

Shenandoah National Park

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide



Trip Name: Lewis Mountain and Laurel Prong

Description: Mountain heights, cascading streams, waterfalls, Rapidan Camp historic site

Entry: 63 MP - South River Picnic Area

Exit: 51 MP - Big Meadows/Rapidan Rd

Map(s): PATC #10 Central District

Level: Beginner or Strenuous Beginner

Total Length: 17.3 miles

Day One

Campsite: Central District developed areas - campground or cabin

5.3 miles

Park at South River Picnic Area and hike 0.1 mile to Appalachian Trail (AT).

Hike north on the (AT) for 5.3 miles.

Turn left into Lewis Mountain Campground (see note below).

Day Two

Campsite: Laurel Prong Trail - backcountry

5 to 6 miles

Hike north on the AT another 3.6 miles.

(Be sure to take side trail up to a splendid view on Bearfence; add 0.3 mile.)

Turn right onto Laurel Prong Trail; begin looking for a campsite after 1 mile.

There are places to camp on Laurel Prong Trail between Cat Knob Trail and Fork Mountain Trail.

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

Day Three

6 to 7 miles

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

Turn left onto Mill Prong Horse Trail (yellow-blazed) and hike 0.8 mile.

Bear left onto blue-blazed Mill Prong Trail at junction and hike 1 mile.

Cross Skyline Drive and hike north on AT 1.9 miles.

Turn left onto Lewis Falls Trail and hike 1.8 miles.

Turn left and hike north on the AT a very short distance.

Turn right, through Big Meadows Amphitheatre to Big Meadows Picnic Area.

Notes

Lewis Mountain Campground is a small campground generally open from May to October. Since the sites are first-come, first-served, the campground often fills to capacity on weekends. Plan to either check into your site when spotting a vehicle on the first day, or to arrive by 4:00 p.m. on a Friday (earlier on a holiday weekend).
