

Directions and Trail Notes for The AT/Mau-Har Loop

Description: This is a strenuous loop that can be done either as a long day hike or overnight backpacking trip. Just as the [AT shuttle](#) through this area has been the hardest backpacking trip I've undertaken to date (08-06) this has got to be the hardest day hike yet! The circuit (lollipop in shape) spans 14.4 miles and a total elevation change of around 6800 feet. The vistas and Campbell Creek (could have used a little more water in it) made the effort well worth it. The Campbell Creek Canyon floor is covered in white and pink Trillium Gradiflorum in the spring.

Directions from US250 and the Blue Ridge Parkway:

1. Turn South onto the BRP.
2. After Mile post 13 turn left onto VA Rt664. Park on the gravel lot at the intersection.

Trail Notes: All trail junctions are signed. The Appalachia Trail is blazed white while the Mau-Har Trail is blazed blue. The AT comes through the parking lot in the left hand corner. Pick it up and proceed south along the edge of a grassy meadow. In the summer it is full of wildflowers. At first the trail is flat but will soon switchback up to a ridge. At about 0.80 miles come to a nice but dry campsite to the left and the first vista of the trek to the right. From here you can get a sweeping view to the west and the village of Love in the valley below. Continue on. Descend and in another 0.80 miles arrive at a kiosk on an old woods road. Maupin Fields Shelter is along the trail behind the kiosk. (You will come up from the Mau-Har Tr here later on.) Continue on the AT, passing a sign for the Three Ridges Wilderness along the way. Soon start climbing, steeply at times, to the ridge of Bee Mountain. Once at the top you will enjoy nearly flat walking for the next 1.92 miles before arriving at the next vista. This is a great break spot as you'll enjoy an unbroken panoramic view with the Priest in the center. To the left you'll be able to see the summit of Three Ridges and Chimney Rock.

After your break continue to climb to the summit. In 1.03 miles arrive at a signpost marking it. There is a small, dry campsite to the left and another vista looking north. From here begin a steep descent via some pretty rocky switchbacks to a lower ridge where things will flatten out again. In 0.48 miles watch for the fourth vista to the right. Continue south on the AT. At 0.55 miles from the last vista keep an eye out for a small rock outcrop on the right. This is before the actual Chimney Rock Vista. It doesn't look like much but once you scramble out to its edge you'll enjoy another great view, this one to the west. Continue on another 0.14 miles to the primary vista, Chimney Rock. Here you'll get yet another grand view. You'll see the rock outcrop to the right as you approach it. Drop your packs and take your camera up for more sweeping views.

From Chimney Rock begin another descent. In about 0.5 miles you'll pass through 2 more vistas. One is at a large flat rock. In another 1.35 miles arrive at a spur trail to the right that leads to Harpers Creek Shelter. If you are backpacking this route I would recommend calling it a day here. The next campsite on water is 2 miles and a nice hill away. Besides the shelter and privy there are several campsites on both sides of the stream. Perhaps

the largest and flattest is a little further down the AT where it crosses the creek. It is marked with a sign.

At the Harpers Creek Shelter spur the AT makes a hard left paralleling the creek a short distance before crossing it. Follow this route and in 0.69 miles reach the junction with blue blazed Mau-Har Trail. Turn right onto it. The trail will be mostly flat at first but you will eventually climb up and over another ridge before dropping down into the Campbell Creek canyon (1.55 miles from the last trail junction). There you will find a campsite large enough for about 4 tents and a yellow blazed spur trail to the left that leads to a nice swimming hole and waterfall.

After a refreshing break begin the climb out of the canyon. The trail is pretty rocky with large boulders you have to step up onto. In 1.10 miles from the swimming hole cross the right fork of the creek and turn left, following the left fork. You will get a short respite from climbing, pass a small campsite on the water's edge to the left and cross the stream twice before climbing to the Maupin Field Shelter. This is about 1.04 miles from the last campsite.

From the shelter take the main spur trail directly in front of it out to the kiosk you passed at the beginning of the hike. Retrace your initial steps back to Reeds Gap and your car.