

Description: This is a moderate 15 mile backpack through the scenic Dolly Sods North. You'll walk through areas of breath-taking beauty. The entire trek is one big photo op. There are some deciduous forest along the way but you'll spend most of your time walking through heath bogs on Dobbin Grade, grassy plains sprinkled with Spruce groves along Raven Ridge and the rocky, tundra-like ridge of Cabin Mountain. There will be views in every direction. Although there are suitable campsites throughout the area this description has you camping in a Red Spruce grove along the Left Fork of Red Creek. After breaking camp stash your packs near the junction of Black Bird Knob and Red Creek Trails and enjoy a romp in the waterfalls and swimming hole of "The Forks".

There are some wet spots, especially along Dobbin Grade so have some dry footwear waiting for you back at the car. Also remember that mountain top weather can change with a wink of an eye and in many instances you might be totally exposed to the elements so pack accordingly.

Directions from WV28/WV55 and Jordan Run Road, north of Seneca Rocks:

1. If heading south on WV28/WV55 turn right onto Jordan Run Road.
2. In 0.9 miles pass the first turn off to Dolly Sods on the left, FR19.
3. In 6.7 more miles turn left onto FR75 marked with signs for Dolly Sods.
4. FR75 soon becomes a gravel road. It has recently been graded but still has some bumpy parts.
5. As you reach the top of the mountain the large trees will disappear and the road will make a final sharp left-hand turn. Park here on either side of the road. The Bear Rocks trailhead is about 100 yards further down the road. There is limited parking there but these spots are often full.

Trail Notes: First I need to thank Trudy and John Phillips and Jonathan Jessup for sharing their maps with me. Their insight has made my exploration of the North Sods quite enjoyable. To get more info on Trudy and John's work go to <http://home.adelphia.net/~johntrudy/> . Jonathan's trail maps might be found somewhere on his site: www.jonathanjessup.com. I've hiked most of these trails 3 times now and carried my GPS unit the last time.

From the cars walk south on FR75 for about 100 yards and turn right onto an old jeep trail named Bear Rocks Trail (Tr522) and blocked by boulders. You will gradually descend to Dobbin Grade, passing a seriously eroded section of the jeep trail (A footpath to the left gets you around this.) and a mini-bog sheltered in a hollow. You'll climb out of the hollow and descend to Dobbin Grade (TR526) at 1.02 miles from the start. The jeep trail is also badly eroded here. There are optional trails on either side.

Cross Dobbin Grade and descend further through a grassy area to Red Creek. There are a few good campsites here. Cross the creek. Climb to the first rise. You'll end up on an old ATV trail. Do not take the ATV trail but turn right onto a footpath at the USFS "Trail" marker. As you enter the woods you'll pass through a small wet area. Cross a drainage and immediately turn right (uphill). Follow the drainage for about 15 yards and turn left. Walk through the woods until you pick up another trail that goes uphill. Turn

right. Soon you'll arrive at the grassy slopes of Raven Ridge although, at this point, you are still on Bear Rocks Trail. Follow the Trail stakes for another 0.4 miles until you arrive at the junction of Raven Ridge Trail (Tr521). Turn right here.

It may be possible at certain spots to climb to the northern edge of the ridge for views of Dobbin Slashing and distant ridges. At about 0.2 miles from the last trail junction pass Beaver View Trail (Tr523) on the left. Soon reach a large grove of mature Red Spruce to your left (South). As you look at it there is a lone deciduous tree to its left, possibly a fruit tree. This approximates an opening in the grove and the front door of a fantastic campsite protected from the elements.

Continue west passing an unsigned trail on the left that eventually connects with Beaver View Trail that you passed earlier. At 0.86 miles from the Spruce Grove turn left onto a footpath cut through some small Red Spruce. In another 0.44 miles arrive at Rocky Ridge Trail (Tr524). Turn left here. From this ridge you can get sweeping views of Dolly Sods and much of what you just hiked. From this ridge you can get sweeping views of Dolly Sods and much of what you just hiked.

Continue south on Rocky Ridge Trail. At about 1.18 miles the trail veers slightly to the right and crosses Rocky Knob. Weather permitting this is a great lunch spot with views of Canaan Valley and Mountain. You have to rely on several cairns and short patches of footpath to get through this area.

In about 0.3 miles from Rocky Knob you'll pass a trail intersection in a wet area with a large boulder. The trail to the left is marked with cairns and leads to a dead end and a possible small emergency campsite should a backpacker need to get off of the ridge. By-pass this trail and in 0.2 miles arrive at a jeep trail. This is the junction with Dobbin Grade Trail (Tr526). Turn right to stay on Rocky Ridge Trail. Climb up a wide woods road to Harmon Knob in 0.48 miles. The actual knob is marked by a very tall cairn. The view point is across a large rock field along the edge of the ridge.

In another .04-0.5 miles arrive at the junction of Harmon Trail (Tr528). Turn left here and, in 1.44 miles, descend to the junction of Black Bird Knob Trail (Tr511). There is a galvanized sign post there but the sign itself was never installed. Turn left onto Black Bird Knob Trail. In about 0.2 miles descend to and cross the left fork of Red Creek. Immediately after crossing the creek turn left onto a footpath and follow it into a large Red Spruce Grove. There are several nice campsites to choose from. The largest is on the west bank.

The next morning return to Black Bird Knob Trail and turn left (east) onto it. You'll pass through a thick growth of Spruce, open, grassy meadows and deciduous forest. In about 0.7 miles from the left fork arrive at the junction with Red Creek Trail. The sign is missing but it is marked with two large cairns. Turn right here and descend to "The Forks" in 0.9 – 1.0 miles. You might want to stash your packs somewhere along the descent.

After enjoying "The Forks" recover your packs and return to the last trail junction. Turn right onto Black Bird Knob Trail. In 0.34 miles turn left onto

Upper Red Creek Trail (Tr509) and follow it up, over and down an open grassy hill to the junction of Dobbin Grade Trail (Tr526).

Turn right onto Dobbin Grade Tr. This is an old rail road grade that was used to haul lumber in days gone by. Being an RR grade the climb out of the bog is very gradual with several boggy areas along the way. Soon after making the last turn you'll pass Raven Ridge Trail on the left. Continue on Dobbin Grade. Cross the right fork of Red Creek and immediately turn left to stay on the trail. If you stay on the rode that goes up to a wind whipped tree you'll turn around to enjoy a fantastic view of DSN.

If you walk up to the vista, return to Red Creek and continue up Dobbin Grade. At about 1.05 miles from the crossing arrive at Beaver Dam Trail (Tr520) on the right. This trail takes you out to FR75. In another 0.62 miles reach the junction with the Bear Rocks Trail. Turn right here and retrace your initial steps back to the cars.