

Shenandoah National Park

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide



Trip Name: Big Meadows and Laurel Prong

Description: Cascading streams, waterfalls, Rapidan Camp, Big Meadows

Entry: 49 MP - Fishers Gap

Exit: 49 MP - Fishers Gap

Map(s): PATC #10 Central District

Level: Strenuous Beginner

Total Length: 19 miles

Day One

Campsite: Central District developed areas - campground or cabin

1.5 miles

Park at Fishers Gap Overlook and hike down Red Gate road to access AT.

Hike south on the Appalachian Trail (AT) 1.2 miles.

Turn left to enter Big Meadows Campground Area and follow signs to campground office (see note).

Day Two

Campsite: Laurel Prong Trail - backcountry

7.5 to 8.5 miles

Hike south on the AT a short distance from the Big Meadows Amphitheatre.

Turn right onto Lewis Falls Trail and hike 1.8 miles.

Turn right onto the gravel road for 50 yards.

Turn right again hiking south on the AT about 2 miles.

Cross Skyline Drive at Milam Gap and continue south on the AT another 2.5 miles.

Turn left onto Laurel Prong Trail, begin looking for a campsite after at least 1 mile.

There is excellent camping on Laurel Prong Trail below Cat Knob Trail and before Fork Mountain Trail.

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

Day Three

9 to 10 miles

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

Turn left onto Mill Prong Horse Trail, being sure to turn right at junction with Mill Prong Trail.

Hike the yellow-blazed trail for a total of 1.8 miles.

Turn right onto Rapidan Fire Road and hike 1.7 miles.

Turn left onto Stony Mountain Trail, hiking 1.1 miles.

Turn left onto Rose River Fire Road and hike 0.9 mile.

Turn left onto Rose River Loop Trail, hiking 2.7 miles.

Cross Skyline Drive to return to vehicle at Fishers Gap.

Notes

Big Meadows Campground is a popular campground, which often fills to capacity on weekends and holidays. Reservations are strongly recommended during the main camping season. During the spring (April to mid-May) the campground is first-come, first-served. If it is a beautiful, warm, sunny weekend, plan to arrive at the campground by 4:00 p.m. to get a campsite. All Shenandoah NP campgrounds are closed in the winter (generally from mid-November through March). See the campground section at www.nps.gov/shen for more information, or call 540-999-3500.

