

## Otter Creek Backpack

**Description:** This can be either a 12.8 or 15.9 mile moderate backpacking trip (Base Mileage) through one of the prettiest wilderness areas in WV. Side out and back slackpacking hikes can be spun off of these loops. The hardest part is accomplished at the very beginning: hauling your packs up a 1300 foot elevation gain over 2.5 –3.0 miles. Once on the top of Shaver's Mountain you will walk along a relatively flat ridge trail, weaving in and out of mixed hardwoods and conifer plantations. You'll then descend via Green Mountain and Possession Camp Trails to Otter Creek, the focal point of any hike in the area. Here you'll be able to explore the many falls, chutes and rapids along a 4 mile stretch of the creek, some without the encumbrance of your pack or explore the bogs of Moore Run on McGowan Mt., before climbing up and over Mylius Gap as you return to your cars. The route described here is the shorter route and uses Possession Camp Trail to descend into the valley. Use the Green Mountain Trail to the creek for the longer route. Tent icons mark some of the better campsites. GPS data is for this long route. Most of Possession Camp Trail is a railroad grade and pretty obvious.

Being a wilderness area, there are no signs or blazes in the Otter Creek area. The trails are, however, well worn and the intersections, for the most part, are marked with cairns. Bring an accurate map and trail description when undertaking any outing here.

### Directions from US33 at Alpena Gap:

1. If traveling west on US33 turn right onto CO12.
2. Proceed 4.6 miles almost to a bridge that crosses Gladys Fork.
3. Make a hairpin left turn onto FR162.
4. Almost immediately turn left into the Mylius Trailhead (sign on right side of FR162).

## Google Custom Directions

**Trail Notes:** Mylius Trail (TR128) starts as an old gravel jeep trail. As the grade increases a grassy jeep trail bears to the right. Continue straight on the well-worn road. You'll cross a power line swath and a wildlife clearing (I don't recall the order.). Soon the grade will increase even more as it passes an abandoned pasture full of Hay Scented Fern enclosed in barbed wire on the left. At this point bare right onto an obvious narrow footpath that climbs Shaver's Mountain at an angle. For a short distance near the top you'll find yourself back on a pretty flat jeep trail before the final ascent to the top of Mylius Gap on another narrow footpath.

The intersection with Shaver's Mountain Trail (TR129) at about 1.6 miles from the beginning of the hike is at a flat area under a canopy of large trees with little under story. All four directions are marked with cairns. You've climbed 900 feet so far. Turn right onto Shaver's Mountain Trail and climb another 400 feet over the next mile or so. Only the beginning of this ascent is steep. The rest is pretty gradual.

At about 2.00 miles from the last trail junction come to an apparent four-way intersection. A left turn will shortly lead you to a grassy area and

spring. A right turn will lead to the site of an old shelter which has been removed. Both are good places to camp should the need arise.

Continue on for another 0.93 miles (Includes side trips to spring and old shelter site so is actually less) to the junction with Green Mountain Trail (TR130). There used to be a sign hanging from above on Shaver's Mt Trail noting "Trail Abandoned" for the continuation of that trail. I think the trail has been rerouted away from that junction and it now, more or less, merges into Green Mountain Tr. There is no sign. Bear left (North-west) and follow Green mountain Trail to the junction with Possession Camp Trail (TR158) in a Grassy area surrounded by conifers. This is another good mountain top campsite if the small stream that crosses Possession Camp Trail close by has water.

**SHORT ROUTE:** Possession Camp Trail is one of the most picturesque mountainside trails in the valley. Almost it's entire length is along a railroad grade encapsulated either with Spruce and Hemlock or mature deciduous trees. At one point you'll descend between some large rocks and quickly regain the railroad grade.

In about 1.2 miles from the last turnoff cross the headwaters of Possession Camp Run. As you reach the opposite bank look for a collection of lumbering artifacts that previous hikers have deposited on a large flat rock on the left side of the trail. In another 0.5 miles the trail will become exposed more to the sun and is the probable cause of a healthy growth of Green Brier in this area. This soon dissipates as a mature forest once again surrounds the trail. In another mile cross an un-named tributary with a nice set of mini-cascades and descend to Otter Creek (3 miles from the last trail intersection).

The intersection of Possession Camp Tr with Otter Creek (TR131) and Moore's Run Trails (TR138 - on the other side of Otter Creek) occurs at a large rock. The intersection itself is marked with a cairn. Turn right and in about 0.2 miles reach a huge campsite. This is the first option for camping. There are other sites all along Otter Creek in either direction between Green Mountain Trail to the north and the Creek crossing south of Possession Camp Trail. When I lead this particular circuit we camped here and visited the many falls and slides between it and the next southern creek crossing on day one. On day two we left our gear and visited Moore's Run (1.2 miles north of camp after crossing Otter Creek) and the falls in between before finishing our trip.

**LONG ROUTE:** From the junction of Possession Camp Tr and Green Mt Tr turn right (West) staying on Green Mt Tr. Initially you will be hiking on an old RR grade. In about 0.46 miles look for a cairn and footpath to the left off of the grade. Turn left here and follow the footpath for 1.58 miles to Otter Creek. (You'll pass one more campsite w/water at 0.67 miles after leaving the RR grade. This is the last campsite before the creek.) Turn left onto Otter Creek Tr. There are 3 campsites here. The middle one is hidden up on a hill and is not used much. The last is right at the creek crossing.

Proceed south on Otter Creek Tr. Fords are marked on the map. You'll pass numerous waterfalls, rapids, chutes and swimming holes along the way.

**There is a short section a little after the first crossing where the trail leaves the RR grade and becomes a narrow footpath clinging to the side of a hill. There are a couple of bad blowdowns across the trail that can be tricky to climb over. Take your time and be careful!!! Make sure you visit the confluence of Moore Run with the creek. It's the best break/lunch spot on the creek! At 3.1 miles from the last major crossing of Otter Creek cross one more time and arrive at a huge campsite along the creek. This also used to be a site of a shelter that was removed in keeping with wilderness regs.**

**If you get a chance visit Moore Run Bogs. Continue south on Otter Creek Trail for a few hundred yard to a cairn on the right just before Possession Camp Tr on the left (Big Rock). Cross the creek, climb a short hill to gain a RR grade and follow the trail for about 3.1 miles. (The trail continues further to the junction of McGowan Mt. Tr.) You'll be able to see the bog to the left. Look for a faint trail covered with a few limbs to the left. Bushwhack at an oblique angle to the trail until you run into a Rhododendron thicket. Pick your way through this to eventually reach the bog.**

**CONTINUATION OF BOTH ROUTES: From camp head south (upstream) on Otter Creek Trail, passing Moore Run Tr on the right and Possession Camp Trail on the left.**

**Ford Otter Creek at about 0.3 miles above Possession Camp Trail. In about 0.7 miles reach Mylius Trail marked by cairns. Turn left onto Mylius and ford Otter Creek for the last time.**

**Climb steeply up Mylius trail for about 0.84 miles until you reach the gap and junction with Shaver's Mountain Trail that you visited on the first day. Descend on Mylius Trail, retracing your initial steps back to your cars.**