



## Falls Ridge - Columbia Furnace, Virginia

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
6.9 mls	★	★	★	★	★
<b>Hiking Time:</b> 3.5 hours plus a half hour for lunch <b>Elev. Gain:</b> 1,745 ft <b>Parking:</b> Park on FR252 at the trailhead for the Stack Rock Trail. 38.89538, -78.74089 <b>IMPORTANT:</b> FR252 is intermittently closed. See web page for dates. To do this hike at any other time park at the end of VA701/Dellinger Gap Rd. 38.87295, -78.75547 on the lower terminus of the yellow blazed Falls Ridge Trail. This will add 1 mile to the total hike length.					

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How would you like to have a beautiful 30ft waterfall all to yourself? Hidden off the Falls Ridge trail on an unofficial side trail, this beautiful waterfall is also unusual as it crashes into rocks next to a 60ft cliff instead of into a pool. In the summer standing under the falls is a great way to cool down on this hike. This circuit also has several great views along the Stack Rock Trail and North Mountain Ridge of Big Schloss and the valley below, as well as excellent car camping on FR252 along Lauren Run.

So why is the solitude so high on such a beautiful waterfall hike? There are a couple of reasons. **1.** This hike is on the southern end of the Great North Mountain hiking area and away from the more popular Wolf Gap hikes. **2.** FR252 is only open from April 1 - May 21 and Aug 1 - Dec 31. Although the hike and circuit can still be done when FR252 is closed by parking at the end of VA701/Dellinger Gap Rd. on the lower terminus of the yellow blazed Falls Ridge Trail. This will add 1 mile to the total hike length for 7.9 miles.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** - From the parking area at the Stack Rock trailhead continue walking along FR252. FR252 is also blue blazed at this point as the Laurel Run Connector Trail. In 0.4 miles pass the first of 2 roadside camping spots, then in another 0.4 miles pass the second camp area. However if you are car camping the sites 1.5 miles earlier on FR252 next to Laurel Run are far superior. Continue walking along FR252 and pass several nice views of the valley, then arrive at a parking area and closed gate blocking FR252 to motor vehicles.
- ▶ **Mile 1.8** - Pass around the closed gate and continue along FR252 on the blue blazed trail for 0.1 miles to the intersection where the yellow blazed Falls Ridge Trail crosses the road.
- ▶ **Mile 1.9** - Turn right uphill on the yellow blazed Falls Ridge Trail. The trail becomes increasingly more steep for the first 0.6 miles to the intersection of the unofficial side trail to the Falls Run waterfall.
- ▶ **Mile 2.5** - Look for a small rock cairn marking the side trail, however it is well worn and hard to miss. Turn left on the side trail that passes through Mountain Laurel. At this point the trail is intermittently marked with faint colored blazes. In 0.16 miles the trail will split.
- ▶ **Mile 2.8** - Turn left downhill (continuing straight will take you to the upper section of Falls Run). This section of the side trail is intermittently red blazed, but is harder to follow than the previous section. As you get closer to the run pass through a section of rhododendron then arrive at the waterfall and 60ft cliff. Pass carefully over the boulders down to the foot of the waterfall.
- ▶ **Mile 3.1** - Return back to the yellow blazed Falls Ridge Trail. Be cautious on the return after passing back through the rhododendron. The trail is very faint and hard to follow.
- ▶ **Mile 3.9** - Turn left uphill on the yellow blazed Falls Ridge Trail. The Falls Ridge Trail will pass through another stand of Mountain Laurel before ending at the ridge and intersection of the North Mountain Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 5.15** - Turn right on the orange blazed North Mountain Trail for 100 yards and arrive at the Stack Rock Trail. Note: this intersection is easy to miss. If you start descending the ridge on the orange blazed trail you have gone too far.
- ▶ **Mile 5.18** - Turn right downhill on the purple blazed Stack Rock Trail. The Stack Rock Trail steeply descends North Mountain making multiple switchbacks. In 1.0 miles on the descent, there is a good view to the north of Big Schloss as well as the valley. Continue downward where the trail will become less steep.
- ▶ **Mile 6.9** - Arrive back at the parking area on FR252.