

## Pond Run-Racer Camp Hollow Loop

**Description:** The Pond Run/Racer Camp Hollow Loop is a strenuous 11 mile circuit hike with several stream crossings and a 1200 foot elevation gain in the first 2 miles. Total elevation gain for the entire loop is 1600 feet. You can make the hike a little longer and challenging by bypassing Racer Camp Hollow Trail and hiking up to White Rocks. This adds about 0.6 miles and a few more 100 feet of elevation gain to the outing. This and a short rock scramble pays off with nice views of Cedar Run Valley, Little North Mountain, Massanutten Mountain and, on a really clear day, the Blue Ridge of Shenandoah National Park. For a slightly shorter and somewhat easier hike with the same view go to White Rocks Circuit.

### **Directions from I-81 and VA Rt55:**

1. From I-81 take US 55 West.
2. Travel approximately 19.1 miles. Pass convenience store/gas station (Shell, True Value, Car Quest Auto Parts). Turn left onto Sanfield Road just before the junction of Rt 259.
3. Turn left at next intersection (Un-signed North Mountain Rd.).
4. Pass a few houses and then turn right onto Waites Run Rd. You'll pass J. Allen Hawkins Community Park on the left and Stone Crest Community on the right.
5. Travel approximately 6.5 miles, crossing a single lane bridge.
6. As you start up hill you'll come to a pink or orchid farm gate on the right and a pull in for 4 cars on the left. This is where the hike starts.

**Trail Notes:** From the parking area walk back down Waite's Run Rd for 1 mile, crossing the single lane bridge. Immediately turn left onto blue-blazed Pond Run/Tuscarora Tr. Proceed up and over a steep hill, descending to Pond Run. Climb steeply for about 2 more miles crossing Pond Run several times.

At the top cross a boardwalk and arrive at the junction of Halfmoon Tr. (right/yellow-blazed) and Tuscarora Tr. (left/blue-blazed). A new white blazed spur trail leads straight ahead a short distance to a rocky ledge with pitch pines which lends a nice view of Halfmoon Lookout, Long Mountain and the northernmost part of Trout Run Valley.

If you visit the vista return to the trail junction and turn right on blue blazed Tuscarora Trail (aka Three Ponds Trail on some maps). If you came up Pond Run and don't want to visit the vista turn left on the Tuscarora Tr. Cross a couple of well-constructed boardwalks and continue on a forest road. The forest road will make a sharp right, uphill turn. Continue straight here on a blue blazed footpath.

In 1.37 miles arrive at the junction with orange blazed Mill Mt. Tr. straight ahead. hill. The previously passed forest road will be to your right behind a bearm. Turn left here to stay on the blue blazed Tuscarora Tr, a forest road at this point.

Proceed 0.6 miles past closed purple-blazed Peer Tr. on your left and yellow-blazed Little Stony Creek Trail on your right. (For backpackers, there is a great campsite just up Mill Mt. Tr. on the left side of the trail and

another good one along the main trail just before Stony Creek Tr. on the right. Sugar Knob Cabin, surrounded by other tent sites and a dependable spring is a short distance down Little Stony Creek Tr.) In another 0.87 miles arrive at the junction with purple blazed Little Sluice Tr. on your right and orange blazed Racer Camp Hollow Tr. on your left.

To complete the short version of the hike, turn left onto Racer Camp Hollow Tr. Descend through the cove, crossing the stream a few times before climbing up and out onto a forest road. Continue on the forest road and in 2.45 miles from the last trail junction arrive at the pink blazed Old Mail Tr. coming in from your right.

Immediately after this intersection turn left into a wildlife clearing. Walk to the back of the clearing to pick up the continuation of the Old Mail Tr. Follow it downhill for 1.28 miles through a pleasant mix of deciduous and pine trees. Cross Cove Run, staying on the Old Mail Trail, which may be wet in spots.

The Old Mail Tr. ends at the intersection of Wilson's Cove Tr, a yellow blazed forest road. Turn left and follow it back to the cars (0.49 miles).

To complete the long version of the hike, pass the afore-mentioned Racer Camp Hollow Trail and continue up the blue blazed Tuscarora Tr for another 1.29 miles. The white blazed White Rocks Spur Tr comes in sharply from the right and is easy to walk by. To make it even easier to miss the sign marking it is nailed onto a tree several yards back on the trail. A key to finding its location is to start looking to the right just as the Tuscarora starts a slight descent. Turn right and follow switchbacks down the spur trail for about 0.26 miles passing a campsite on the right. You'll have to scramble up and over some rocks to reach the overlook.

Return to the Tuscarora Tr and turn right. In 0.51 miles arrive at the northern terminus of the Old Mail Trail. Descend for 0.95 miles and cross a woods road (Racer Camp Hollow Trail). Walk through a wildlife clearing and follow the above directions for the short version to complete your trek.