

Directions and Trail Notes for the Wil Kohlbrenner Memorial Circuit

Description: This is a very strenuous trek. It can be done either as a 12 mile day hike or a 14 mile over-night backpack. I named this loop after a very energetic PATC trail builder, Wil Kohlbrenner, who besides writing trail guides for the Massanutten Mt and the Great North Mountain and performing the constant task of trail maintenance, constructed several miles of trail in GWNF. Wil passed away in April, 2005. I met the man briefly last year at the top of Long Mt on the Great North. We just had time for a handshake back then. The first 4 miles of today's trek were Wil's. First you follow a seemingly gentle grassy woods road up to the west ridge of Massanutten Mt. You then turn north and follow the ridge, some times along the top and at other times it drops down along either flank as Wil's trail deftly avoids even more difficult areas. Then you'll climb up to the top of an overlook that Wil really must have worked hard at for great views of the valley. You then descend to Crisman Hollow only to ascend up the steep and rocky Creek Gap Trail to Scothorn Gap Tr. You get a 2 mile reprieve from all of the rockiness that defines much of the Massanutten trail system for the almost sandy rolling hills of Scothorn. Then you'll descend steeply into a hollow between Middle and Waterfall Mountains for another 2 miles only to make a hard right turn to climb 800 feet of Waterfall Mountain in less than 0.6 miles. The rest of the hike is a nearly flat walk though recovering woods and wildlife clearings. I have to admit this has been the most challenging 12 miles I've ever hiked, even more so than the [13+ mile Green Ridge Hike](#) described elsewhere on this site. Allow a lot of time for this one. It's probably best to do it in the early spring but after the time change when the days first become long but the temps are still mild. Bring extra water and some food as all of the ups and downs and the rocky tread will leave you fatigued.

Directions from US211 at New Market Gap Visitor Center:

If heading west on US211 turn right onto Crisman Hollow Rd. In approximately 2 miles come to the signed trailhead for the Massanutten Trail with orange blazes. There is a parking loop on the left.

Trail Notes: Begin the trek by crossing the bearm blocking the west trailhead. Follow an old woods road, steeply at times, up the side of the ridge. At 0.27 miles the trail splits. Turn right and continue to follow the orange blazes. Over the next 4.2 miles you will walk along the ridge of Kearns Mountain, sometimes on the very top and sometimes on either flank. The tread is extremely rocky! Some overlooks are obvious. For more views just climb up onto the nearest rock outcrop.

Arrive at the junction of Jawbone Gap Trail (Blue blazed) and an overlook trail (white blazed, straight ahead.) The Massanutten Tr makes a sharp left here. The views are worth the climb up to the top of the overlook but if you're backpacking you may consider stashing your load first.

Descend on Jawbone Gap Trail. Initially it will be a footpath. In 0.5 miles arrive at a woods road. Turn left here. In a short distance another road will come in sharply from the right. Stay straight, following the blazes. Turn right onto a hard gravel road at the next intersection and follow it to

Crisman Hollow Rd. Turn right and in a few yards bear left onto another old woods road. This is the beginning of blue blazed Creek Gap Trail. There are primitive car campsites along this road. The trail turns left through one and crosses Passage Creek on a bridge.

Climb steeply up Creek Gap trail. In 1.2 miles the Creek Gap Trail makes a hard left turn and Yellow Blazed Scothorn Gap Trail goes straight. The sign is missing but the blazes are obvious. Follow Scothorn Gap Trail.

In 1.52 miles reach the junction with the Orange Blazed Massanutten Trail (Left and Straight. Scothorn Gap Trail makes a hard right here.) Stay straight joining Massanutten Mountain Tr going south.

Descend 1.93 miles to the junction of the white blazed Massanutten Mountain Connector Trail. You will cross a small stream twice in the process. Turn right to stay on the orange blazed trail and climb very steeply for 0.56 miles to the top of Waterfall Mt. At the top make a left turn (The old trail goes straight. Avoid this.) and in 0.61 miles reach Crisman Hollow Road and your car.