

## ***M. R. Hyker's Latest Adventure***



09-04 to 06-2010, Roaring Plains Base Camp Backpack and Day Hike: This has been at least my fifth (maybe sixth) time visiting this venue and it never gets old. I was joined by Gadget Gyrl, Speedy, Darius Rucker, Treebeard-IM, Indiana Moser, Bad Penny and Doctor Mike. When we arrived at the trailhead we found the parking area full of vehicles with PA plates. (I would be reminded later in the trip that Bruce Sundquist, co-author of the MNF Trail Guide, and his crew would be sharing the woods with us. It was cool and blustery as we began our short hike into our camp. The hiking was pretty effortless. We made two prerequisite vista stops to take in the view of the South Prong Drainage and surrounding plateaus including Dolly Sods. We reached a surprisingly vacant campsite around 3:00. There was enough flow in the stream to maintain our water supply. Without some much needed rain it might not be there next weekend. We set up camp and then set about doing what ever we wanted to do: power napping, reading, day hiking ... whatever. We ate dinner and built a nice fire but most retired early as the winds drove us into our tents.

The 13.4 mile day hike was as I remembered it except the Hidden Passage and most of the unofficial Canyon Rim Trail has become a hiker super highway. That's not saying that we ran into a lot of other hikers. It's just that the once somewhat obscure trails are now substantially less obscure ... pretty easy to follow actually. The hike to the Meadows and its wide open view seemed a bit shorter than before, probably because I no longer have to stop and look at my GPS unit and/or map and compass to get there. We continued along the old jeep trail and then descended on the gas pipeline to join the Canyon Rim Trail. We stopped at a campsite vista (I have to use this spot at least once.) before proceeding to the still flowing Roaring Run where several folks took the opportunity to collect some cold, sweet mountain water. We took a very long break (as we always do) at the Point before proceeding. From here you can look up both the Long and Roaring Run Drainages, see Spruce Knob and Chimney Rocks on North Fork Mountain and Seneca Rocks down in the valley just by turning your head. From there we proceeded to hit every vista along the rim, especially the one I call photo op rock, and stopping at Crevice Rock for an extended

lunch. I'm sure everyone enjoyed the long talus slope traverse and descent. After this descent is where I usually adlib my trail finding skills but this time, with a few minor corrections, it was like hiking any other trail. Once at the junction with the Roaring Plains Trail we found Bruce's hideout. We were greeted by Tom who had stayed in camp while Bruce and the rest of his crew explored the Old Hunter's Blind and other points of interest. After a break we started down the rocky trail hoping to run into him but after about a half a mile I decided we had had enough rocky trail (and had yet more to hike to get back to camp) so reversed direction and descended down to the Forest road for a leisurely stroll back to the South Prong Trail. A very steep but thankfully short climb soon found us back at camp. Despite being tired and sore most of us stayed up past our regular time. Perhaps the endorphins had kicked into over drive. Whatever the reason it was nice hanging out by the campfire, reminiscing about previous trips ... classic rock .... trail names.

The next morning found us bustling about eager to break camp and find a nice breakfast place in Petersburg before heading home. We did stop at Pancake Rocks but from our vantage point the views seemed to be mostly grown in, but then our stomachs were not much in the mood to linger. We were heading down FR91 by 10:00 and just made it to Family Traditions in time for breakfast!