

Description: This is a moderate 11 mile loop on Massanutten Mt. It is probably one of the least traveled circuits on the mountain. There are a couple of partial views as you descend on Bear Wallow Tr but more can be had if you take a little detour along the Meneka Tr.

Directions from the intersection of US 340 and US 55 in Front Royal, VA:

1. Take VA 55 West.
2. Turn left onto Rt. 678.
3. Pass Fisheries road on left and parking lots for Signal Knob on the right.
4. Pass Elizabeth Furnace Picnic Area on the left.
5. Soon come to the Family Camping area on the left. On the right side is an old gravel road. Turn here And park on either side near the main road.

Trail Notes: From your cars, proceed up the purple blazed gravel road. When I first hiked this route in 1998 the gravel road was more open to the sun but in recent years the forest has started to grow in around it. Walk around a forest gate. In about 0.3 miles from the start you'll pass a white blazed spur trail on your right (your return route). At first the trail will be steep and winy. The grade soon lessens and straightens out as you walk along the side of the mountain. At about 1.5 miles it begins a gradual descent and at about 3 miles from the start ends in a small grassy turn-around area. Directly across from this clearing the trail continues as a footpath. Use this path to descend to Little Passage Creek. Turn right and follow the footpath, crossing the stream a couple of times, for about 0.8 miles.

Arrive at another maintained gravel road. This is part of the orange blazed Massanutten Trail. Turn right here and begin a steady climb up the service road. The pitch of the trail increases as you get further up the trail. The service road continues all the way up to Signal Knob. You can use it to reach the next trail in this route but I recommend taking the footpath to the left for a short excursion around the western side of Strasburg Reservoir. Keep an eye out for some perfectly cut stone near the trail.

At about 3 miles from leaving the Mud Hole Gap Tr you'll return to the service road. Cross it and climb up the blue blazed Tuscarora/Bear Wallow Tr. This is the steepest climb on the entire mountain. Fortunately it is only about a mile in duration. At the top arrive at white blazed Meneka Tr on the left (not shown on this map but is shown on the Signal Knob/Mt. Meneka map elsewhere on this site). If time and stamina allows turn left and follow it for a while for some nice views of Fort Valley. Otherwise, proceed straight on the blue blazed Bear Wallow Trail for about 3.2 miles. You'll pass an old trail on the right with pink blazes painted over pink. This used to be the return leg of the trip.

Stay on the Bear Wallow Trail. At about 2 miles from the Meneka Trail junction come to a white blazed spur trail with a sign for the Elizabeth

Furnace Campground. Turn right here and soon arrive at the original gravel road you started on. Turn left and soon return to your cars.