

Shenandoah National Park

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide



Trip Name: AT: Hawksbill to Swift Run

Description: Mountaintop trek over three of the four highest peaks in the park

Entry: 45 MP - Hawksbill Gap

Exit: 65 MP - Swift Run (north)

Map(s): PATC #10 Central District

Level: Strenuous Beginner or New

Total Length: 22.5 miles

Day One

Campsite: Central District developed areas - campground or cabin

5.1 miles

Park at Hawksbill Gap.

Hike up Lower Hawksbill Mountain Trail, 0.9 mile.

Enjoy the view from the highest peak in the park.

Take Salamander Trail down to the Appalachian Trail (AT), 0.8 mile.

Turn left onto the AT, hiking 3.4 miles.

Turn left to Big Meadows Campground (several spur trails lead there).

Visit campground office for walk-in site.

Day Two

Campsite: Central District developed areas - campground or cabin

9.1 to 9.4 miles

Return to the AT, hiking south 9.1 miles to Lewis Mountain Campground.

Bearfence Rock Scramble is worth the extra effort if everyone has good balance (add 0.3 mile).

Visit campground office for walk-in site.

Day Three

8.3 miles

Return to the AT, continuing to hike south as far as desired.

The suggested stopping point is Swift Run, in 8.3 miles.

(However, there are other places to get off the trail both before and after.)

Notes

Both campgrounds are popular and often fill to capacity on weekends and holidays. Lewis Mountain Campground at all times, and Big Meadows Campground during the spring (April to mid-May), are first-come, first-served. If it is a sunny or holiday weekend, plan to arrive at either campground by 4:00 p.m. to get a campsite. Reservations are strongly recommended at Big Meadows during the main camping season. All Shenandoah NP campgrounds are closed in the winter (generally from mid-November through March). See the camping section at www.nps.gov/shen for more information, or call 540-999-3500.
