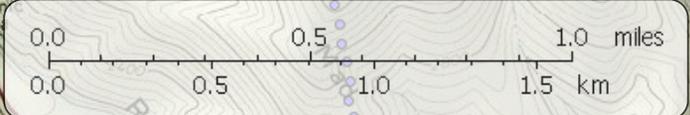


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Jerry's Run Loop - Ramsey's Draft Wilderness Area

| Length | Difficulty | Streams | Views | Solitude | Camping |
|---------------------|---|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 8.3 mls | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Hiking Time: | Hike Time: 6.0 hours with half hour for lunch | | | | |
| Elev. Gain: | 1,175 ft | | | | |
| Parking: | Mountain House Picnic Area across concrete spillway, Park on right 100 yards. 38.30812, -79.36117 | | | | |

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)

By Trail Contributor: Jeff Monroe



Ramsey's Draft Wilderness has many hiking and backpacking options, including the Ramsey's Draft circuit at 16.8 miles, and the Shenandoah Mountain circuit at 18.2 miles which is the extended version of this hike. Visitors from the DC area often come here to backpack, but hikers who live closer come out often for day hikes. This is an excellent loop if you want either a day hike or a shorter backpack – it is actually a great place to take young hikers on an early overnight (although there are no facilities). You can get a sense of the wilderness solitude along the stream that runs through the middle of the wilderness, then you climb up to the ridgetop and have

wonderful views into Highland County as you loop back to your vehicle. There are many possible campsites along the stream at the beginning of this hike, but if you can, hold off until you get to the old Sexton Cabin site, the single best campsite in this wilderness area.

The first part of this hike has multiple stream crossings, so be sure to wear waterproof boots. It is almost impossible to get out of here without dunking a foot into the cold waters! Nevertheless, this hike is better in the colder months, as the views from Shenandoah Mountain are better and Jerry's Run Trail attracts Stinging Nettle by June. Because the first part of the hike is through a wilderness area, the trail is not blazed, and it may sometimes split with either direction looking equal. They probably are equal, and both will get you there. You are following the stream for the first 2.7 miles until reaching a side trail.

Parking is located by turning at the National Forest's Mountain House Picnic Area and continuing straight back behind the picnic area, over a bridge, to a small lot that probably holds 10-12 vehicles. (If it is ever full, you can park at the Picnic Area, adding about a quarter mile each way to your hike.)

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – From the parking lot pass information kiosk and trail register. Be sure to add your hike and vehicle information to the register. Continue straight on the Ramsey's Draft Trail and after about 100 yards pass a sign for Bridge Hollow Trail, heading off to the right. About 25 feet further is a sign for the Road Hollow Trail, heading off to the left. You will come back on the Road Hollow Trail, but stay straight for now on the Ramsey's Draft Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 0.6** – The trail enters the actual wilderness after passing an old green shed on the left and the remains of a gate. There is a wilderness sign ahead on the left – photo op!
Mile 0.7 – After following the west (left) side of the stream for a while, you have reached the first of five crossings of Ramsey's Draft. It may look like you can hike along the ledges to the left and avoid the stream crossing. Don't get sucked in! You will not avoid a crossing and this is the best spot.
- ▶ **Mile 1.1** – Stream Crossing 2. The Ramsey's Draft Trail generally follows an old road that was washed out by a 1985 flood. Twenty years ago this area was very different, but an insect known as the Woolly Adelgid has killed off most of the ancient hemlocks that used to inhabit this valley.
- ▶ **Mile 1.4** – Stream Crossing 3.
- ▶ **Mile 2.0** – Stream Crossing 4.
- ▶ **Mile 2.3** – Stream Crossing 5. Are your feet wet yet? If not, congratulations! You have only smaller crossings from here on out.
- ▶ **Mile 2.5** – Cross a minor stream then come to the Jerry's Run Trail, where there is a trail sign. There is also a nice large campsite here, on the right side of the trail. Take Jerry's Run Trail to the left. I am always a little nervous that I will not come across the trail, but I have never missed it. Both trails are very evident here.
- ▶ **Mile 2.7** – Trail crosses Jerry's Run, and then crosses back again about 50 feet further up the trail. The Jerry's Run Trail crosses its namesake stream multiple times as it climbs in elevation through a drainage with steep sides.
- ▶ **Mile 4.3** – Reach site of the old Sexton Cabin, in a small open area ideal for camping or stopping for lunch. This cabin was built by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club back in the 1940's, reportedly because Club President Myron Avery loved this area so much. He used to bus hikers from DC to this area. The cabin burned down in 1967 and was rebuilt before the Forest Service asked the PATC to tear down the cabin, after the area became a federal wilderness area in 1984. The timbers from this cabin are still used today, as part of the PATC's Mutton Top Cabin. On your way out, be careful. It may appear that you should head to the left of the cabin site. The actual trail heads off to the right, crossing what remains of Jerry's Run (still strong enough for a camping water source, but easily jumped) to the right of the cabin site as you look uphill. This is your last water source until the end of the hike.
- ▶ **Mile 4.6** – Reach the end of the Jerry's Run Trail, where it meets the Shenandoah Mountain Trail. To the right, the Shenandoah Mountain Trail heads north through some very secluded country. You want to turn left and head south.
- ▶ **Mile 4.8** – Leave area designated as federal wilderness, marked by small metal sign. Follow Shenandoah Mountain Trail, built during the Depression by federal workers, and one of the most gentle mountain trails you will ever experience. Nice views to your right (west) into Highland County, Virginia.
- ▶ **Mile 5.7** – Road Hollow Trail intersection; take this left, leaving the Shenandoah Mountain Trail. (The Shenandoah Mountain Trail continues south along a ridge to U.S. 250 at Confederate Breastworks.) The Road Hollow Trail, blazed yellow, was built by the Student Conservation Association in the early 1990's and is now a popular mountain biking trail. Be on the alert for mountain bikes on this trail; they are prohibited from entering in the federally designated wilderness, but this trail is outside of wilderness. The Road Hollow Trail follows the contour of the side of the mountain just above an old road that gave Road Hollow its name and was a longer but easier climb than the present U.S. 250, likely used during the Civil War. As you approach the end of this hike, road noise from U.S. 250 will become increasingly prevalent.
- ▶ **Mile 8.2** – Return to Ramsey's Draft Trail. Take a sharp right back to your vehicle just before the trail sign, which you probably saw from the trail as you descended the last few feet approaching this intersection.
- ▶ **Mile 8.3** – Return to the parking area.