

# Shenandoah National Park Hikes

## Hike 1: The Old Rag Mountain

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
8 miles	4 stars	2 stars	6 stars	0 stars	1 star

Hiking time: approximately 5.5 hours depending on speed and stopping time

Elevation gain: 2,510 ft.

Hike Description:

According to Hiking Upward ([www.hikingupward.com](http://www.hikingupward.com)), the Old Rag Mountain hike in the Shenandoah National Park is one of the most popular hikes in the mid-Atlantic region. With many spectacular panoramic views, and one of the most challenging rock scrambles in the park, this circuit hike is favorite of many hikers. But be prepared for the crowds. Hiking Upward gives this hike a 0 star rating for solitude, however they give a 6 star rating for views.

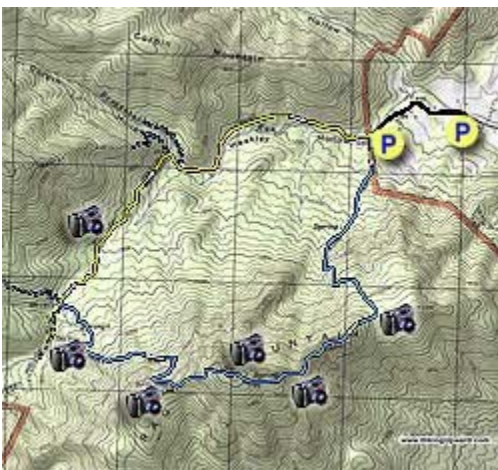
Many hikers also prefer to do this loop counterclockwise, thereby tackling the rock scramble on the Ridge Trail on the downhill. Either way, the rock scramble can be challenging, being both steep, and requiring climbing through cracks in the rock. The best bet to enjoy this great hike is to be at the trail head by 7 a.m. before all the crowds arrive.

From the upper Old Rag parking area turn left uphill on the blue blazed Ridge Trail next to the closed gate. (If you parked in the 200 car overflow lot on SR600/Nethers Rd. walk 0.5 miles up SR600 where it veers left and in another 0.4 miles ends at the Old Rag parking area). The trail will gradually increase in grade and make nine switch backs before reaching the first of many view points in 1.9 miles. From the first vista point to the west, the Ridge Trail will become more rocky before reaching the main easterly vista on the ridge in another 0.2 miles.

**NOTE:** From this point to the summit in 0.9 miles, the trail becomes a rock scramble with narrow passages, and several spots requiring hand over hand climbing.

Directions:

From JMU. Take Interstate 81 North to exit 264 New market. Follow US 211 as it winds through town of New Market. Continue 30 miles past Luray and over Blue Ridge Mountains (There is an entrance to SNP here – do not use it – continue East to Sperryville. Look for route 522 follow it south for .8 mile. Turn right on route 231, follow 8 miles, turn right onto route 601 and follow signs to the parking area. Old Rag parking is about 3 miles from route 601.



## Hike 2: Stony Man Point

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
3.7 miles	1	N/A	5	1	N/A

Hiking Time: Approximately 3 hours depending on speed and stopping time

Elevation gain: 860 ft

Hike Description: This is a short and pleasant hike, and has some of the best vistas in the Shenandoah National Park. Little Stony Man, just below the main peak, has a popular rock wall with local climbers. Make sure to pick a haze free day, because you don't want to miss all the views along the ridge!

Start the hike on the left of the parking area at the trail junction. Turn right on the on the yellow blazed Stony Man Trail for 0.5 miles to the intersection of the Horse Trail.

Turn left uphill on the Horse Trail for 0.5 miles and come to the first of the Shenandoah Valley overlooks. Continue up the trail for another 50 yards to the junction of the the blue blazed trail, and horse rail. Turn left, and in 80 yards arrive at the main Stony Man Mountain overlook.

Return back, passing the trail you turned off in 80 yards, where the blue blazed trail splits. Stay left, and in 0.4 miles the trails rejoin. Continue downhill for another 0.1 miles to the the four way intersection of the white blazed Appalachian Trail.

Turn left on the white blazed trail for 0.7 miles to the Little Stony Man overlook. As you continue downward make several switchbacks before reaching the left turn for the blue blazed Passamaquoddy Trail. The Passamaquoddy Trail turnout is easy to miss. Look for a concrete post marker and a double white blazed tree marking the junction.

The Passamaquoddy Trail will pass a lower vista at the base of the Little Stony Man Mountain cliff face. Continue around the mountain for 1.0 miles to the junction of Furnace Spring Road. Turn left uphill for 20 yards, then make a sharp turn to the left again onto the yellow blazed trail. Follow the yellow blazed trail as it winds uphill, arriving back at the Stony Man Mountain parking area in 0.5 miles.

Directions:

From JMU. Take Interstate 81 North to exit 264 New market. Follow US 211 as it winds through town of New Market. Continue East for 23 mile take exit to Sky Line Drive South. Look for parking entrance on right at Skland Dr between mile marker 41 and 42. Turn right at Skyland dr then immediately turn right into large parking area for the Stony Man



### Hike 3: White Oak Canyon/Cedar

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
7.9 miles	4 stars	5 stars	1 star	1 star	1 star

Hiking Time: Approximately 5 hours depending on speed and stopping time

Elevation gain: 2,1450 ft

Hike Description: From the trailhead, the path begins to descend into the canyon, passing first through the Limberlost, a stand of virgin hemlock trees which are considerably larger than most of the trees in the park. Past the Limberlost, the trail continues down at a fairly easy to moderate slope, eventually meeting and crossing over Whiteoak Run on a bridge. The trail follows the stream down until it crosses again right before the top of the wide sliding cascades which begins Whiteoak Falls #1. It's pretty easy to follow this slide down for 30 to 50 feet, although caution is urged on the open rocks since they may be slippery. At the end of the slide, the falls drop off into one of the most beautiful and most photographed cascades in the Park. This 50 foot cascade fans out as it falls into the beginning of the canyon and can be viewed easily from a flat rocky outcropping which serves as an overlook. After the overlook, the trail descends steeply on a stone staircase. As the trail once again meets Whiteoak Run, hikers have the option of following the trail down to the next falls or turning right off the trail and walking up fairly easily to an incredible view of the cascade from the bottom. This is definitely the most photogenic of the falls in the canyon so waste your film here! The trail follows Whiteoak Run for a while, passing several interesting cascades and occasionally switching back on its way down to Whiteoak #2. After a steep switchback, the trail passes by Whiteoak Falls #2. This falls is a fairly steep slide over a textured rock surface which is fairly typical of Virginia waterfalls. The trail continues along Whiteoak Run, eventually meeting Whiteoak Falls #3 which will also not be missed. Before reaching the falls, the stream takes a 90 degree turn left and the falls crash down into a pool below in several wide cascades through a narrow gorge with high rock cliffs on either side. At the bottom of the falls, the stream turns immediately back 90 degrees to the right and continues down the canyon. Continue down the trail and follow the unmarked trails that lead off from the right of the trail back towards the falls. After Whiteoak Falls #3, the canyon descends drastically but instead of following it down, the trail stays high above the stream along the rim of the canyon. Unfortunately, this means that Whiteoak Falls #4 and #5 can only be seen from the trail from a great distance if at all. However, they are actually not too difficult to reach although perhaps better left until after visiting Whiteoak Falls #6. The trail eventually descends steeply on several switchbacks down to meet the stream again at Whiteoak Falls #6, which is another sliding falls similar to Whiteoak #2. Incidentally, there is actually a parking area about a mile or so downstream of Whiteoak #6 at the bottom of the mountain, which explains why there are so many kids at a waterfall which takes a couple hours to reach. After you've had your fill of kids and splashing, you can either hike back up or you can go off the main trail to find Whiteoak #4 and #5. On the right side of the falls leading off from the trail will be a steep worn trail. Take this up the hill and along the edge of the stream upstream. Soon you will be able to see the falls which cascade down in two major cascades down the side of a rock cliff. The bottom cascade is larger and consists of a very steep staircase-type waterfall. The stream falls into a dark deep pool large enough for swimming and is relatively open and free of trees, owing to a large bare sloping rock cliff to the right of the pool at the bottom of the falls. If you are ambitious, the Whiteoak Canyon hike can be made into a loop by meeting up with the Cedar Run trail a mile or so below Whiteoak #6. The Cedar Run trail passes by at least one more waterfall on the way up but is just as steep and as lengthy as the Whiteoak Canyon hike.

Total distances : Trailhead to #1 - 2.3 mi., #1 to #2 - .5 mi., #2 to #3 - .2 mi., #3 to #6 - .7 mi., #6 to #4 - .2 mi., #5 to #4 - .1 mi. Total elevation change from trailhead to Whiteoak #6 - 2100 feet but worth almost every one!

#### Driving Directions:

From JMU. Take Interstate 81 North to exit 264 New market. Follow US 211 as it winds through town of New Market. Continue East for 23 mile take exit to Sky Line Drive South. Look for parking lot on left side mile marker 42.6.



## Hike 4: Riprap Hollow

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
9.5 miles	4 stars	3 stars	4 stars	3 stars	1 star

Hiking Time: Approximately 5 hours depending on speed and stopping time

Elevation gain: 2,225 ft

Hike Description: According to Hiking Upward ([www.hikingupward.com](http://www.hikingupward.com)), Riprap Hollow is one of the best circuit hikes in the southern section of the Shenandoah National Park. The views from Chimney Rock, and along the ridge of Rocks Mountain, offer great vistas to the west and north. The spring fed stream in Cold Spring and Riprap Hollow is very scenic, and has a 50ft wide swimming hole fed by yet another mountain spring.

From the Riprap parking area walk the 50 yards along the blue blazed trail to the intersection of the white blazed Appalachian Trail. Turn right uphill on the white blazed trail for 0.4 miles to the intersection of the Riprap Trail.

Turn left on the blue blazed Riprap Trail as it descends through a hollow on the ridge before climbing and arriving at the first vista point in 0.7 miles. In another 0.3 miles reach the second vista and Chimney Rock. From Chimney Rock the trail will begin to descend into Cold Springs Hollow. In 1.7 miles from Chimney Rock the spring fed stream that has come in on the left of Riprap Trail will pass through a small gorge and over a 20ft waterfall.

After passing the waterfall follow the blue blazed Riprap Trail for another 0.3 miles to a large swimming hole. Just past the swimming hole the trail will cross the stream, and pass a trail marker and an overgrown trail that leads to an old Riprap Shelter on the right. Continue straight on the blue blazed Riprap Trail next to the stream for another 0.7 miles to the intersection of the Wildcat Ridge Trail.

Turn left on the blue blazed Wildcat Ridge Trail and shortly cross the stream again before the trail starts heading uphill through a small gorge. In 0.6 miles the Wildcat Ridge Trail will make several switchbacks and become much steeper, as it follows the Wildcat Ridge for another 2.0 miles to the four way intersection with the white blazed Appalachian Trail.

Turn left on the while blazed Appalachian Trail for the remaining 2.8 miles back to the Riprap parking area.

Directions:

Follow us 33 east from town for 23 miles. Enter Shenandoah National Park – follow Skyline Dr south 24 miles. Look for parking on right at mile post 90.





## Hike 5: Austin –Furnace Mountain Loop

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
12.6 miles	5 stars	2 stars	5 stars	3 stars	1 star

Hiking Time: Approximately 7 hours depending on speed and stopping time

Elevation gain: 3000 ft

This is a 12.6 mile (13.4 if doing the out-and-back Furnace Mt Summit Trail) strenuous circuit with approximately 2600 feet of elevation gain and is for experienced hikers only. Terrain will range from mature woods to Mountain Laurel Tunnels (if hiked in June) to exposed talus slopes. Large sections of the trail are open to the sun. Wear sturdy boots and sun protection. Especially when hiking in the summer months bring extra water and allow plenty of time. On clear days grand views can be had all along the Austin Mountain Trail, the Furnace Mountain Summit and the infamous Blackrock area.

### Description:

Trail Notes: As the map indicates you can start the hike at four different parking areas (one at the western boundary of the park). We start at the Browns Gap Parking Area.

From the parking area head west down the yellow blazed Madison Run Fire Road. In 0.71 miles turn right onto yellow blazed Big Run Spur. In 0.26 miles arrive at the junction with blue blazed Rockytop Trail. Turn left onto it and in 0.39 miles bear left at a fork onto blue blazed Austin Mountain Trail. Views of Furnace Mountain are had in between the Mountain Laurel tunnels. In 3.3 miles from the last trail junction descend to Madison Run Fire Road. Turn right and in 0.74 miles turn left onto blue blazed Furnace Mountain Trail and ford Madison Run. (This is your last chance to fill up with water if you brought a filter or chemicals to treat it.) Climb steadily up the western flank of Furnace Mountain. In 1.71 miles from the ford reach the Summit Spur. We did not do this out-and-back due to dense haze but I've been told it offers good views of Madison Run /Dundo Hollow and Austin Mountain(which you traversed earlier). Things never really quite flatten out until you reach Blackrock but the grade does eventually lessen considerably. In 2.09 miles reach the junction with Trayfoot Mountain Trail. Turn left and descend to the junction with the AT/Blackrock Spur in 0.26 miles on the left. Make this turn and soon pass through a slot in the rocks and arrive at Blackrock and the AT. Here you have two options. You can either turn right on the AT and then left on the continuation of the Trayfoot Mountain Trail then scramble up the backside of Blackrock for an almost 270 degree view. My preference is a careful frontal assault. Whichever you chose return to the previous trail junction and continue north on the AT. (Note: there was a fire along the northern section of Trayfoot Mountain Trail in the spring of 2008 making for a very unattractive walk. You will pass along the edge of it but there is no need to walk right down the middle of it.) In 0.35 miles come to a post on the right marking the Trayfoot Mountain Trail and the Blackrock Parking Area. This is about 75 yards down the old road. Continue straight on the AT and in 0.56 miles cross Skyline Drive. In 0.25 miles cross blue blazed Jones Run Trail, staying on the AT. Jones Run Parking is to the left. Pass side trails to the Dundo Group areas on the left and in 1.26 miles arrive at Skyline Drive and the Browns Gap parking area just across the road.

### Directions:

Follow us 33 east from town for 23 miles. Enter Shenandoah National Park – follow Skyline Dr south 24 miles. Parking is shared with Brown Gap and is .9 miles past mile post 83

