

Shenandoah National Park

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide



Trip Name: Big Meadows and Rose River

Description: Several beautiful and popular waterfalls, first night in Big Meadows campground

Entry: 53 MP - Milam Gap

Exit: 53 MP - Milam Gap

Map(s): PATC #10 Central District

Level: Beginner

Total Length: 14 miles

Day One

Campsite: Central District developed areas - campground or cabin
4 miles

Hike north on the Appalachian Trail (AT) about 2 miles.

Turn left onto Lewis Falls Trail and hike 1.8 miles.

Turn right to enter the Big Meadow area through the amphitheatre and follow your map to the campground office.

Camp at Big Meadows Campground (see note below for camping reservations).

Day Two

Campsite: Rose River Loop - backcountry
3 to 3.5 miles

Return to the AT and hike north 1.6 miles,

Turn right onto Red Gate Fire Road and cross Skyline Drive 0.1 mile.

On other side of Skyline Drive pick up Rose River Fire Road.

Turn left almost immediately onto Rose River Loop Trail/Skyland-Big Meadows Horse Trail, which is marked with yellow blazes on the trees.

In 0.9 mile, bear right to stay on Rose River Loop Trail. Note that the blazes now have changed to blue.

Camping: There are three possible places to look for flat spots to camp.

One area is before the falls upslope on the right/west.

The second is found by bearing left at the lower trail post (before the trail turns right and back up hill) and heading towards the confluence of Rose River and Hogcamp Branch.

The third area is located further down, where a small feeder stream and Hogcamp Branch cross the trail. By going downstream, places to camp will be found.

Day Three

6.7 miles (add one mile for side trip to Big Rock Falls)

The next day continue hiking on the Rose River Loop Trail to Rose River Fire Road (1 to 1.5 miles).

A side hike at the Dark Hollow Falls Trail is an option, just uphill from the trail and fire road junction, in order to view the upper section of the falls.

Turn left onto Rose River Fire Road and hike downhill 0.9 mile. Out of view of the trail, several legal campsites exist on benches.

Turn right onto Stony Mountain Trail and hike 1.1 miles. Additional legal campsites may be found along this stretch of trail.

Turn right onto Rapidan Fire Road and hike 1.7 miles.

Turn left onto Mill Prong Horse Trail (yellow-blazed), hiking 1 mile. (You may wish to turn left and hike 1 mile roundtrip to Big Rock Falls.)

Turn right onto Mill Prong Trail (blue-blazed) and hike 1 mile. At the second stream crossing, legal campsites may be found on the left (Southern) side of the trail.

Cross Skyline Drive to return to Milam Gap.

Notes

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