

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide

Three Nights

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



Pocosin, Laurel Prong, and Slaughter

Standard - Circuit

Level: Experienced

Total Length: 27.5 to 29 miles

Trip Description: Waterfalls (83' high), mission ruins, views, Bearfence Rocks, Rapidan Camp

Entry: 63 MP - South River Picnic Area

Exit: 63 MP - South River Picnic Area

Map(s): PATC #10 Central District

Day One

Campsite: Pocosin Horse Trail - backcountry

About 3 miles

Hike South River Falls Trail, 1.2 miles (viewpoint for 83' waterfall 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 dry campsite within the next mile (bring water).

Day Two

Campsite: Laurel Prong Trail - backcountry

8 to 9 miles

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

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

Turn right onto the Appalachian Trail (AT) and hike north 5.6 miles.

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

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

There is excellent camping on 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: Slaughter Trail - backcountry

8 to 9.8 miles

Continue on Laurel Prong Trail into Rapidan Camp (total distance on Laurel Prong Trail: 2.8 miles).

Explore the camp, then look for Mill Prong Trail at the north end of the camp

Turn left onto Mill Prong Horse Trail (yellow-blazed) and hike 0.8 mile

Bear left onto blue-blazed Mill Prong Trail at junction and hike 1 mile.

Turn left, hiking south on AT 5.2 miles.

Turn left onto Slaughter Trail and hike 0.5 to 1.0 mile, then look for a place to camp.

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

Day Four

6.7 to 7.2 miles

Hike Slaughter Trail uphill, back 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 blaze orange during hunting season, as you will pass through small areas of Rapidan Wildlife Management Area where hunting is allowed (see topographic map).

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Options

This can also be hiked from Swift Run Gap when Skyline Drive is closed. Add 3.2 miles to the first and last days, hiking on the AT from Swift Run to access this route.