



Horse Use and Pack Animals

Policies and Regulations



Introduction

Numerous trails in Shenandoah National Park are designed for horseback riding and the use of pack animals. Legally defined, horses, mules, burros, and llamas are all designated as “pack animals.” Collectively, we refer to them as horses in this guide.

Horse Trails

To minimize trail use problems with hikers, riders may take horses only into areas designated for their use. **Horse trails are marked with yellow paint blazes on trees.** Most of the park’s fire roads are included in the horse trail system and are blazed accordingly. Commercial horse use services, such as guided trail rides, require a Commercial Use Authorization.

The Appalachian Trail (white blazed) and other hiking trails (blue blazed) are for foot traffic only and are not maintained for horses.

Meadows and native grasslands, including Big Meadows, contain sensitive vegetation and are strictly off-limits to horse use. The paved roads and developed areas in the park (such as lodging areas and campgrounds) have high vehicle traffic and other visitor use and are not suited for horses. Use of horses in these areas is prohibited. Exceptions include short stretches of travel along paved roads to access horse use trailheads close to one another.

Trails Open to Pack Animal Use

North District

Beecher Ridge Trail
Bluff Trail
Browntown Trail
Compton Gap Trail
Dickey Ridge Trail (portion)
Harris Hollow Trail
Heiskell Hollow Trail
Hickerson Hollow Trail*
Hull School Trail
Jenkins Gap Trail
Jordan River Trail
Keyser Run Road
Knob Mountain Trail
Lands Run Road*
Mathews Arm Trail
Mt Marshall Trail
Neighbor Mountain Trail
Piney Branch Trail
Rocky Branch Trail
Thornton River Trail
Springhouse Trail
Weddlewood Trail

Central District

Berry Hollow Fire Road*

Conway River Fire Road

Conway River Trail
Dry Run Fire Road
Fork Mountain Fire Road
Fork Mountain Trail
Furnace Spring Trail
Graves Mill Trail
Hazel Mountain Trail
Hazel River Trail
Laurel Prong Trail (lower)*
Meadows School Trail
Mill Prong Horse Trail
Old Rag Fire Road*
Pine Hill Gap Trail
Pocosin Fire Road
Pocosin Horse Trail
Rapidan Camp Road
Rapidan Fire Road*
Red Gate Fire Road*
Rose River Fire Road*
Skyland Fire Road*
Skyland/Big Meadows Horse Trail*
Slaughter Trail
South River Fire Road
Stony Man Mountain Horse Trail
Stony Mountain Trail*

Tanners Ridge Admin Road*

Upper Dark Hollow Trail*
Weakley Hollow Fire Road*
White Rocks Trail
Whiteoak Canyon Fire Road*

South District

Beldor Fire Road*
Big Run Loop Trail (south side)
Big Run Portal Trail
Browns Gap Road*
Gasline Road
Lewis Run Trail
Madison Run Road*
Madison Run Spur Trail
Stull Run Fire Road
North Fork Moormans River Trail
North Fork Moormans Fire Road
Paine Run Trail
Patterson Ridge Trail
Simmons Gap Fire Road*
Smith Roach Gap Fire Road
South Fork Moormans Fire Road
Turk Branch Trail
Turk Gap Trail

**Also for commercial horse use services*

Trail Maps

Recreational maps published by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) clearly designate horse use portions of trails. These include PATC Map # 9 for North District (Front Royal to US Hwy 211), Map # 10 for Central District (US Hwy 211 to US Hwy 33), and Map # 11 for South District (US Hwy 33 to Waynesboro).

These maps are available for sale throughout the Park at entrance stations, visitor centers, and concession facilities, at outdoor stores in the region, and through the PATC and Shenandoah National Park Association bookstore websites.



Hitching Posts

Hitching posts have been placed in a few areas of high horse use. Please use them where provided. Do not tie your horse to a tree. The horse's pawing at the ground causes "dough-nuts" of eroded areas around the tree,

compacting soil and killing tree roots. Pickets and other tethers or restraints that will not damage trees or other vegetation should be used where hitching posts are not available. Grazing is not permitted.

Watering Horses

Water your horse at a low rocky spot in the streambank where little vegetation and soil disturbance will occur. Many watering places are small or contain sensitive vegetation and

fragile soils. Water horses away from these sources to prevent damage, or use a collapsible water bucket.

Parking of Trailers

Horses are often trailered into the Park and ridden out on the horse trails from points along the Skyline Drive. Trailhead parking may be very limited or unavailable both on the Skyline Drive and at Park boundary access points.

Please be considerate; do not block private property or Park access roads. Remember to clean up after your animals in the parking lots and around high-use areas.

Safety Concerns

Please slow down to a walk when you pass hikers. Few hikers know they should step off on the downhill side of the trail, so you may need to ask them to hold up while you pass. If instead you are the one being overtaken, remember that hikers might be packing a load of gear and have a right to be on the trail too. Find a good spot and let hikers pass. A little conversation as you pass each other may reduce the chance of your horse being spooked. There may be vehicle traffic on fire roads; please ride single file until the vehicle passes by.

Skyland, and other developed areas. Young children have been known to approach horses and may be kicked or bitten. Bears are present in all areas of the Park and may frighten your animals.

Reporting Accidents and Getting Help:

In an emergency, call the Park Communications Center at 1-800-732-0911. Cellular phones have limited range from many trails. Phones are located in most developed areas in the Park, including lodging areas, campgrounds, visitor centers, gas stations, and entrance stations.



No Unattended Horses:

Please leave someone to watch the horses while your group is away, especially in Big Meadows,

Overnight Stays

Shenandoah National Park has no facilities for horses to stay overnight. The campgrounds and concessioner are not able to accommodate horses. Horses may not be kept at the lodges overnight or left overnight in trailers.

a free permit and observe all backcountry camping regulations. Backcountry camping with horses can cause much damage to backcountry natural resources, and visitors are urged to take precautions to reduce the impact on vegetation. Backcountry regulations require all campers to camp at least 20 yards from and preferably out of sight of trails and fire roads. Please lead your horse carefully to your campsite to minimize damage to the vegetation and avoid creating new "trails."

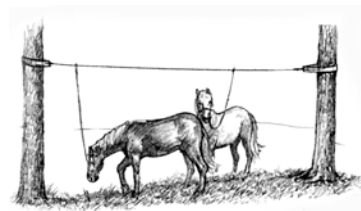
Several commercial facilities near the Park will board horses and their riders overnight to facilitate early starts on the trail. Contact Virginia Horse Council or local Chambers of Commerce for nearby horse stable information.

Please contact the park ahead of time to discuss your overnight trip planning.

Horses are required to remain on the trails at all times while traveling and should be led carefully to off-trail campsites. Grazing is not permitted; you must bring your own feed for your horses. We recommend that you use certified clear feed for your animals since oats and hay may bring damaging non-native grass species into the park.

Although it is permitted in the park, camping with horses is discouraged. For all overnight camping in the backcountry, visitors must obtain

When camped, use the *highlining* technique to secure your horses to minimize damage to trees and other vegetation. Refer to "Leave No Trace" highlining techniques (<http://www.LNT.org> or 1-800-332-4100). Tie the horse(s) off to a highline away from trees and rocks. Use "belts" such as tow straps around trees to protect the bark. Do not tie off the lead directly to the highline, but use a swivel or cord to keep the lead from knotting up from horse movement. Try to highline your horses out of sight of trails and roads. Do not tie horses within 50 yards of streams or springs. Upon leaving the site, please scatter manure and rehabilitate the highline site.



Highlining Technique

For More Information

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Luray, VA 22835
(540) 999-3500
www.nps.gov/shen

Virginia Horse Council
368 Litton Reaves (0306)
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Blacksburg, VA 24061
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