

Prince William Forest Park Loop

Description: This is a moderate 11 mile circuit in the little advertised and under-utilized trail system of Prince William National Park between Dumfries and Fredericksburg, VA right off of I-95. Only the long distance keeps me from categorizing it as easy. In the six times I've hiked there I believe I may have encountered no more than 7 people on the trail. The majority of them had walked in a short distance from the Scenic Drive that runs through the park. The trails are well-marked and meticulously groomed. There are some hills but they are usually either long and slight or steep but very short. For that reason I show no Elevation Profiles for this park. Here I describe this long loop and also show two easier loops contained within it. They are described in detail in the [Beaver loop](#) and [Pyrite Mine Loop](#) links. Upon further studying the map there seems to be an infinitesimal number of shorter loops in this park. I've purposely not drawn in the northern trails to minimize confusion but these other trails even further promulgate the number of hikes one can do in this tiny venue.

Although I prefer to hike in Prince William in the winter it should be given serious consideration for spring and fall outings, especially for beginners. In the spring the under-story along the creeks are abloom with Red Bud, Dogwood and Wild Azaleas. In the fall there is always the orange and yellows of Maple, Beech and other deciduous trees.

Directions from I-95 just south of Dumfries:

1. Take exit 150B (Quantico Triangle and Prince William NP signs).
2. At the end of the ramp, bear right onto VA Rt619.
3. Turn right into Park. This is a fee area (\$6.00/car). If the gate house is closed pay at Park Headquarters further down the road.
4. Pass the Scenic Drive on the left.
5. Turn left into Pine Grove picnic Area. Continue down the parking area directly in front of you and park at the end of the lot.

Trail Notes: All Trails and Woods Roads are signed. All Trails are blazed with painted bars on trees. Some woods roads are not blazed except where they might temporarily share the tread with a trail and are shown in purple on the map. Other woods roads are blazed blue.

At the end of the parking lot walk north picking up the yellow blazed Laurel loop Trail. Descend to the south branch of Quantico Creek. In 0.4 miles arrive at a 4-way intersection. South Orenda Road is to the left and Laurel Loop Trail continues to the right. Continue straight, crossing the creek on a cable bridge at 0.5 miles.

Turn right onto white blazed South Valley Trail. In 0.67 miles arrive at un-blazed Pyrite Mine Road. To get a view of the remains of the old Pyrite Mine and the swamp around it created by the dumping of mine tailings turn right, cross a bridge and immediately turn left. Soon arrive at a boardwalk that leads to the viewing area.

There is a new boardwalk/trail to the right of the of the viewing platform as you look at the mine. Follow it and soon cross a new bridge over the North Branch of Quantico Creek. Dual blazed (orange and blue) Cabin Branch Mine Trail is straight ahead. Follow it a few hundred yards to visit the old foundations of the main Mine Buildings.

Return to the creek and turn left onto blue blazed North Valley Trail. In a mile arrive at the junction of yellow blazed Geology Trail on the right. Turn left, staying on the North Valley Trail a little longer.

Reach another junction with the yellow blazed Geology trail. Turn left onto the Geology Tr. In 0.57 miles arrive at the junction of Lake One Road. Turn left, following the yellow blazes, and in a few yards turn right back onto a yellow blazed path. Soon arrive at the Scenic Drive. Cross the drive, joining red blazed Mary Bird Trail, and pass through a swampy area created by beavers using a plank walkway. In 0.47 miles arrive at un-blazed Black Top Road.

Turn right onto Black Top Rd but soon turn left onto orange blazed High Meadows Trail. In about 0.2 miles cross a stream on a bridge and pass yellow blazed Little Run Loop Tr on the left. In another 0.2 miles cross blue blazed Taylor Farm Road.

Continue on High Meadows Trail, passing the Taylor cemetery on the left, and in 0.9 miles cross the Scenic Drive again.

In another 0.85 miles pass through a Pine plantation and descend to white blazed South Valley Trail. Turn left onto South Valley Tr.

You will either cross or go under the Scenic Drive 3 times: at 1.76 miles from the last junction (Soon after this one pass Taylor Farm Road on the left.), at another 0.3 miles and then at another 1.2 miles. There are excellent places for a break/lunch all along the creek.

In about 0.2 miles after the last Scenic Drive intersection pass blue blazed Turkey Run Ridge Trail on the left. In 0.76 miles from the last Scenic Drive crossing come to un-blazed North Orenda Road on the left. Turn right and in 0.16 miles arrive at the cable bridge you crossed at the beginning. Cross the bridge and either retrace you steps back to the car or take North Orenda Rd to your right or the continuation of Laurel loop Trail to your left for a change of pass. They both end in the Pine Grove Picnic Area.