

M. R. Hyker's Latest Adventure



07-25 to 28-2009, Seneca Shadows Car Camping and day hiking: MRSHyker and I loaded up the dogs and our camping gear and headed out to WV for four days of camping and some hiking at Seneca Rocks, Dolly Sods and North Fork Mountain. We had a pretty good turnout for this event. Besides regulars Doc, Cognac Jack and the Mad Hatter we were joined by Kelly, Sybelle, Richard, two Steves, Tom, Betty and Mike.

After setting up camp seven of us made the obligatory trek to [Seneca Rocks](#). As usual, I scrambled all the way to the top. As I was shooting a [panoramic view](#) and photographing a couple I could see a storm rolling through the gap from where Seneca Creek Flows. No sooner did I reach the viewing deck then the skies opened up and it began to pour. There was no need to put on any rain gear since I was already wet from sweat. By the time we returned to the cars the rain had diminished to a light drizzle. We returned to camp, ate dinner and sat around the fire for a bit. As we retired for the night it began to rain and continued to do so for most of the night, stopping just as the sun arose the next morning.

After breakfast we set out for a 10.6 mile hike through Dolly Sods. The spoon shaped circuit included the Blackbird Knob Tr, Breathed Mountain Tr and Red Creek Tr with part of the latter forming the handle of the spoon. The [first crossing of Red Creek](#) was not too bad and everyone made it across with dry boots. [The meadows](#) were full of Dog Bane, St. Johnswort and ripe blueberries. Obviously this last item slowed down the hiking considerably. [The crossing of the Left Fork](#) was a bit trickier. Some opted to change into sandals or go across barefoot while two decided to return to their car. We decided to take a lunch break after the crossing. P-Hyker began to whimper, an indication that we were taking too long of a break. You wouldn't have known that ten days ago she could barely walk due to Lyme's Disease. (Antibiotics are a good thing!) As we began moving again the rain started to fall, first lightly but then a bit stronger. Although it seemed longer it had

mostly stopped by the time we passed through the second Pine plantation on the Breathed Mountain Trail. The last time I had hiked this trail was in 2004. It seems like the forest is slowly taking back the wide open heath meadows as they seem somewhat smaller than they did five years ago. I guess that's a good thing. The trails were pretty water-logged by this point and the lower ford of the [Left Fork](#) was totally under water. Although it was running swift the rocks below were large, flat and offered relatively good traction. We all made it across safely and took a long break to enjoy [the falls](#) and the huge [swimming hole](#) at "The Forks". The climb through the meadows back to the Blackbird Knob Tr seemed easier than on past trips. From there it was a simple matter of retracing our steps along the handle of the spoon. When we arrived back at camp we were surprised to find that there was no rain in that part of the forest. That night was pretty much a repeat of the previous night sans the rain.

We awoke to sunny skies the following day and set off at 9:15 to arrange the car shuttle for our North Fork Mountain hike. It went pretty well considering the number of people (10). We were on the trail by 10:15. The Redman Run Tr starts as a wide, gradually climbing fire road but as it turns to make its climb up the west flank of the mountain it leaves the road and follows a footpath to the [first of many vistas](#). If you keep a moderate but steady pace there is usually little problem with making it to the top. We lingered here a bit and enjoyed the views and the cool breeze. From here you can see Champe Rocks and a chicken farm I must have passed a hundred times during my hiking career. Next came a descent to a low point in the ridge and another long and gradual climb to a vista that I personally call Andrew's Rock. Here you can look through a [hiker's window](#) or easily climb to its top and take in a view to [the west of the Allegheny Front as well as to the east with the ridges of Shenandoah and Great North Mountains before you](#). From this point on the hiking is pretty easy. We visited one vista after another until we finally arrived at the focal point of the hike, [Chimney Top](#). (I still can't figure out how people climbed those sandstone pillars to have their photos taken. Perhaps they were dropped by helicopter.) We took a nice long lunch and looked back on [the ridge we had just traversed](#). Once we made it back to the trail we were a mere 1.7 miles away from its northern terminus. Along this stretch we managed to see some turkeys with their polts as well as my first black bear in over two years. He was a small thing and wanted no parts of us. No photo op there! Surprisingly we weren't done with the vistas yet. We stopped for [views of the North Fork Valley, New Creek Mountain and the village of Cabins](#). About halfway down I sucked out the last bit of water from my bladder. Fortunately the rest of the hike was short, downhill and in the shade. We were through hiking by 4:30. We recovered the vehicles at the south end of the hike and headed back to camp. We had another enjoyable night save for the fact that most of us were a bit more tired than when we first rolled into camp.

The next morning we broke camp early, said our farewells and headed out for a hearty breakfast at Mallow's Mountain Inn. There's nothing in the world quite like a nice Southern Fried Steak smothered in Sausage Gravy with two eggs over easy to top off a great outdoor adventure like this one!!!