

Shenandoah National Park

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide



Trip Name: Jones Mountain to South River, Staying Dry

Description: Mostly mountaintop trek from boundary; also waterfalls and park history

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 or Advanced

Total Length: 34.9 miles

Day One

Campsite: Jones Mtn Trail - backcountry

4.5 miles

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

Continue straight, now on Staunton River Trail, about 2 miles.

Turn left onto Jones Mountain Trail and hike about 2 miles.

Find a place to dry-camp. (Get drinking water before you leave the Staunton or at the spring at Jones Mountain Cabin.)

Day Two

Campsite: Slaughter Trail - backcountry

6.8 miles

Continue hiking Jones Mountain, about 2 miles, depending on where your campsite is.

Stay straight onto Cat Knob, hiking 0.5 miles.

Turn left onto Laurel Prong and hike 1 mile.

Turn left onto the Appalachian Trail (AT), hiking 2.9 miles.

If it isn't icy, be sure to do the Bearfence Rock Scramble (adding 0.3 mile).

Camp at Bearfence Hut (0.1 mile) in the winter if desired, or pick up water there and hike down Slaughter to dry-camp.

Day Three

Campsite: Pocosin Horse Trail - backcountry

8 to 9 miles

Hike south on the AT another 5.5 miles.

Turn left onto South River Falls, hiking 1.2 miles (overlook to 83' falls at 1 mile).

Turn left toward South River Road, hiking 0.4 mile.

Turn right onto South River Road and hike less than 1 mile.

Turn left onto Pocosin Trail and look for a place to dry-camp within the next mile.

Day Four

Campsite: Cat Knob Trail - backcountry

8.1 to 9.1 miles

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

Turn left onto Pocosin Road and hike uphill 1.1 miles.

Turn right onto the Appalachian Trail (AT) and hike north 5.5 miles.

Turn right onto Laurel Prong and hike 1 mile.

Turn right onto Cat Knob, hiking up to 0.5 mile.

Look for a place to dry-camp as you near Jones Mountain Trail.

Day Five

6.5 to 7 miles

Finish Cat Knob (0 to 0.5 mile).

Turn right onto Jones Mountain and hike 4 miles.

Turn right onto Staunton River and hike to vehicle, 2.5 miles.

Notes

This is a great route if you want to avoid high water crossings (perhaps in the winter, after a storm, or someone in your group just hates water). But do plan ahead so that you have enough drinking water each day.

Wear bright orange during hunting season, as you will pass through small areas of Rapidan Wildlife Management Area where hunting is allowed (see topographic map).