

**Description:** This is a moderate 13.3 mile shuttle backpack in one of the premier venues of the Potomac Ranger District of the MNF, WV. In reality this hike can be completed in a day without packs if you get an early start. Since I have to drive from Baltimore and enjoy the area so much I prefer to camp the night before at the semi-primitive Spruce Knob Campground that is minutes away from either trailhead and spend at least one night along the creek.

Day one has you starting at the Spruce Knob Parking lot and hiking about 9 miles. Your route is either all flat or downhill with the exception of a steady, wet and gradual climb along the northern 2 mile section of the Lumberjack Trail. You begin on Huckleberry trail and descend to Lumberjack. After Lumberjack you'll descend along a series of open meadows and then follow the bottom segment of Huckleberry Trail to Seneca Falls where you will spend the night.

The next day is spent gradually ascending 5.0 miles out of Seneca Creek valley as you visit all of the waterworks the creek has to offer.

**Directions from the intersection of U.S.33 (South bound) and Briery Gap Rd in Riverton, WV:**

1. Turn right onto Briery Gap Rd.
2. At 2.67 miles Briery Gap Road becomes gravel FR112.
3. At 7.2 miles from the end of Briery Rd come to a triangle intersection with FR104 (goes to Spruce Knob). Proceed strain (left) on FR112.
4. Switchback down the mountain a bit. Pass the trailhead for Lumberjack Trail. Park some of your vehicles at the Seneca Creek Trailhead.
5. With the remaining cars backtrack to the intersection with FR104 and turn left. Continue to the top of Spruce Knob. The Huckleberry Trailhead is behind a picnic shelter in the north corner of the parking lot (bus parking area).

**Trail Notes:** From the parking lot proceed down Huckleberry Trail (TR533). The first 2-2.5 miles is spent weaving in and out of alternating Spruce groves and heath and fern meadows on a relatively flat to slightly descending grade. It seems that every Spruce grove has at least one campsite although they are all dry.

At about 3.1 miles descend to a large campsite nestled in a very large grove. The trail goes both left and right but follow the sign and turn right onto a grassy woods road. In a 100 yards or so a blue diamond with a black arrow will direct you to make a left turn onto a footpath which leads to yet another woods road and a sign stating the mileage to Seneca Creek (1.8 miles) and Lumberjack Trail (0.4 miles). The woods road goes in either direction. Bear left at the sign. The woods road soon enters dense woods. As it begins to disintegrate, look for another blue diamond with a black arrow directing you to turn right onto a narrow footpath. Descend, steeply at times, to the junction of Lumberjack Trail (TR534).

Turn right onto Lumberjack trail. This is an often times very wet railroad grade. Climb gradually and at 2.i miles arrive at the junction of the High

**Meadows Trail (TR564).** This trail starts on an old Railroad grade or woods road but soon turns sharply left, following a barbed wire fence as it descends to the first meadow. Watch for blue diamonds on the right that direct you through a rocky area just before the meadow. This is a great lunch spot as you take in the Seneca Creek valley enclosed by the Allegheny Mountains.

Walk straight across the clearing and pick up a narrow post with blue blaze that puts you back on the trail. You'll descend along the face of the hill and re-enter the woods on another woods road. Just before the road appears to enter a clearing look for blue blazes on the right directing you on to a footpath that leads to a lower part of the meadow. Watch for blazed stakes and cairns marking the way. Cross the meadow and re-enter the woods again. Cross a stream and enter one more beautiful meadow. As you look back up the hill you can see all of the meadows you have walked through. Cross this last meadow, pass a cow salt feeder and descend to the junction with Huckleberry Trail (1.8 miles from leaving Lumberjack Trail). Turn right and follow the trail down to Seneca Creek Trail (TR515) (0.6 miles). Turn right onto Seneca Creek Trail. Soon pass Seneca Falls on the left. The campsite is immediately below the falls on a bench along the creek. There is enough room for several tents. If for some reason the site is full reverse direction and cross Seneca Creek. There is a nice grassy area here that can also accommodate several tents.

The rest of the outing is pretty obvious. Enjoy a nice 4.8 mile walk as you gradually climb out of the valley on Seneca Creek Trail. This entire trail is an old railroad grade except near the end where it becomes a woods road. The grade is barely noticeable especially in comparison to all of the downhill walking accomplished the day before. You will have to cross the creek about four times. The first one, just above the falls, is the most problematic. There is one place where you have to climb up, over and around some boulders to avoid a blow-out of the grade.

Try to allow time to visit all of the water works along the way. Some may be hidden behind a wall of Rhododendron so keep your ears alert for the sounds of water falls. Also keep an eye out for an unmarked side trail on the left. I believe this is an old railroad siding that once lead to a mill. Follow it to see what makes be think this! The side trail comes back to the main trail so you don't have to retrace your steps. I can't recall it's exact location. I know it's just below Judy Spring (See following description.) but can't recall if it's above or below Bear Hunter Trail.

Pass Bear Hunter Trail (TR531) on the right at 1.68 miles from the falls. The last time I was there the sign was missing but the trail was obvious. Shortly thereafter arrive at a grassy clearing. This is the site of the old Judy Spring Campground. The well has been capped off but the area remains a favorite campsite for backpackers. I can't recall ever walking through this meadow with there at least being one tent set up in the orchard. A bridge, leading to Judy Springs and Judy Springs Trail, is on the left. Continue straight on Seneca Creek trail.

**Pass Swallow Rock Trail (TR529) on the right at 1.18 miles from Judy Spring and, in another 1.36 miles, Tom's Lick Trail (TR559) also on the right. From there walk another 0.92 miles to the parking area and your awaiting cars.**