

Shenandoah National Park

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide



Trip Name: Graves Mill, Rapidan, and Jones Mountain, 2 nights

Description: Variety of forest habitats; historic sites: Rapidan Camp and Jones Mountain Cabin

Entry: Graves Mill Boundary (Central District; East side; Route 662)

Exit: Graves Mill Boundary (Central District; East side; Route 662)

Map(s): PATC #10 Central District

Level: Experienced

Total Length: 18.6 miles

Day One

Campsite: Mill Prong Trail - backcountry

8 to 11 miles

Hike into Shenandoah National Park on Graves Mill Trail for about 0.5 mile.

Turn right, continuing 2.2 additional miles on Graves Mill Trail.

Turn left onto Rapidan Fire Road and hike 3.4 miles.

Turn left onto Rapidan Camp Road, hiking 0.8 mile to Rapidan Camp.

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

Hike uphill on Mill Prong Horse Trail (yellow-blazed) for 0.8 mile.

Bear left onto blue-blazed Mill Prong Trail at junction and hike 1 mile, looking for a place to camp; OR

After hiking Mill Prong Trail, turn left, hiking south on Appalachian Trail (AT) at least .3 miles.

Look for a place to dry-camp in the next couple of miles.

Day Two

Campsite: Staunton River/McDaniel Hollow Trail - backcountry

7.5 to 8 miles

Continue hiking south on the AT for a total of 2.5 miles from Mill Prong Trail.

Turn left onto Laurel Prong Trail and hike 1 mile.

Turn right onto Cat Knob Trail, hiking 0.5 mile.

Turn right onto Jones Mountain Trail and hike 3.5 miles.

Turn left onto McDaniel Hollow Trail and find a place to camp in the next 0.5 mile.

Day Three

2.4 to 2.9

Finish hiking McDaniel Hollow Trail (0 to 0.5 mile).

Turn right onto Staunton River Trail and hike 2.4 miles to your vehicle.

Notes

You will be following the Rapidan River upstream from where it leaves Shenandoah National Park for the last time. Fish, swimming holes, and level areas to camp abound. Rapidan Camp is the historic retreat built for President Hoover; the buildings and exhibits may be open for a self-guided tour. The circuit back will take you on the AT and over Hazeltop Mountain, down into the mountain laurel thickets at Laurel Prong, then up Jones Mountain where you can see (or even stay in) an old mountain cabin. (Visit www.patc.net for information on staying in Jones Mountain Cabin.)

Options

You may also hike this route in reverse, of course.

Or for a three-night option, split the first day as follows:

Day one – 1 to 2.1 miles

Hike into Shenandoah National Park on Graves Mill for as far as you like.

Find a place to camp . Watch out for poison ivy.

Day two – 6.4 to 9.5 miles

Finish hiking Graves Mill Trail (total 2.7 miles from parking area).

Turn left onto Rapidan Fire Road and hike 3.4 miles.

Continue as written above.