



Hardscrabble Knob - Todd Lake, Virginia

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
7.0 mls	★	N/A	★	★	★
Hiking Time: Elev. Gain: Parking:	4.5 hours with a half hour for lunch 2,050 ft Directions from the entrance of the GWNF on Stokesville Rd. Enter the GWNF, and shortly stay left towards Todd Lake on paved FDR95 for 4.3 miles (passing Todd Lake Recreation Area in 3.0 miles), Turn right on FDR95 towards Elkhorn Lake for 1.9 miles (passing the Elkhorn Lake Entrance in 1.5 miles), Stay straight on FDR95 where the road splits and becomes gravel (FDR96 turns left) for 3.0 miles crossing North River twice, then park on the left at the Camp Todd sign.				

This hike is a tough workout. Even though it's only 7 miles, and just over 2,000 vertical feet total gain, you climb over 1,000 feet of that in the first mile. Hardscrabble Knob is just one of several hikes in the Lake Todd area. Consider hiking several of them and car-camping at one of the many sites along FDR95, or at one of Lake Todd Recreation Area's great campsites.

From the Camp Todd forestry sign and parking area head west on a small dirt road (Camp Todd sign side of FDR95) for 30 yards until the dirt road turns right. Now stay straight on the smaller white blazed Wild Oak Trail, and in 50 yards pass one of only a few faded white blazes and forestry service sign marking the trail. At this point the trail begins its long climb up through the gorge and along Springhouse Ridge. The trail makes several small switchbacks before beginning to level off at 1.2 miles. At 1.5 miles from the hike start point arrive at the intersection of the Little Bald Knob Trail.

Turn right as trail passes a small campsite in 50 yards, then continues through the gap for another 1.3 miles before arriving at Hiner Spring and the intersection of the Ramsey's Draft Trail. Turn right uphill and immediately pass between Hiner Spring 50 yards to the left, and a popular campsite on the right.

In another 25 yards the trail splits. Taking the right fork, that looks like a washed out trail section, heads the more direct route. Taking the left fork makes a small detour to one of the prettiest high mountain campsites in the area. Thick grass and fern surround the site in the warmer months. This campsite is also less rocky than the one at Hiner Spring. In 20 yards past the campsite the trails re-join before making a quick switchback over a small burn, and arriving at the trail junction to Hardscrabble Knob.

Turn left uphill towards Hardscrabble Knob following the trail for 0.5 miles. Just below the summit pass an abandoned cabin and small high mountain campsite and in 30 yards the trail turns to the left. Pass through the steel ruins of an old lookout tower and climb 15 feet through a seam in the rocks to the summit.

Scramble to the right along the rocky ridge line for 75 yards to the overlook, passing a USGS marker at about halfway that was placed there in 1957. From the overlook you can see Elliot Knob at at 190° in the distance, the highest peak in the GWNF. The undulating ridge immediately in the foreground is Bald Ridge, part of the Ramsey's Draft hike.

This is an out and back hike so to return retrace your steps.

NOTE: Be alert at Hiner Spring not to miss the return trail to the left marked by an old sign on a tree.