

Shenandoah National Park

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide



Trip Name: Pocosin, Laurel Prong, Staunton, and Slaughter

Description: Waterfalls (83' high), views, great density of historic sites -- both restored and ruins

Entry: 63 MP - South River Picnic Area

Exit: 63 MP - South River Picnic Area

Map(s): PATC #10 Central District

Level: Experienced

Total Length: 34 to 35 miles

Day One

Campsite: Pocosin Horse Trail - backcountry

About 3 miles

Hike South River Falls, 1.2 miles (overlook to 83' falls at 1 mile).

Turn left toward South River Fire Road, hiking 0.4 mile.

Turn right onto South River Fire Road and hike less than 1 mile.

Turn left onto Pocosin Trail and look for a place to dry-camp within the next mile (bring water).

Day Two

Campsite: Laurel Prong Trail - backcountry

8 to 9 miles

Finish hiking Pocosin Trail (total 1.3 miles) at the ruins of Pocosin Mission.

Turn left onto Pocosin Fire Road and hike uphill 1.1 miles.

Turn right onto the Appalachian Trail (AT) and hike north 5.5 miles.

(Be sure to take the side trail up to the splendid view on Bearfence, adding 0.3 mile.)

Turn right onto Laurel Prong; begin looking for a campsite after 1 mile.

There are good places to camp off the Laurel Prong Trail between Cat Knob Trail and Fork Mountain Trail.

Remember that the area within 0.5 mile of Rapidan Camp is closed to camping.

Day Three

Campsite: Staunton River/McDaniel Hollow Trail - backcountry

6.7 to 7.9 miles

Continue on Laurel Prong Trail to Fork Mountain Trail (0 to 1.2 miles depending on campsite).

Turn right and hike up Fork Mountain Trail, about 1.4 miles.

Turn right onto Jones Mountain Trail and hike 4.8 miles (optional side trip to cabin).

Turn right on Staunton River Trail and look for a place to camp (estimate up to 0.5 mile hike).

Day Four

Campsite: Slaughter Trail - backcountry

8.7 to 9.7 miles

Hike upstream on Staunton River Trail 2.3 to 2.8 miles.

Turn left onto Fork Mountain Road and hike uphill about 0.8 mile.

Turn left onto Jones Mountain Trail and hike 0.8 mile.

Turn right onto Cat Knob Trail and hike 0.5 mile.

Turn left onto Laurel Prong Trail and hike 1 mile.

Turn left onto the AT and hike 2.8 miles.

Turn left onto Slaughter Trail and hike 0.5 to 1 mile, then look for a place to camp.

(You may want to pick up water at the Bearfence spring.)

Day Five

6.7 to 7.2 miles

Hike Slaughter Trail uphill, return to the AT (0.5 to 1 mile).

Turn left onto the AT and hike 6.2 miles to South River Picnic Area.

Notes

Wear bright orange during hunting season, as you will pass through small areas of Rapidan Wildlife Management Area where hunting is allowed (see topographic map).

The only potential high water crossings are on Staunton River. If the water is up, you may simply hike back up Jones Mountain Trail to tie into Cat Knob Trail

Emergency Phone: 1-800-732-0911

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