

Shenandoah National Park

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide



Trip Name: Loft Mountain and Big Run Portal

Description: Mountaintop campground; wilderness valley with excellent camping and fishing

Entry: 81 MP - Big Run OL/Doyles River Pkg

Exit: 81 MP - Big Run OL/Doyles River Pkg

Map(s): PATC #11 South District

Level: Strenuous Beginner

Total Length: 12 to 20.7 miles

Day One

Campsite: South District developed areas - campground or cabin

1.5 miles

Cross Skyline Drive to Doyles River Parking and down trail.

Turn left onto Appalachian Trail (AT) and hike north 1.5 miles.

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

Day Two

Campsite: Big Run Portal/Loop Trails - backcountry

6 miles

Continue hiking north on the AT another 2 miles.

Turn left onto Frazier Discovery Trail and hike north (right) side of loop 0.7 mile.

Cross Skyline Drive and hike north in grass a short distance.

Turn left onto Patterson Ridge Trail and hike 3.1 miles.

Find a place to camp on Big Run Portal Trail (see note below).

Day Three

4.5 miles

Turn left onto Big Run Portal, hiking upstream 2.3 miles from Patterson Ridge Trail.

Turn left onto Big Run Loop Trail, hiking 2.2 miles to Big Run Overlook.

Notes

The wilderness valley of Big Run is the largest watershed in the park and has excellent camping and fishing. There are many possible places to camp, so you should take your time to find one that you really like.

Be aware: There are many stream crossings on Big Run Portal Trail, and in the spring and after a heavy rain the lower crossings may be knee to waist high.

Camping for groups up to ten persons, at pre-existing sites, is possible at the lower end of Big Run Portal Trail. Follow the trail until you reach Brown Mountain Trail, follow social trails downstream while looking for a place to camp. Note that this will increase your total mileage. Experienced level groups may be able to find other areas to pristine site-camp on Big Run.

Options

Optional extra day camping on Big Run – Circuit dayhike – 8.7 miles

Leave your camp set up with permit displayed on outside of tent and with food abhs scented tiems stored properly; take valuables with you.

Hike to Rocky Mountain Trail on Big Run Portal Trail.

Turn onto Rocky Mountain Run Trail and hike 2.7 miles.

Turn left onto Brown Mountain Trail, hiking 4.6 miles..

Turn left and return to your campsite on Big Run Portal Trail.