

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide

Three Nights

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



Winter Trip from Madison Run

Standard - Circuit

Level: Experienced or Advanced

Total Length: 36.4 to 38.4 miles

Trip Description: See beautiful wilderness areas with outstanding views while staying dry.

Entry: Madison Run Boundary
South District; West side; Route # 663

Exit: Madison Run Boundary
South District; West side; Route # 663

Map(s): PATC #11 South District

Day One

Campsite: AT (3D) Doyles River - Blackrock Gap* - backcountry

6.8 miles

Hike up Madison Run Fire Road up to 0.5 mile (depending on where you park).

Turn right onto Furnace Mountain Trail and hike 3.4 miles.

(Be sure to take the side trail to the view beyond the Furnace Mountain Summit, adding 1 mile roundtrip.)

Turn left onto Trayfoot Mountain Trail, hiking 1.4 miles.

Turn right onto the Appalachian Trail (AT) hiking south 0.5 mile.

Turn left to access Blackrock AT Hut and designated camping areas (0.2 mile).

Day Two

Campsite: Patterson Ridge Trail - backcountry

11.3 to 12.3 miles

Hike back up the Blackrock Hut Trail (0.2 mile).

Turn right, hiking north on the Appalachian Trail (AT), 10.2 miles.

Turn left to Ivy Creek Maintenance Hut and spring (no camping in this area), pick up water.

Continue on Ivy Creek Fire Road, about 0.6 mile.

Cross Skyline Drive and hike up Patterson Ridge Trail; dry-camp after hiking 0.3 mile to 1.3 miles.

Day Three

Campsite: Big Run Portal/Loop Trails - backcountry

8.3 to 9.8 miles

Retrace your steps to the AT (1 to 2 miles).

Turn left onto the AT and hike north another 1.4 miles to Ivy Creek Overlook.

Leave the AT and hike north on Skyline Drive about 0.6 mile.

Turn into Brown Mountain Overlook.

Hike down Brown Mountain Trail, 5.3 miles.

Camp on Big Run Portal Trail, between Brown Mountain Trail and Rockytop Trail (0.5 mile).

Four Nights

10 miles

Hike up Rockytop, 5.3 miles

Turn right onto Austin Mountain, hiking 3.2 miles

Turn right on Madison Run road, hiking up to 1.5 miles to return to vehicle

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You'll need to get an early start on the first day. If that isn't possible, for your first day hike up Madison Run to across from Austin Mountain. Turn right, cross the stream, and look for a place to camp.

This is a great hike in the winter or early spring if Skyline Drive is closed, or if you don't want to get wet due to cold weather or high water. The only potential problem is at the very beginning of the trip, getting onto Furnace Mountain. If you could safely cross, but will get wet, hike this route in reverse, getting wet at the very end of your trip. There is a bridge across Big Run between Brown Mountain & Rockytop.