

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide

Three Nights

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



Jones Run, Big Run, and Brown Mountain

Standard - Circuit

Level: Experienced

Total Length: 29 miles

Trip Description: Spectacular mountains, three waterfalls, wilderness valley, and geology

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

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

Map(s): PATC #11 South District

Day One

Campsite: Jones Run Trail - backcountry

6 miles

Hike downhill from parking lot to the Appalachian Trail (AT).

Turn right, hiking south on the AT 3.4 miles.

Turn left onto Jones Run Trail and hike 2.5 miles to junction with Doyles River Trail.

Look for places to camp below the confluence of Jones Run and Doyles River.

Day Two

Campsite: Big Run Portal/Loop Trails - backcountry

9.5 miles

Hike up Doyles River Trail 2.2 miles.

Turn right onto Appalachian Trail (AT) and hike north 3.4 miles.

Turn left onto Frazier Discovery Trail and hike north (right) side of loop 0.7 mile.

Cross Skyline Drive and hike north in grass a short distance.

Turn left onto Patterson Ridge Trail and hike 3.1 miles.

Turn right on the Big Run Portal Trail and look for a pre-existing site to camp on in the next mile (see note below).

Day Three

Campsite: Big Run Portal/Loop Trails - backcountry

9-mile day hike (Be sure to properly store your food items if you are leaving your campsite unattended.)

Hike up Rocky Mountain Run 2.7 miles.

Turn left onto Brown Mountain and hike 4.6 miles.

Turn left onto Big Run Portal and return to camp (about 1.5 miles).

Day Four

4.7 miles

Hike upstream on Big Run Portal, about 2.5 miles (depending on campsite).

Turn left onto Big Run Loop, hiking 2.2 miles to Big Run Overlook.

Cross Skyline Drive to return to your vehicle.

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Notes

The wilderness valley of Big Run is the largest watershed in the park and has excellent camping and fishing. There are enough nice campsites that you should take your time to find one that you really like (and includes legal distances). If you stay in your site two nights (as written above), look for a pre-existing site. Look for these near Eppart Hollow, below Rocky Mountain Run Trail intersection, and downstream from the Brown Mountain Trail intersection.

Be aware: There are many stream crossings on Big Run Portal, Jones Run, and Doyles River. In the spring and after a heavy rain the crossings may be knee to waist high.

Brief description –Jones and Doyles have three large waterfalls and several swimming holes. The AT, especially around Loft Mountain, has some excellent views to the east, while Frazier Discovery Trail (the northern part of the loop) has an outstanding view to the west. After Frazier you could grab lunch at the Loft Mountain Wayside or just head straight into the wilderness. Once you've hiked 0.5 mile on Patterson Ridge, you'll be in designated wilderness for the rest of your trip. Big Run is loaded with brook trout and is a splendid wilderness valley. The day hike is strenuous but combines pretty mountain streams and cascades with jagged peaks and awesome views. When you climb down Brown Mountain into Big Run, there are some nice swimming holes.