

Directions and Trail Notes for Falls Ridge – North Mountain Loop

Description: This is a strenuous 11.7 mile circuit hike with a 1600 foot elevation gain over the first 2.5 miles. The hike along the ridge offers at least two vistas on a clear day. The first provides a vantage point for both east and west views while the second provides a good view of Massanutten Mt. On a good day you can even make out Signal Knob. The descent along a pipeline swath is both steep and exposed to the sun. Parts of the ridge walk is equally exposed to the sun. Dress accordingly and bring lots of water and sun screen for this one.

In season one might expect to find Fly Poison (a Lily), Dwarf Iris, Mountain Laurel, Pink Lady Slippers and Gray Beardtongue growing along the trails and roads. This is a companion hike to the [Laurel Run - Stack Rocks](#) and [Laurel Run - Falls Ridge](#) circuits.

Directions from I-81:

1. At Woodstock, take Rt 42 West for 5.8 miles.
2. At Columbia Furnace turn right onto SR 675. Turn left immediately after crossing the bridge to stay on SR 675.
3. In about 3 miles bear left onto SR 717. (Wolf Gap Rd continues to the right.)
4. In about 2.5 miles pass SR 691 on the right with Liberty Furnace remains, a preserved Mill and Mansion are on the corner.
5. Turn right onto SR 701 (Dillenger Gap Rd). An old church and graveyard are on the hill at the intersection.
6. Continue on SR 701, beyond the "End County Maintenance" sign, until it ends at the trailhead gate. Park on the left.

Trail Notes: As you approach the private drive bear right onto the yellow blazed Falls Ridge Tr and immediately cross Falls Run. This is usually a rock hop at the worst. Proceed up a very eroded wagon road. In 0.19 miles come to a junction of grassy woods roads. There will be an old green bus in the woods to the left. Purple blazed Fat Mt Tr is straight ahead (Your return route). Yellow blazed Falls Ridge Tr is to the right. Turn right. Keep an eye out for a faint yellow blaze on a tree next to a dirt and rock bearm blocking a trail to the left. Turn here and cross the bearm. The trail meanders through an overgrown grassy field for a while before slipping back into some secondary woods that parallels a wide open field to its right.

In another 0.55 miles cross the blue blazed Laurel Run Connector and begin a steep climb. At about 1.37 miles from the last junction you'll come to a white triangle blaze on a tree to the left marking a faint trail. This begins a bushwhack to a waterfall. I've yet to explore it since both times I've hiked the trail there has been little, if any, water coming off of the mountain. Continue up the Falls Ridge Tr for another 0.63 miles. Arrive at the junction of orange blazed North Mountain Tr.

Turn left here. In about 0.93 miles watch for a rock outcrop that juts up to the sky to your right. This is a good vista that provides both easterly and westerly views.

Continue on another 1.58 miles to the next vista. This one has room to lounge in the shade and provides a view of Massanutten Mt and points east.

The next 1.74 miles is pretty flat and goes by rather quickly. At this point reach gravel SR 720. Bear left onto the road and switchback down to where it crosses a pipeline swath. Turn left onto the the pipeline swath (colored red on the map) and descend steeply for 0.71 miles. Keep an eye out for a rock pile and a blue blaze on a tree to the left. Turn left here and cross a stream. This is the Laurel Run Connector.

Cross two more streams. Keep a sharp eye out for a very faded purple blaze on the right. This is the beginning of the Fat Mountain Tr. Turn right here. In about 0.70 miles the trail will almost reconnect with the Laurel Run Connector on the left. Turn right at a purple blazed post and continue to follow the Fat Mt Tr for another 0.74 miles. Arrive back at the old green bus junction. Turn right onto the yellow blazed Falls Ridge Tr and retrace your original steps back to your car.