



Hightop Mountain - SNP, Virginia

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
5.6 mls	★	N/A	★	★	N/A
Hiking Time:	3.0 hours plus a half hour for lunch				
Elev. Gain:	1,480 ft				
Parking:	Park on Skyline Drive on the south site of the bridge over VA33 where the Appalachian Trail continues south. 38.35612, -78.54493				

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)



The Hightop Mountain summit out/back hike has a beautiful panoramic vista, and is also one of the lesser known summit hikes in the Shenandoah National Park. The Swift Run Gap hike start area was crossed by Virginia Lieutenant Governor Alexander Spotswood leading the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe expedition on September 5, 1716 as they passed into the Shenandoah Valley for the first time. Monuments to this crossing are erected on the southern side of VA33 at Swift Run Gap.

The main out and back hike from Swift Run Gap is 5.6 miles and 1,480ft of elevation gain. You can also shorten the hike by starting at the Hightop Mountain parking area on Skyline drive. This reduces the hike to 2.3 miles and 940ft of elevation gain.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** - Start the hike from the southern end of the bridge that crosses VA33 on Skyline Drive. Cross Skyline Drive then start south uphill on the Appalachian Trail (AT). Shortly pass a stream on your right as the trail gradually passes over the first rise. The AT will then level out before passing over another rise, then descending to Skyline Drive and the Hightop Mountain parking area.
- ▶ **Mile 1.3** - Cross over Skyline Drive and continue on the AT as the trail now more steeply ascends Hightop Mountain. Pass a section of large granite boulders, then as the trail nears the summit make several switchbacks.
- ▶ **Mile 2.75** - Arrive at the first of of the two vistas. The first vista is a more obscured view to the western Shenandoah Valley.
- ▶ **Mile 2.8** - Arrive at the main vista. There is a short trail that leads out to commanding views to the south and west. This is the turn around point. Retrace your route back down the AT.
- ▶ **Mile 5.6** - Arrive back at the parking area on on Skyline Drive at Swift Run Gap.