

Description: This is a moderate 10.6 mile circuit through the scenic Dolly Sods North. You'll walk through areas of breath-taking beauty. The entire trek is one big photo op. There are some deciduous forest along the way but you'll spend most of your time walking through heath bogs on Dobbin Grade, grassy plains sprinkled with Spruce groves along Raven Ridge and the rocky, tundra-like ridge of Cabin Mountain. There will be views in every direction throughout the course of the day.

There are some wet spots, especially along Dobbin Grade so have some dry footwear waiting for you back at the car. Also remember that mountain top weather can change with a wink of an eye and in many instances you might be totally exposed to the elements so pack accordingly. A final note: this area was recently acquired by the Forest Service. There are no signs or blazes. A good map and compass are essential tools for those exploring this area for the first time. Allow extra time in case you ... mis-navigate.

Directions from WV28/WV55 and Jordan Run Road, north of Seneca Rocks:

1. If heading south on WV28/WV55 turn right onto Jordan Run Road.
2. In 0.9 miles pass the first turn off to Dolly Sods on the left, FR19.
3. In 6.7 more miles turn left onto FR75 marked with signs for Dolly Sods.
4. FR75 soon becomes a gravel road. It has recently been graded but still has some bumpy parts.
5. As you reach the top of the mountain the large trees will disappear and the road will make a final sharp left-hand turn. Park here on either side of the road. The Bear Rocks trailhead is about 100 yards further down the road. There is limited parking there but these spots are often full.

Trail Notes: First I need to thank Trudy and John Phillips and Jonathan Jessup for sharing their maps with me. Their insight has made my exploration of the North Sods quite enjoyable. To get more info on Trudy and John's work go to <http://home.adelphia.net/~johntrudy/> . Jonathan's trail maps might be found somewhere on his site: www.jonathanjessup.com. I combined the two resources and then, after actually walking the route, made minor modifications to arrive at what you see here.

From the cars walk south on FR75 for about 100 yards and turn right onto an old jeep trail named Bear Rocks Trail (Tr522) and blocked by boulders. You will gradually descend to Dobbin Grade, passing a seriously eroded section of the jeep trail (A footpath to the left gets you around this.) and a mini-bog sheltered in a hollow. You'll climb out of the hollow and descend to Dobbin Grade (TR526) at 1.02 miles from the start. The jeep trail is also badly eroded here. There are optional trails on either side.

Cross Dobbin Grade and descend further through a grassy area to Red Creek. There are a few good campsites here. Cross the creek. Climb to the first rise. You'll end up on an old ATV trail. Do not take the ATV trail but turn right onto a footpath at the USFS "Trail" marker. As you enter the woods you'll pass through a small wet area. Cross a drainage and immediately turn right (uphill). Follow the drainage for about 15 yards and turn left. Walk through the woods until you pick up another trail that goes uphill. Turn

right. Soon you'll arrive at the grassy slopes of Raven Ridge although, at this point, you are still on Bear Rocks Trail. Follow the Trail stakes for another 0.4 miles until you arrive at the junction of Raven Ridge Trail Turn right here.

It may be possible at certain spots to climb to the northern edge of the ridge for views of Dobbin Slashing and distant ridges. At about 0.2 miles from the last trail junction pass Beaver View Trail (Tr523) on the left. Soon reach a large grove of mature Red Spruce to your left (South). As you look at it there is a lone deciduous tree to its left, possibly a fruit tree. This approximates an opening in the grove and the front door of a fantastic campsite protected from the elements.

Continue west passing an unsigned trail on the left that eventually connects with Beaver View Trail that you passed earlier. At 0.86 miles from the Spruce Grove turn left onto a footpath cut through some small Red Spruce. In another 0.44 miles arrive at Rocky Ridge Trail (Tr524). Turn left here. From this ridge you can get sweeping views of Dolly Sods and much of what you just hiked.

Continue south on Rocky Ridge Trail. At about 1 mile the trail veers slightly to the right and crosses Rocky Knob. Weather permitting this is a great lunch spot with views of Canaan Valley and Mountain. You have to rely on several cairns and short patches of footpath to get through this area.

In about 0.3 miles from Rocky Knob you'll pass a trail intersection in a wet area with a large boulder. The trail to the left is marked with cairns and leads to a dead end and a possible small emergency campsite should a backpacker need to get off of the ridge. By-pass this trail and in another 0.1 to 0.2 miles arrive at a jeep trail. This is the junction with Dobbin Grade Trail (Tr526). Turn left here. Parts of this jeep trail are extremely eroded and serves as a part-time stream. There is a footpath on the right bank. The track of this trail is mostly easterly. You'll descend at first, then climb the left side of a gentle knoll and descend again to the Left Fork of Red Creek. Cross it and climb to the top of the bank to find another 3-way intersection. Going left will take you back to the campsite in the Spruce Grove. Turn right and in 0.6 miles merge right onto a railroad grade. To the left will be Beaver View Trail which you passed earlier on Raven Ridge.

Continue on Dobbin Grade Trail. At first it hugs the side of a hill and then descends to a huge open bog. It turns south here following the drainage for a tributary of Red Creek. In places I think the stream and the trail are one and the same. As the grade begins to turn left (East and then North-east) pass Upper Red Creek Trail (Tr509) to your right (south) and, in a few more yards, Raven Ridge Trail (Tr521) to your left (North).

As Dobbin Grade makes it's gradual turn to the left (North-east) cross Red Creek. For a great view of the bog and points west climb up a grassy slope to an exposed campsite and turn around.

Return to Red Creek and turn right. If you did not climb up to the view turn left immediately after crossing the creek. At about 1.16 miles from the crossing arrive at Beaver Dam Trail (Tr520) on the right. This trail takes you

out to FR75. In another 0.65 miles reach the junction with the Bear Rocks Trail. Turn right here and retrace your initial steps back to the cars.