

Piney Ridge-Piney Branch Loop

Directions from Sperryville on US 211:

- 1. Head west on US 211.**
- 2. Enter the Shenandoah Park (\$10.00 per vehicle) and proceed north on Skyline drive.**
- 3. Pass mile post 23. Pass Matthew Arms area on left. Just before mile post 22 turn right into parking area for maintenance shops.**

Trail Notes:

From the parking area find the bulletin board and trail post for Piney Branch Trail between the parking area and Skyline Drive. Proceed down the blue-blazed Piney Branch Trail. In about 0.3 miles, come to the junction of the white-blazed Appalachian Trail. It is a woods road at this point. Turn right here.

Follow the AT to the PATC Range Cabin and a partial view east. Leave the AT, walking through the clearing, toward the spring, and turning right onto a service road. At the top of the hill (less than 50 yd.) turn left onto blue-blazed Piney Ridge Trail.

For the next 3.7 miles the walk is all downhill. At 2.0 miles from the last trail junction pass the Dwyer graveyard on the right marked by a cairn and then the junction with the blue-blazed Fork Trail. Piney Ridge Trail goes to the left. To shorten the hike by 1.1 miles and miss the lower 2 stream crossings turn left here and pick up the directions later. Otherwise continue straight onto Fork Trail.

Continuing on Fork Trail for 1.09 miles, come to the junction of yellow-blazed Hull School Trail. Turn left, following it down to Piney Run where you'll make your first crossing. Turn left, walking upstream. For a short distance Hull School and Piney Branch Trails share the same tread. In about 300 yd. Hull School trail will bear off to the right. Continue straight on blue-blazed Piney Branch Trail.

Re-cross Piney Branch and in 0.67 miles from the last trail intersection pass blue-blazed Piney Ridge Trail on the left.

In about a half of a mile the valley will narrow and you'll have to negotiate a series of switchbacks taking you high above the stream. Soon after this the views begin as stream climbs swiftly to meet you. None of the falls or rapids are right on the trail but a few are easy enough to bushwhack to. Others are harder to reach.

In about a mile re-cross Piney Branch and begin a steep climb out of the valley. The stream will be below you and to your left. There are more waterfalls here but they are harder to see and to get to. Soon the steep climb will lessen and at 2.39 miles from the last trail junction you'll come to a T intersection. Poole Bridge Trail comes in from the right. You'll turn left staying on Piney Branch Trail.

Dip down and cross Piney Branch for the last time. A couple of nice long switchbacks will help you almost to the top of the ridge. The last 0.5 miles

will be a straight climb, crossing what appears to be a trail, but is actually the route of some survey posts, and the AT before reaching the parking lot and your vehicle.