

Trail Notes for Brown Mountain – Big Run Loop

Description: This is a strenuous 9.7 mile loop. Some of the ridge walk is very rocky and still exposed to the sun as the result of a devastating fire many years ago. You'll descend about 2000 feet only to have to climb back up again. The rewards are the many views along the way. Not only will you be rewarded with views of Rockytop to the west and its steep canyonesque walls and an un-named valley to the north-east but, on a clear day, you'll also be able to see the southern most end of Massanutten Mountain and the surrounding Shenandoah Valley. Be prepared for this one. Wear sturdy boots and headgear. Apply the sun block copiously if wearing short sleeves. The many pools and swimming holes along Big Run and Rocky Mountain Run will help you recover before the climb out becomes steep. If you wish to do this as an overnight backpacking trip we've marked some campsites for you.

[Google Custom Directions](#)

Special Note: Google Maps and other on-line mapping programs might suggest you use old fire roads that are no longer accessible by automobile. Use a real map to confirm your route. This trailhead is at the Brown Mountain Overlook just north of Mile Post 77 on Skyline Drive.

Trail Notes: From the Overlook find the break in the stone wall. This is the Brown Mountain Trailhead. From here follow the blue blazed trail. Initially the trail passes through an open area with constant views of Rockytop and peaks and ridges beyond it. Descend into a saddle and the junction of the Rocky Mountain Run Trail on the left at 0.63 miles from the overlook. This is your return route. Continue straight and climb to the top of Rocky Mountain. The trail will switch between the ridge's northern and then southern flanks. When you first reach the top you'll pass the first of many vistas (0.99 miles from the last trail junction).

After walking along the ridge top of Rocky Mountain for a while you'll descend to another slight saddle and then climb to the top of Brown Mountain. The walk along this ridge is short but you'll enjoy at least 3 more vistas not counting the ones encountered during your descent, along switchbacks, to Big Run. In 1.04 miles from the last ridge top vista arrive at a concrete post. Bearing to the left (or more straight ahead) leads you to the junction with the yellow blazed Big Run - Portal Trail. There are no markings for the initially obvious foot trail to the right. This is an unofficial trail that leads to a couple of really nice campsites. (Note: Fires are not allowed in SNP!)

At the junction with the Big Run - Portal trail turn left. The trail fords Big Run 4 times. During periods of high water these could be wades. The crossings are at 0.24 miles, then another 0.48, then another 0.4 and the last, another 0.18 miles. There is a very nice swimming hole just above this crossing.

In a mere 0.3 miles come to a trail junction. Turn left onto the Rocky Mountain Run Trail. In another 0.71 miles arrive at a nice swimming hole.

There is a campsite on the other side big enough for one or 2 tents. The climb to this point has been quite gradual. It will become slightly steeper for the next mile and become more severe over the last mile. You will be aided near the top with some much appreciated switchbacks.

In 2.08 miles from the last swimming hole reach the junction with Brown Mountain Tr. Turn right here and retrace your initial steps back to your cars.