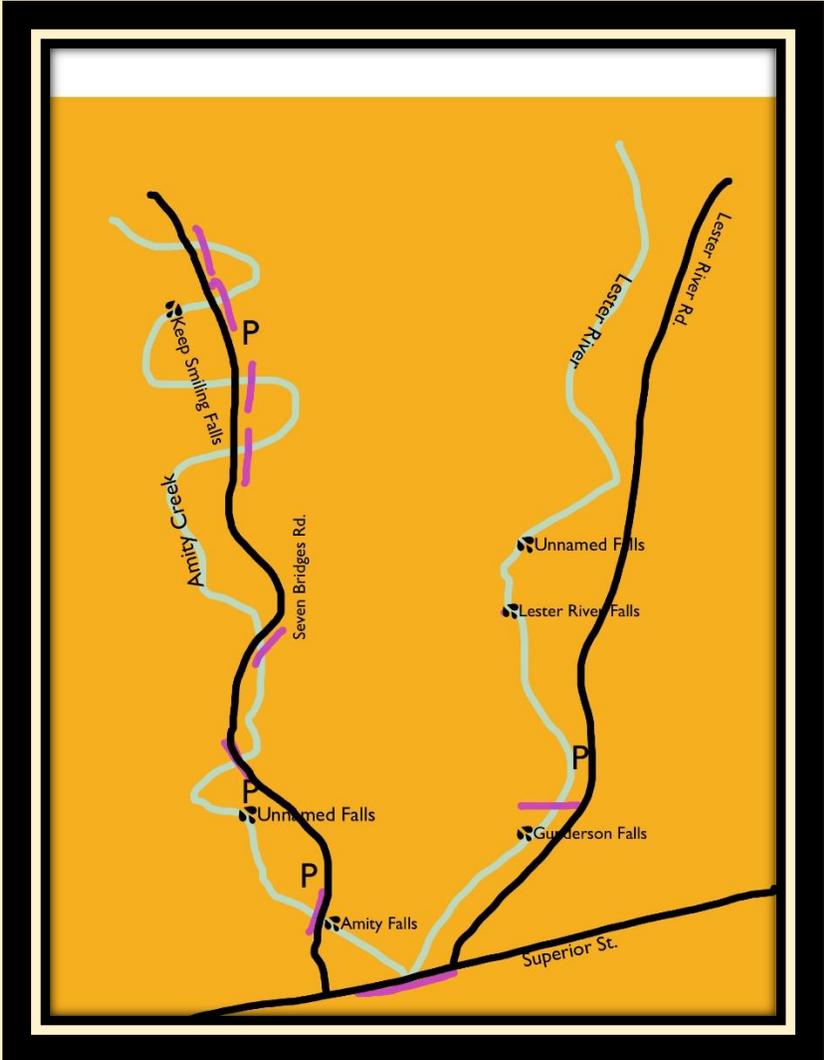
Highlights: Lester Park is a true gem. It has towering pine trees, rock canyons, broad valleys, and trails for all seasons. It is a must if you love outdoor activities. Amity Creek and the Lester River flow through the park with dozens of waterfalls. This guide provides you instructions on how best to photograph six of the most stunning waterfalls in the park.

Parking and Directions:

From the I35 continue on London Road until you get to 60 Ave. East. Take a left on 60th and then a right on Superior St. On Superior St. you will cross the Lester River Bridge and take a left on Lester River Road. The Lester Park parking area is to your left.



Lester Park Sign



Overview map of the six waterfalls covered in this guide

1. Gunderson Falls



View of Gunderson Falls from the Superior St. Bridge

Directions: From the parking lot off of Lester River Road, go to the south end of the parking lot. Find the asphalt bike trail heading south to Superior St. Go west on the Superior St. Bridge until you get a good angle at the Stone Bridge and waterfall. Wait for traffic to clear the bridge before taking the photo. May and October best times of year.

2. Lester River Falls



View of Lester River Falls from gravel sand bar on the south end of the pool

Directions: After photographing Gunderson Falls head back to the Lester Park parking area. On the north end of the parking area there is a path along the river heading into the woods. Follow the path for about a quarter mile until you see rock steps heading down. Ignore these steps and continue on to the next set of rock steps. At the bottom of these steps is a path leading to the waterfall. You may have to climb some rocks to get to the gravel sand bar at the edge of a large pool. On calm days you can get a great reflection of the waterfall.

Important: Do not use the rock stairway in times of high water, such as early spring or after several days of heavy rain.

3. Unnamed Waterfall #1



View from a overlook on the Lester River Bike Trail

Directions: Head back to the parking lot where you started. Go down to the Stone Bridge and cross to the over side (enjoy the view both upstream and downstream). Right on the other side of the bridge is the Lester River Bike Trail. Head north on this trail following the signs. There are many great falls and cascades along the way but about one and one third miles up the trail is an overlook with a series of falls coming down from the woods. It is very beautiful in fall. If you want head up to the two-mile mark for another small waterfall coming out of a rock canyon.

5. Amity Falls



View of Amity Falls from a sandbar at creek level

Directions: If you want to hike to this waterfall, start at the parking lot, cross over the Stone Bridge and follow the sidewalk past the playground to the other side of the park. You will find a small bridge over Amity Creek which you should cross over. Head upstream admiring the beautiful section of the creek with cascades and falls along the way. Once you reach the area with the wooden bridge, head down the rock hill to the creek. **(Do not go down to this area if water levels are high)** At the bottom of the hill there is a flat gravel area great for shooting the falls and bridge. If you drive leave the parking lot and head east on Superior St. Look for Occidental Ave. (which turns into Seven Bridges Rd.) and cross the first stone bridge. There is parking here and you can head back over the bridge to the falls area. **Be very careful crossing the bridge being aware of any cars crossing the bridge.**

5. Unnamed Falls #2



View from parking area below bridge #2

Directions: From the parking area north of bridge #1, head a short way up the hill to a pull over parking area just south of bridge #2. At the south end of this parking area are large boulders. From this spot you can see the waterfall below you. You can also go around the corner down the road a bit to see another view. Be very careful to stay off the roadway if taking photos from this spot. There are many trees, so it can be tricky getting a good shot. Actually in November you can get a good view of this waterfall after all the leaves are gone.

6. Keep Smiling Falls



View from rock ledge just below the falls, waterfall # 6 on the map

Directions: From Bridge number two, head up the hill to a pull over on the right side just below bridge #6. Head down to the creek, where you will find many good-sized rocks. Find a level spot with a good view of the waterfall and bridge over it. If you prefer hiking the Amity Route you can head from the Stone Bridge to the other side of the park and cross the creek to a trail that leads up to Amity Falls. The Keep Smiling Falls are about a mile up Seven Bridges Rd. **Just be sure to stay of the side of the road facing traffic and be very careful on the bridges.** That being said, it is a great hike and all downhill on the way back to the park.

There are many more falls than the six I picked out and you can find many by just exploring the hiking and biking trails in the park. There is a beautiful area just north of the Stone Bridge with several falls and cascades. There are several overlooks along the East Amity and Lester River Bike Trails. There is one fairly large fall just below bridge number two that you can see clearly down in a ravine during late fall and winter. Unfortunately, the view is blocked by leaves in the summer.

Explore, have fun but always be careful

John LaTour