

George Washington National Forest Hikes

Hike 6: Big Schloss

| Length | Difficulty | Streams | Views | Solitude | Camping |
|-----------|------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|
| 4.1 miles | 2 stars | N/A | 5 stars | 2 stars | 4 stars |

Hike time: Approximately 4 hours depending on speed and stopping time

Elevation Gain: 1,035 feet

Hike Description: According to Hiking Upward (www.hikingupward.com), Big Schloss is a relatively easy at only 4.4 miles and 1,000 vertical feet, it's the sister hike to Tibbet Knob which heads to the south from the same parking location. Leave the Wolf Gap Campground (near campsite #9) and start up the orange blazed Mill Mountain Trail to begin the steepest portion of the hike. The first mile has several switch backs before arriving at the ridge line of Mill Mountain.

Once getting to the ridge line, turn left and continue following the now narrower trail as it follows the ridge before arriving at the junction of the Big Schloss Trail in 1.9 miles.

Turn right onto the white blazed Big Schloss Trail for another 0.3 miles before crossing a wooden bridge that will take you to the overlook just 50 yards further along. Enjoy the view it's one of the best! To return, just retrace your route back to the Wolf gap Campground.

Driving Directions:

Follow 81 north to exit 279 –turn left on SR 675 follow to Columbia Furnace. After crossing Stony Creek immediately turn left to stay on SR 675. At the junction with SR 717 (3.1 miles from Columbia Furnace) bear right staying on SR 675. At about 2 miles turn right onto FR 92 and follow 3.9 miles to parking area on the right just before crossing Little Stony Creek



Hike 7: Buzzard Rock

| Length | Difficulty | Streams | Views | Solitude | Camping |
|---------|------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|
| 7 miles | 3 stars | 1 star | 2 stars | 2 stars | 2 stars |

Hike Time: Approximately 5.5 hours depending on speed and stopping time

Elevation gain: 2,510 ft

Hike Description: The Buzzard Rock hike is a shorter out and back hike in the Elizabeth Furnace section of the GWNF near Front Royal Virginia. Finding the trail head through the picnic area is a little tricky. From the main parking area take the path from the top left side straight for 100 yards (two other paths cross it) before you arrive at Elizabeth Furnace. Continue around the furnace staying on the blue/orange blazed Tuscarora/Massanutten Trail. Immediately after passing the furnace stay straight DO NOT take the unmarked trail that heads to the right uphill.

Follow the blue/orange blazed Tuscarora/Massanutten Trail and shortly cross a small wooden bridge before starting uphill. The trail will cross a non-maintained yellow blazed trail twice before arriving at the ridge line and four-way trail intersection 2.3 miles from your starting point. At the ridge and intersection turn left on the white blazed Buzzard Rock Trail it turns uphill for 2.0 miles before reaching Buzzard Rock. The views here are obstructed by trees so for a better vista continue for another 100 yards along the trail where there is a spot that looks out towards Front Royal and the Shenandoah Valley.

To return retrace your steps back down the Buzzard Rock Trail to the four-way intersection. At this point you can either turn right going back down the Tuscarora/Massanutten Trail from where you came or continue straight through the intersection for 25 yards then turning downhill on the old yellow blazed trail. If you should choose the yellow blazed trail it is considerably shorter as it heads almost straight downhill but therefore very steep as well. This trail is only blazed at the top and before crossing the Tuscarora/Massanutten Trail for the first time, so just stay straight, it will end back at the picnic area.

Driving Directions:

Follow 81 north to exit 296 Strasburg Turn right on VA-55 toward Strasburg 1.5 miles. Turn right at N Massanutten St/Old Valley Pike/US-11/VA-55 0.2 mi. Turn left at E King St/VA-55 Continue to follow VA-55 4.4 mi. Turn right at 768 Fort Valley Rd. Turn right on the fish hatchery road and look for obvious Buzzard Rocks trail head on right .9 mile past hatchery



Hike 8: Fridley Gap

| Length | Difficulty | Streams | Views | Solitude | Camping |
|------------|------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|
| 10.5 miles | 5 stars | 4 stars | 2 stars | 5 stars | 4 stars |

Hiking Time: Approximately 6.5 hours depending on stopping time and speed

Elevation gain: 2,780 ft

Hike Description: According to Hiking Upward (www.hikingupward.com), Fridley Gap, in the George Washington National Forest, has a little bit of everything. From gentle mountain streams to ridge climbs and a great swimming hole, this hike has it all. The best part of this hike, which is nestled two hours away from DC just south of the the town of Shenandoah, is its solitude.

Start by walking up FS65 (636 you were just on, not FS65A which turns right uphill) to the orange blazed trail head on the left side of the road at .2 miles. Cross Boone run for the first time and ascend Massanutten Trail South for .5 miles criss crossing Boone Run several more times, until coming to the junction of the blue blazed Boone Shelter Trail that comes in from the left. Continue straight on the orange blazed trail as it gets steeper before coming to a four way junction at a clearing in another 1.1 miles. Turn left up Massanutten Trail South and reach the ridge in another .5 miles before turning left and descends Third Mountain. The trail will cross Fridley Run and turn right, ascend and switch back before coming to the ridge line of Forth Mountain 1 mile from crossing Fridley Run. Descend the Fourth Mountain ridge and cross Fridley Run in 1.4 miles. Take the left trail at the junction for 50 yards and come to a swimming hole--a great place for lunch. Begin your return by going 50 yards back to the junction turning left on Massanutten South Trail for .1 miles. Turn right on purple blazed Fridley Gap Trail. The next .8 miles is the steepest portion of the hike until cresting Third Mountain and descending another .3 miles and reaching the junction of Martin Bottom Trail. Turn right on Fridley Gap Trail, gently ascending for .6 miles to the clearing and four way junction you passed earlier. Continue straight down Massanutten Trail South for the remaining 2.2 miles back to the parking area.

Driving Directions:

Follow US 33 East from Harrisonburg 14 miles. Turn left on E. Point Rd (VA 602) (Look for this road one block past main Massanutten resort entrance). Follow VA 602 (it will make winding turns) for about 4.7 miles. Turn left on Rt 636 Cub Run road 2.5 miles. Look for road side parking (do not make right hand turn – this takes you away from trailhead).



Hike 9: Hone Quarry Ridge

| Length | Difficulty | Streams | Views | Solitude | Camping |
|---------|------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|
| 5 miles | 3 stars | 1 star | 3 stars | 4 stars | 3 stars |

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

Elevation gain: 1,480 ft

Hike Description: According to Hiking Upward (www.hikingupward.com), the Hone Quarry area is nestled in a quiet area of the GWNF just west of Harrisonburg VA. With two beautiful loop hikes, one up Oak Knob and Pond Knob with two overlooks, and the other on the opposite Hone Quarry Ridge also with a beautiful vista at the Abbie Point overlook. The valley also has great camping at the Hone Quarry Campground (vid).

Turn left out of the Hone Quarry Campground on Hone Quarry Rd/FR62 and shortly cross Hone Quarry Run over a spillway. In 200 yards turn left on the yellow blazed Big Hollow/430 trail. In 0.1 miles arrive at the intersection of the Heartbreak/435A trail. Stay right on the Big Hollow trail as it starts ascending the mountain next to a stream for 0.8 miles before making a switchback to the right. In another 0.3 miles the trail will cross an abandoned fire road, then pass back around a spur before heading uphill and joining the abandoned fire road in another 0.4 miles. The Big Hollow trail becomes wider where it joins the abandoned fire road, and also steeper without any switchbacks for the remaining 0.7 miles to the ridge, and intersection of the Hone Quarry Mountain/435 trail. Turn left on the yellow blazed Hone Quarry Mountain trail, immediately passing a campsite, then descending through a saddle and climbing steeply to the best vista on the hike at the Abbie Point overlook in 0.6 miles. From the overlook continue on the trail as it passes through another saddle, climbs the next knob, again passing through a saddle then arriving at the intersection of the Heartbreak/435A trail. The Hone Quarry Mountain trail is closed from this point. Turn left on the yellow blazed Heartbreak trail as it begins to descend the mountain. Pass several rock slides before the trail begins to level out reaching Hone Quarry Run and the Hone Quarry Run Campground on the opposite bank in 1.0 miles. The Hone Quarry Run trail will continue for another 0.1 miles back to the intersection Big Hollow trail. Stay right on the Big Hollow trail for 0.1 miles to return to Hone Quarry Rd/FR62. Stay right on Hone Quarry Rd/FR62 for the remaining 300 yards to the Hone Quarry Campground.

Driving Directions: Follow 42 south leaving Harrisonburg 4 miles. Turn left in town of Dayton onto RT 257 west 6 miles (this road turns so keep an eye on road signs. Turn left at stop sign by Ottobine grocery store which is on the right 3 miles. Turn Right at Briery Branch (gas station on left) 2 miles. Road splits – follow left and signs to Hone Quarry Campground 2 miles.



Hike10 : Strickler Knob

| Difficulty | Length | Streams | Views | Solitude | Camping |
|------------|-----------|---------|---------|----------|---------|
| 5 stars | 9.1 miles | 1 star | 6 stars | 5 stars | 2 stars |

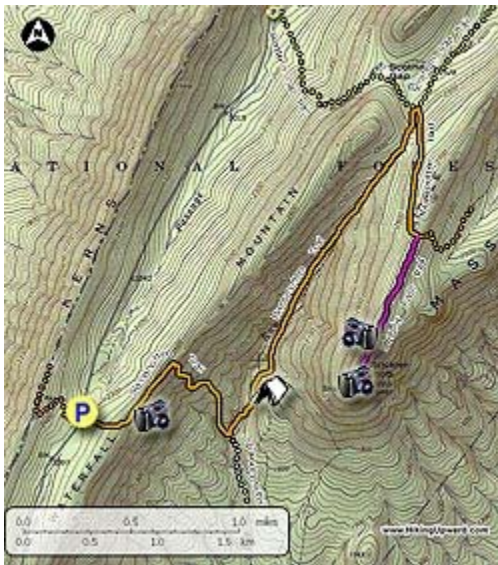
Hike Time: Approximately 5 hours depending on speed and stopping time **Note:** Hike is not suitable for young children or dogs.

Elevation gain: 2,240ft

Hike Description: According to Hiking Upward (www.hikingupward.com), Some of the best vistas in the mid-Atlantic. The new Strickler Knob trail is a challenging rock hopping/scramble that has beautiful views of New Market Gap, the Luray Valley, and a 360 degree picture perfect panorama from the Strickler Knob summit. A hike as challenging as Old Rag, and with no crowds! You'll probably have this one to yourself. The Strickler Knob hike is now one of our favorites. The rock scramble on the last 0.2 miles of the Strickler Knob trail is just as much fun as Old Rag and Duncan Knob, requiring several 12ft climbs over and between the cracks of the boulders. You can also shorten the hike by two miles and park at the Scothorn Gap trailhead on Crisman Hollow Rd/VA211. From the Massanutten trailhead on Crimson Hollow Rd/VA211 start east towards Waterfall Mountain on the orange blazed Massanutten trail, immediately passing a campsite on the left. In 0.2 miles there is a vista of the Luray Valley. Continue for 0.3 miles at which point the trail turns steeply downhill. Make several switchbacks, then the trail becomes less steep before reaching the intersection of the white blazed Massanutten Connector trail in 0.6 miles from the ridge. Turn left on the orange blazed Massanutten trail as it begins to climb alongside Big Run, passing a campsite in 0.1 miles. Cross the run where the trail becomes steeper, then re-cross the run, make one large switchback, then level out and arrive at the intersection of the yellow blazed Scothorn Gap trail 2.0 miles from the last intersection. Turn right uphill as the orange blazed Massanutten trail continues to climb, then arrives at the ridge and intersection of the pink blazed Strickler Knob trail in another 0.6 miles. Now the fun starts. Firstly, thank you to the trail builders! This used to be a formidable bushwhack. The Strickler Knob trail is marked with both pink blazes on the rocks, and red plastic diamonds on trees, and can be a little hard to follow in places. You need to be almost right on top of the rock blazes to spot them. The trail will also appear to end in a couple of places, but keep heading along the ridge, and you'll pick the trail back up. You'll know when you get to Strickler Knob :) After 0.3 miles pass a rock outcrop and view to the west and north. From this vista, continue on the trail rock hopping for another 0.4 miles to another opening, and beautiful vista to the southwest. From this point the rock hopping and bouldering becomes more intense. The first obstacle is a 12ft climb over a small rock wall, then just before the the main summit pass through a group of three boulders This is not the summit stack! Once through the crack continue to follow the blazes, pass a small overhang, and climb a 6ft ledge. The main summit is accessed through a rock crack on the left. Continue for another 30ft to the southern summit overlook. A hiker has left a trail journal in a waterproof bag here, add you thoughts! Climbing to the main summit provides a 360 degree view of the Luray Valley and New Market Gap.

Driving Directions:

Follow 81 north 14 miles. Exit 264 follow VA 211 east – stay on VA 211 as it turns through New market. After 4 miles turn left at Forestry Development Rd 274/George Washington National Forest



Hike 11: Trimble Mountain

| Length | Difficulty | Streams | Views | Solitude | Camping |
|---------|------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|
| 4 miles | 3 stars | 1 star | 3 stars | 4 stars | N/A |

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

Elevation gain: 1,050 ft

Hike Description: According to Hiking Upward (www.hikingupward.com), the Trimble Mountain loop is an easy to moderate loop situated just opposite the Todd Lake Recreation Area on FDR95. There are several views of Big Bald Knob and Little Bald Knob on the western section of the loop. At the end of the circuit, the short climb up to the Lake Todd dam embankment offers a beautiful lunch spot, and view of the lake.

From the parking area on the turnout, cross FDR95 and start up the yellow blazed Trimble Mountain Trail. In 400ft the Trimble Mountain Trail will split at a clearing. We recommend going to the left, or counter clockwise, as it's less steep on the ascent, and the best views are on the westerly descent of the mountain. After turning left, the trail will gradually climb Trimble Mountain becoming steeper before arriving at the ridge in 1.2 miles. The trail will follow the ridge climbing the northern summit, before passing through a saddle and climbing over the southerly summit. As the trail begins to descend the westerly section of Trimble Mountain, there are two good vistas of Big Bald and Little Bald Mountains to the west. The trail will then descend more steeply before arriving back at the clearing, and beginning of the loop 1.0 miles from the last vista. Stay left returning to the parking area in another 400ft.

Lake View Out/Back: After returning to the parking area make sure to continue following the yellow blazed trail up to the crest of the dam for a beautiful view of Todd Lake and lunch spot.

Directions:

Follow VA 42 South our of Harrisonburg. Through the town of Bridgewater Continue on Mossy Creek Rd .Turn left at Mossy Creek Rd/Route 747 2.4 mi. Turn right at Natural Chimneys Rd 1.0 mi Turn left at N River Rd 3.6 mi Turn right at Stokesville Rd Turn right on Tillman Rd followed by immediate Left onto Forest Road 95. Follow for 2.5 miles – look for turnout parking on right.



Hike 12: North River Gorge

| Length | Difficulty | Streams | Views | Solitude | Camping |
|------------|------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|
| 12.5 miles | 4 stars | 5 star | 3 stars | 3 stars | 3 stars |

Hike Time: Approximately 6 hours depending on speed and stopping time

Elevation gain: 2070 ft

NOTE: You are required to ford North River 9 more times in the final 4.2 mile section of this hike. If the river is high, it could take significantly longer than the 6 hour hike time to complete.

Hike Description : From the parking area head down the yellow blazed connector trail as it descends steeply to the purple blazed North River Gorge Trail in 0.1 miles. Turn left on the purple blazed trail and ford North River in 200 yards. After fording North River the purple blazed trail turns right, and a yellow blazed connector trail turns left down river. Turn left on the yellow blazed trail, and in 0.2 miles arrive at the intersection of the white blazed Wild Oak Trail. Turn right uphill on the white blazed trail for 0.3 miles where it meets the intersection of the 100 yard out/back lookout trail. Take the lookout trail for the best vista on the hike. After returning to the white blazed trail, continue uphill as the trail becomes increasingly steep for another 1.6 miles before arriving at the final two good vista points on the hike. The first is to the east and Harrisonburg VA, and the second in another 100 yards, to the west. From the ridge and second vista, continue another 0.8 miles over the hike high point on Lookout Mountain, then descend to the saddle in the ridge and intersection of yellow blazed trail TR513. Continue uphill on the white blazed trail for 1.2 miles passing over another rise and arrive at the un-maintained Bear Draft Trail. Continue straight on the white blazed trail for 0.3 miles, where the trail turns right downhill following a narrow Forestry Service (FS) road for 0.2 miles to the intersection of a wider FS road. Turn right downhill following the the FS road as it winds down to the valley in 2.0 miles. Where the FS road veers left, near the valley floor, turn right onto an unmarked grass covered FS road, and in 100 yards pass through a closed gate. Follow the FS road down to the banks of North River, and intersection of the purple blazed North River Gorge Trail. Turn right on the purple blazed trail and in 0.3 miles make the first of 9 fords across North River. There are several nice campsites on the trail, the first just after the second ford, and a large group campsite after the 8th ford 3.6 miles from the first campsite. From the large group campsite, after the 8th ford, continue on the right side of the river to the intersection of the yellow blazed trail in another 0.1 miles. Re-cross North River staying on the purple blazed trail for 200 yards, then turn right uphill on the yellow blazed trail for the remaining 0.1 miles back to the parking area.

Directions:

Follow VA 42 South our of Harrisonburg. Through the town of Bridgewater Continue on Mossy Creek Rd .Turn left at Mossy Creek Rd/Route 747 2.4 mi. Turn right at Natural Chimneys Rd 1.0 mi Turn left at N River Rd 3.6 mi Turn right at Stokesville Rd Turn right on Tillman Rd followed by immediate Left onto Forest Road 95. After entering the GWNF paved FDR95 will veer left, stay left on FDR95 for 1.1 miles, and park on the left in the 15 car [parking area](#). Note: there is no signage here.

