

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide

Two Nights

National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
Shenandoah National Park
Emergency: 1-800-732-0911



Big Run, Doyles River, and Frazier

Standard - Circuit

Level: Experienced or Strenuous Beginner

Total Length: 18.1 to 26.8 miles

Trip Description: Wilderness valley, excellent camping and fishing, three popular waterfalls

Entry: 79 MP - Loft Mt. Wayside

Exit: 79 MP - Loft Mt. Wayside

Map(s): PATC #11 South District

Day One

Campsite: Big Run Portal/Loop Trails - backcountry

4 to 4.6 miles

Hike north in grass beside Skyline Drive to Patterson Ridge Trail.

Turn left onto Patterson Ridge Trail, hiking 3.1 miles.

Turn left onto Big Run Portal Trail and begin to look for a place to camp.

Option – Or turn right to lengthen the hike, backtracking the next day.

Day Two

Campsite: Jones Run Trail - backcountry

7.2 to 8.7 miles

Hike upstream on Big Run Portal Trail (total of 2.3 miles between Patterson and Loop).

Turn right onto Big Run Loop Trail, hiking 2 miles.

Turn right onto Appalachian Trail (AT) and hike 1.9 miles.

Turn left onto Jones Run Trail, hiking 2.5 miles.

Look for a place to camp downstream from the confluence of Jones Run and Doyles River.

Day Three

6.3 miles

Hike upstream on Doyles River Trail for 2.2 miles.

Turn right onto AT and hike 3.4 miles.

Turn left onto Frazier Discovery Trail and take the right-hand (north) side of the loop (0.7 mile).

Cross Skyline Drive to return to vehicle.

Notes

Excellent camping and fishing is available throughout the Big Run drainage. This wilderness valley is well worth exploring. Take your time to find a nice campsite, as they are plentiful.

The multiple stream crossings on Big Run Portal Trail can be knee to waist high when the water is up. Beware in the spring and after heavy rains!

It is not recommended to hike this route in reverse order due to the climb up Patterson Ridge. If you want a longer first day and a shorter last day, park at Doyles River Parking and follow the above loop in the same direction.

Group camping at pre-existing sites is possible at the lower end of Big Run Portal. Follow the trail until you reach Brown Mountain Trail, then leave the park trail and follow social trails leading downstream while looking for a place to camp. Note that this will increase your total mileage. Experienced-level groups may be able to find other areas to pristine site-camp on Big Run.

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Options

Optional extra day camping on Big Run – Circuit dayhike – 8.7 miles

Leave your camp set up with permit on tent and food secured; take valuables with you.

Hike to Rocky Mountain Trail on Big Run Portal Trail.

Turn onto Rocky Mountain Run Trail and hike 2.7 miles.

Turn left onto Brown Mountain Trail, hiking 4.6 miles.

Turn left and return to your campsite on Big Run Portal.