

M. R. Hyker's Latest Adventure



09-13 to 16-2008 - Car camping and day hiking in SNP, VA: We couldn't have asked for better weather. The daytime temps for Saturday and Sunday were in the low 80s. A cold front with high winds blew in Sunday night dropping the daytime temps down into the 70s. We had clear skies for the majority of the trip. Wesiana Sunshine, Cognac Jack, Moonshine, Don and Cindy joined me for some or all of the adventure. We had several deer visit us, the best was a large 10 point buck. Also had a young black bear visit us a couple of times. Never got a camera on "Junior" though.

The hiking was great. We did the standard Rip-Rap Hollow loop on Sunday. Great views were had at both Calvary Rocks and Chimney Rocks as well as an extended view along Rock Mt created by a recent forest fire. Here we were also treated to an added attraction: Showy Goldenrod lined both sides of the trail.

By the time we descended to the low point of the hollow I was ready for a dip and the stream flowing through the hollow provided us with a nice pool to relax by/in. The 2.5 mile climb up Wildcat Ridge was a bit tedious but the final leg along the AT was quite pleasant.

That night the campground was buffeted by high winds (but no rain!). When I awoke I had to pull the picnic canopy out of the woods and peg it to the ground and re-secure the tent. After eating a breakfast of pancakes and sausage made by Janet, Cognac Jack, Moonshine and I drove down to milepost 97 on Skyline drive to begin our trek up to Turk Mountain. We used the AT to reach the spur trail. We took in some views along the way. As we crossed Skyline Drive we took in the view from the Sawmill Run Overlook. We stopped a couple of times climbing up to the Turk Mt Summit. Our first view was to the south and east and was a bit disappointing. Cognac Jack suggested we scramble out onto the rocks at the true summit. There we found a great 180 degree view. We had lunch there (I took one of my patented 10 minute power naps.) before descending back to the AT. We ran into Cindy and Don at the summit marker. They had taken a more direct route to the top. We soon crossed Skyline Drive again and descended to the Moormans River using the Turk

Branch Trail. During periods of high water this section is probably pretty picturesque. Near the bottom we found what would probably make a nice waterfall uphill from a pair of old bridge abutments. Both Turk Branch and the river are mere streams here so crossings were not an issue. The remaining 1.8 miles was a gradual 600 foot climb along the fire road back to the cars.

After the completion of the hike Moonshine headed home. Cognac Jack dropped me off at camp and broke camp as well. Janet had been somewhat beside herself during the day. As she sat in camp reading a book the dogs began freaking out. There, at the end of the picnic table stood a small Black Bear. (The rangers call him Junior.) After a short while the little guy was no longer amused with Joey and Precious and decided to sniff around some vacant sites for leftovers.

Janet and I spent another relaxing evening by the fire with Cindy and Don before heading off to an early bedtime so we could break camp early the next day. We both arose by 7:00 and were driving out of the campground by 8:30 with thoughts of sausage gravy and biscuits at the Thunderbird Diner. The food and service were excellent.