

Shenandoah National Park

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide



Trip Name: Big Run Loop and Big Run Portal

Description: Simple, flexible trip in a wilderness valley with excellent camping and fishing

Entry: 81 MP - Big Run OL/Doyles River Pkg

Exit: 81 MP - Big Run OL/Doyles River Pkg

Map(s): PATC #11 South District

Level: Beginner or Strenuous Beginner

Total Length: 5.4 to 12 miles

Day One

Campsite: Big Run Portal/Loop Trails - backcountry

2.7 to 6.2 miles

From Big Run Overlook, hike down Big Run Loop 2.2 miles.

Please do not camp at this trail intersection, as it is too close to the stream. However, turn right onto Big Run Portal, hike for 0.5 mile to 4 miles while looking for a legal place to camp (see notes below).

Day Two

2.7 to 6.2 miles

Return via same route.

Notes

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

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

Groups can also take this trip, but it will be more strenuous. To find legal sites that are close in proximity, groups should plan on hiking 4 miles down Big Run to find a place to camp. 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. Your first day will be 6.2 miles, and your second day will either be the same mileage, or add 1.4 miles for the loop with the AT at the end of the trip.

Options

Longer option: 6.8 to 13.8 miles - 5.8 mile loop plus 1 to 8 additional miles roundtrip

From Big Run Overlook, hike down Big Run Loop 2.2 miles.

Turn right onto Big Run Portal and begin looking for a place to camp (see notes), 0.5 mile to 4 miles.

Return to Big Run Loop, 0.5 mile to 4 miles.

Turn right onto Big Run Loop and hike up the southern side.

Legal camping opportunities may also be found on the left (Eastern) stretch of this section of Big Run Loop.

At the intersection with Rockytop turn left to continue on Big Run Loop (total 2 miles).

Turn left onto the Appalachian Trail (AT) hiking north 1.5 miles.

Additional camping options exist along this stretch of the AT, however, be sure not to camp within 1/4 mile of Skyline Drive.

Turn left onto Doyles River, hiking a short distance to the parking area.

Cross Skyline Drive to return to vehicle.

For a two-night trip, simply find a pre-existing site your first night, and stay in that site your second night as well. You will find plenty of places to explore in Big Run on your second day.