

**Description:** This is a 16 mile, 2 day backpack through the Tea Creek drainage. Easily 2/3rds of the hike is along railroad grades. While this implies hiking along gradual slopes it also entails stepping on a very rocky surface often times punctuated by old rail road ties. Most of the time is spent walking under a very dense canopy of mixed hardwoods and Red Spruce. Tea Creek, Right Fork and Red Run are all beautiful streams featuring rocky cascades and swimming holes in the lower areas and swampy, beaver modified tracts in the upper areas.

When I first scouted this hike I did it in segments as a series of smaller loop and shuttle hikes. My maps suggest hiking 10.5 miles on day one and camping along the Right Fork and accomplishing the final 5.5 miles on day 2. While there are 3 Adirondack shelters in the wilderness area 2 of them are in bad locations for a 2 day backpack and the third, On Bear Pen Ridge is "dry". **The best camping area is at the confluence of Red Run and Right Fork of Tea Creek (9.5 miles into the circuit) leaving 6.5 miles for the next day.** Besides the obvious area marked by fire rings there are two flat shelves nestled under Red Spruce further out on the point.

**Directions from the intersection of U.S. 219 and I-64 at Lewisburg:**

1. Travel 44 miles North on U.S. 219 through Marlinton.
2. Turn left onto Scenic Highway 150.
3. In 9 miles cross Williams River and turn left onto an exit ramp for FR 86.
4. At the end of the ramp turn left. Travel 1 mile and turn right, crossing a low narrow bridge, to get to Tea Creek Primitive Camp Ground. The hike begins at the Kiosk in the small day use area to the right of the water pump.

**Trail Notes:** All trails are blazed with blue plastic diamonds and signed. From the kiosk follow the Williams River Trail. Cross Tea Creek on a wooden bridge. By-pass the foot trail the follows the opposite bank. Continue on Williams River Trail. Turn left on Tea Creek Mountain Trail. Its sign and that for Tea Creek Trail is just a few steps up the trail. Turn left onto Tea Creek Trail. Follow the switchbacks up and over the hill to an old railroad grade. In 2.8 miles from the beginning arrive at a shelter, swimming hole and the confluence of Right Fork of Tea Creek with Tea Creek. Signs for North Face and Right Fork Trail are also there.

Cross the Right Fork and continue up Tea Creek. This section is slow. The trail still contains much of the rock ballast used for the railroad and several old ties as well. Furthermore there are more than 10 crossings of Tea Creek along this segment. At 1.4 miles from the Right Fork Crossing reach the junction of Bear Pen Ridge Trail from the right and the Boundary Trail from the left.

The trail follows the Creek for about another mile before making a hairpin right turn and following another railroad grade up the hill. 0.5 miles after this turn Tea Creek Trail turns left at a sign and Tea Creek Connector Trail continues straight up the grade. Follow the Connector Trail for 0.5 miles until you reach the Gauley Mountain Trail.

Turn right onto Gauley Mountain Trail and slowly climb about 0.5 miles passing the east terminus of Bear Pen Ridge Trail. In another 1.1 miles arrive at Red Run Trail. The signs and the MNF Trail Guide notes the length of this trail as being 2.5 miles. I and others believe the actual distance is closer to 1.7 miles. If need be, you can camp at the headwaters of the run about 0.3 miles down the trail. Places for tents might be found to the right of the trail against a hill. **Its best to continue down Red Run Trail to it's junction with Right Fork Trail. Follow Right Fork Trail until you cross Red Run. There you will find a nice shelf to camp on. Further out on the point are even better more isolated sites that are not visible from the trail.**

On day two climb the steps carved into the hill by the Forest Service to bypass a major blowout in the old trail. Cross Right Fork and continue up the trail walking through forests and swamps. Be sure to check out the beaver activity. At about 1.5 miles arrive at the intersection of Right Fork Connector Trail. The map calls for staying on Right Fork Trail but a great side bar is to take a left onto the connector and visit a recently constructed boardwalk and nature study area along the fringes of a beaver pond and bog. It's a pretty impressive view with the Red Spruce and Gauley Mountain as a backdrop. From there you can either retrace your steps back to Right Fork Trail and follow it up to Tea Creek Meadow or take the gravel road at the boardwalk up to the same area. Either way, arrive at a small parking area and the trail head for Tea Creek Mountain Trail. I believe the sign is missing but an empty kiosk is there. Little Laurel Overlook is across the scenic highway from this trailhead.

This is probably the hardest part of day two, a steep ascent up the side of the mountain. You'll gain 400 feet in about 0.25 miles via a set of switchbacks. After that the rest of the hike is either flat or gradual climbs crossing a rock field and three knobs. At 3 miles from the Tea Creek Mt Trailhead pass North Face Trail on the right and begin a rapid descent. At 1.4 miles pass Tea Creek Trail on the right and arrive at Williams Trail. Turn right here and retrace your steps back to the starting point.