

M. R. Hyker's Latest Adventure



04-04-2009 – AT/Bluff Mountain Loop: I haven't hiked this route since 2005. I was looking for something long somewhat strenuous to prepare me for backpacking season. At 19.9 miles and 3000 feet of elevation gain this one was the ticket. I was joined by a good crew of experienced hikers: The Mad hatter, Dot Com, Cognac Jack, Annette, Treebeard IM, Ted E. Bear and the newly named Tom and Jerry (Hikers formerly known as Todd and Nina, respectively). There wasn't a cloud in the skies. The temps were in the high 40s to low 50s but the wind, especially at the vistas, was howling pretty fiercely.

Most of the serious elevation gain is completed over the first 4 or 5 miles but the climbs are so gradual one hardly notices the degree of exertion. All of the views were spectacular. A good hiking friend, Dimitri Tundra, gave me a way point for a hidden vista and thanks to his info we found the area. We climbed up on one rock with a more easterly view that is not had at the other vistas. From there we could see an even more easterly rock outcrop but it was covered with a rock climbing class. We decided to leave it to them and continued on our way. We made good time to the Gravel Spring hut where we met up with Jim Tomlin, Dick Dugan, Steve and other PATC volunteers who were demolishing the old privy. (A new one is scheduled for construction).

After a 20 minute lunch we completed the last 7 miles or so of the route. There was some more climbing but it was pretty minimal. The issue along this leg of the trek was all of the water. The stream that feeds Big Devils Stair Canyon and all of the forks of the Jordan River were flowing hard. That and all of the springs turned a lot of the trail into streams themselves. On the positive side, since we were now on the leeward side of the ridge we were totally out of the wind. The bright sun quickly warmed us through the chilly air.

We really picked up the pace for the last couple of miles when it became apparent that we were turning into Jenkins Gap, our starting point. We started into the woods at 10:30 and were finished by 4:30.