

Shenandoah National Park

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide



Trip Name: Paine Run, Riprap, Wildcat, and Moormans Rivers

Description: Excellent views, geology, swimming holes, side trail to a waterfall

Entry: Paine Run Boundary (South District; West side; Route # 661)

Exit: Paine Run Boundary (South District; West side; Route # 661)

Map(s): PATC #11 South District

Level: Advanced

Total Length: 30 miles

Day One

Campsite: Riprap Trail - backcountry

6.2 to 7.2 miles

Park at the turnaround; do not block driveways or gates.

Hike up Paine Run Trail 3.7 miles, picking up water before leaving the stream.

Cross Skyline Drive and turn right, hiking south on the AT 2.5 miles.

Turn right onto Riprap Trail and find a place to dry-camp off the trail in the next mile.

Day Two

Campsite: AT (3E) Blackrock Gap - Jarman Gap - backcountry

6.3 to 7.8 miles

Continue hiking down Riprap Trail for a total of 3.6 miles from the AT junction.

Turn left onto Wildcat Ridge Trail and hike 2.7 miles. Get water at the stream crossing.

Turn right onto the AT and hike south 1 to 1.5 miles.

Look for a place to dry-camp off the AT. Sawlog Ridge or Goat Ridge has level places to camp.

Day Three

Campsite: North Fork Moormans River - backcountry

7 to 8.5 miles

Continue hiking south on the AT another 0.8 mile to 1.3 miles (2.3 total from Wildcat Ridge).

Turn left onto Turk Branch Trail hiking 2.1 miles.

Turk Branch Trail ends at South Fork Moormans River Fire Road.

Turn left; the road leaves the park. Proceed 2.1 miles and cross the river near the Charlottesville Reservoir.

Follow the gravel road to the left, and then upstream on North Fork Moormans River Fire Road (NFMR), re-entering the park.

Hike up NFMR past Big Branch, then start looking for a place to camp (2 to 3 miles).

Day Four

8.4 to 9.4 miles

Continue hiking north on NFMR back to the AT (total NFMR is 5.2 miles).

The trail leaves the park again at 1.5 miles north of Big Branch and becomes a gravel road. About a mile further the road takes a sharp left, crosses the stream, and ascends to the AT after re-entering the park.

Turn right onto the AT and hike 1.3 miles.

Turn left onto Blackrock Spur Trail for 0.1 mile.

Follow Trayfoot Mountain Trail, hiking 4.5 miles total.

Reach Paine Run Trail, turn right, and return to vehicle in 0.3 mile.

Notes

Potential high water on NFMR and on SFMR above reservoir: knee- to waist-high stream crossings in the spring before green-up, and after heavy rains.

Riprap and Trayfoot have some excellent views, and the Blackrock area on the AT is an interesting geologic area. There are swimming holes on Paine Run, Riprap, SFMR, and NFMR. NFMR has some impressive flood damage still evident from 1995.