



Emerald Pond - New Market Gap, Virginia

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
8.0 mls	★	N/A	★	★	★
Hiking Time: 4.5 hours plus a half hour for lunch Elev. Gain: 1,690 ft Parking: Park at the old Welcome Center. 38.64278, -78.61138					

Emerald Pond is a beautiful spring fed swimming hole nestled in a small hollow off the Bird Knob Trail. The water has exceptional clarity, and in the summer months is surprisingly warm for a mountain pond. It practically begs you to jump in! But that's not the only feature on this circuit, just 1.5 miles into the hike on the Massanutten South Trail on Big Mountain is a spectacular vista to the west of the Harrisonburg Valley. Want to make this hike a little longer? Then try the Browns Hollow Hike that adds the Browns Hollow and Roaring Run Trails to make for a 11.5 mile circuit.

When backpacking there is a nice campsite right on the banks of Emerald Pond. Also if you travel west homeward towards I81, make sure to stop at Pack's Custard Stand on US211 in New Market for some of the best frozen custard around!

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** - Start the hike near the front of the parking area on the white blazed Wildflower Trail, DO NOT go down the paved Nature Trail at the end of the parking area. Follow the white blazed Wildflower Trail downhill for 0.3 miles to the intersection of the orange blazed Massanutten South Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 0.3** - Turn right uphill on the orange blazed trail for the steepest section of the hike. Wind around the mountain and climb through a bolder field before arriving at the lower ridgeline in 1.0 miles. Continue uphill for 0.4 miles to the first of two great vistas. This section of the hike is where you are most likely to run into other hikers, as many hikers do not do the entire Emerald Pond circuit, but instead do the much shorter out/back to the overlook.
- ▶ **Mile 1.7** - Continue on the Massanutten South Trail for 0.8 miles to the intersection of the white blazed Bird Knob Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 1.5** - Veer right on the now white blazed Bird Knob Trail, then shortly pass an unmaintained trail on the left. In another 0.7 miles stay right as you pass another unblazed trail that connects from the left. From this point it is 0.8 miles to a large clearing near Bird Knob. Bird Knob does not have an overlook as you may expect by the name. Stay left downhill on the Bird Knob Trail as it descends through the hollow to the intersection of an old logging road.
- ▶ **Mile 3.3** - Turn left on the old logging road for 0.1 miles and arrive at Emerald Pond. Pass along the left side of the pond following a small trail to a campsite on the opposite bank.
- ▶ **Mile 3.5** - Return to the white blazed Bird Knob Trail, turn left, then in 0.5 miles pass a closed gate.
- ▶ **Mile 4.0** - Turn left onto a Forestry Service road that is also the orange blazed Massanutten south Trail for 0.4 miles to the point where the road makes a hairpin turn to the right.
- ▶ **Mile 4.4** - Stay straight passing a closed gate and continuing on the orange blazed Massanutten South Trail. In 0.6 miles from the Forestry Service road arrive at an unmarked intersection, stay right remaining on the orange blazed trail, then in 0.8 miles pass through a small clearing and arrive back at the Bird Knob Trail intersection.
- ▶ **Mile 5.8** - Turn right orange blazed Massanutten South Trail retracing your route back past the two vistas, then descending to the white blazed Wildflower Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 8.0** - Turn left on the white blazed Wildflower Trail for the remaining 0.3 miles back to the parking area and now closed Visitor Center.