

M. R. Hyker's Latest Adventure



09-18 to 21-2010 – Car Camping at Lake Sherwood Recreation Area, WV and day hiking: The late summer weather was wonderful with clear blue azure skies and low humidity. The nighttime temps were just right for sleeping outside. Janet, the dogs and I got to camp around 2:00. After setting up we took off to find the trailheads for Monday's hike and a much needed gas refill. By the time we returned Ted E. Bear, The Mad Hatter and Hank – "Are You Ready for Some Football?" had arrived and set up their tents. The rest of the evening was as usual: private dinners, some banter around the campfire and then off to bed to listen to the sounds of the crickets, geese and a loon Katydid.

The first hike started at camp. We walked around to the beach bathhouse and picked up the Lakeside Trail, enjoying an easy 3 mile stroll, mostly through white pine forest, with wonderful views of the lake. The next two miles were along Meadow Creek, climbing gradually through dense Rhododendron tunnels and crossing the mostly dry stream some eight times before reaching the junction with the Connector Trail. Precious made sure to cool down in the few pools of water we managed to find.

After a brief break we followed this old jeep road as it wound its way, almost in a corkscrew fashion, to the ridge line of Meadow Mountain. At this point all of the serious elevation gain was behind us. What lay before us now was a wide grassy jeep road that passed through alternating meadows and woods. It seems that the further along we went the fewer and smaller the meadows became. Occasionally there were partial views of Allegheny Mountain to the east and Middle Mountain to the west. I had hiked the former several years ago and am considering backpacking the latter next year. The hike ended with a rapid descent down another jeep road and through the group camping area to Rt14. From there it was a short road walk back to our campsites.

That night was a repeat of the previous one except some went to bed a bit earlier.

The next day Precious and I led a caravan to Blue Bend Recreation Area where we planted Ted's van for the back end of the shuttle. He and the Mad Hatter jumped into our pickup and we drove around to the South Boundary Trailhead on Big Draft Road. The initial climb was steep and seemed as if it was going to be never ending but ended abruptly with a set of short, steep switchbacks to the top of a ridge. We descended a bit on an old jeep road before veering off onto a blazed footpath. The trail became quite overgrown with Mountain Laurel and Blue Berry to the point that we all began to do a little head scratching. We backtracked a bit but decided the original path must be correct and pushed through the tangles until we arrived at yet another jeep road. A check of the map and GPS showed that we were on the correct route. A series of easy walking jeep roads led us to a rapid descent on a narrow side hill trail. All of our legs, except for Precious', had trouble keeping up with gravity. Once at the bottom we took a brief break as we waited for that "rubber knees" feeling to subside. The last five miles was a nearly level and straight walk on old railroad grades passing through Rhodo tunnels, Hemlocks, pines and hardwood forest. Occasionally the Rhodos would open up exposing us to great views of Anthony Creek. We took a nice lunch at a campsite along a canyon-esque part of the valley. Both the Laurel Creek and Big Draft Crossings were bone dry but one could tell by the steepness of their banks that this is not always the case. In the spring one might need to wade across these. We crossed the creek on a well constructed suspension bridge and soon found ourselves back at Ted's van. We recovered our pickup and returned to camp for an even more abbreviated version of the preceding two nights, tired from hiking over 24 miles over two days. The next morning found us arising early to break camp and find a nice place for breakfast before heading home. Have you ever been to Granny's House on U.S. 60? We highly recommend it.