

Shenandoah National Park

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide



Trip Name: Whiteoak Canyon, Hawksbill Summit, and Cedar Run

Description: Popular waterfalls and highest peak circuit; avoid on weekends

Entry: 45 MP - Hawksbill Gap

Exit: 45 MP - Hawksbill Gap

Map(s): PATC #10 Central District

Level: Experienced

Total Length: 14 miles

Day One

Campsite: Whiteoak Canyon Trail - backcountry

6.4 to 6.9 miles

Start at MP 44.4, Crescent Rock Overlook.

Take short spur trail from overlook to Appalachian Trail (AT).

Turn left, hiking south on AT 1.4 miles.

Turn left onto Salamander Trail and hike 0.8 mile to Hawksbill Peak.

Find Lower Hawksbill Trail and hike 0.9 miles to Hawksbill Gap.

Cross Skyline Drive to reach Cedar Run Trail.

Hike down Cedar Run for 3.1 miles.

Turn left onto Whiteoak Canyon Trail and hike uphill 0.2 mile, crossing Whiteoak Run.

Look for a place to camp in the next 0.5 mile; you may not camp above the intersection with Cedar Run/Whiteoak Link Trail. Pre-existing campsites are mostly in the ¼ mile below the Link Trail.

Day Two

5 to 5.5 miles

Continue hiking up Whiteoak Canyon Trail another 3.5 to 4 miles.

Turn left onto Limberlost Trail for about 0.4 mile.

Turn left onto Crescent Rock Trail, 1.1 miles to vehicle.

Notes

Whiteoak Canyon is a beautiful place, but it is currently receiving extraordinarily high use on weekends. Not only does this make for unpleasantly crowded camping, it damages the natural resource as increasingly large areas are impacted. Intermediate level backcountry campers need to plan your overnight stay on a Monday – Thursday night. Due to the difficulty in finding legal campsites once the pre-existing campsites are occupied, this is an Advanced Level route on weekends (Friday night – Sunday night). Please note that for weekend trips, there are many other beautiful and less crowded options at Shenandoah National Park!

Options

Short Loop: 8 miles

Day one – 3.3 to 3.8 miles

Start at MP 45.6, Hawksbill Gap Parking.

Cedar Run Trail starts on the east side of Skyline Drive. Hike down Cedar Run Trail for 3.1 miles

Turn left onto Whiteoak Canyon Trail and hike uphill 0.2 mile, crossing Whiteoak Run.

Look for a place to camp in the next 0.5 mile; you may not camp above the intersection with Cedar Run/Whiteoak Link Trail. Pre-existing campsites are mostly in the ¼ mile below the Link Trail.

Day two – 4.2 to 4.7 miles

Continue hiking up Whiteoak Canyon Trail another 2.1 to 2.6 miles.

Cross footbridge, turn left, and follow Whiteoak Canyon Fire Road/SBMH 1.8 miles.

When Whiteoak Canyon Fire Road and Skyland-Big Meadows Horse Trail (SMBH) split, stay left on SBMH for 0.3 mile.

Turn right on Cedar Run Trail 0.1 mile to return to Hawksbill Gap Parking.