

Trail Notes for the Hurricane Mountain Loop

Description: This is our fourth and final exploration of Iron Mountain in the Mount Rogers N.R.A. See [Comers Creek Loop](#), [Rowland Creek Falls Loop](#) and [the Beartree Gap Loop](#) for other Iron Mountain circuits. The 21 mile long yellow blazed Iron Mountain Trail used to be part of the AT until a major relocation several years ago. It is now maintained as a multipurpose trail, allowing hiking, mountain biking and horse riding. As with the other hikes the Iron Mountain Trail serves as the backbone for the trek, with mostly gradual climbs and descents. The climb to Flat Top is mostly gradual. The walk along a gravel forest road is pretty pedestrian but short lived. The rest of the hike is mostly flat or downhill. The AT portion is probably the best since it is designated for foot traffic only. Hiking through the pastures on the Fairwood Valley Trail provides views of the surrounding mountains.

The hike starts at the kiosk in the parking area.

Trail Notes: Look for an unmarked but obvious trail to the right of the kiosk. Follow it, stepping over a few blowdowns, with an old fence to your left. In 0.1 miles join the Flattop Trail, turning left onto it. Although used by equestrians the clay and gravel makes a pretty durable surface, resistant to the forces applied by our 4 legged friends. The forest and understory is lush in the summer. Turn right onto a service road in 0.6 miles. Pass a few false roads. Reach a bend in the road in 0.7 miles. There will be a yellow gate in front of you. Bear to the right, continuing up the road for another 0.2 miles. Turn right onto the yellow blazed Iron Mountain Trail. Parts of the trail might be muddy as the result of frequent equestrian use. The trail surface eventually stabilizes making it relatively good for walking. In 1.7 miles reach an area called Chestnut Flats and the intersection with the AT. Turn right and descend for 2.2 miles on a nice footpath. As the elevation drops more and more trailside Rhodos and Hemlock appear. Cross Fox Creek on a bridge. This is a great break spot. The water is perpetually cold and clear. Just before reaching Rt 603 turn right onto the Fairwood Valley Trail. It might be muddy at first but becomes a packed gravel base after a ford. Pass the Old Orchard trail on the left in 0.4 miles and then the Lewis Fork Trail also on the left in an equivalent distance. Pass through a pasture with wonderful views of Hurricane and Pine Mountains (home of Mt. Rogers). Make sure you close the gates. In 1.2 miles from the last trail junction arrive at a trail marked with a stake that leads you back to the parking lot.