



McAfee Knob - Catawba, Virginia

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
8.3 mls	★	N/A	★	★	★
Hiking Time: 4.0 hours plus a half hour for lunch Elev. Gain: 1,740 ft Parking: Park on VA311 at the Appalachian Trail parking area.					

McAfee Knob is one of the most photographed spots on the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) as it winds its way through Virginia. Roanoke.com states: *"In Virginia, McAfee Knob is the Appalachian Trail's poster and postcard image. Pick up an Appalachian Trail calendar and there's a good chance it's there."* The Knob has an almost 270 degree panorama of the Catawba Valley and North Mountain to the West, Tinker Cliffs to the North and the Roanoke Valley to the East. If you are going to do this as a backpack and plan on camping at the Pig Farm campsite or Campbell Shelter the total distance will be 9.5 miles.

It is a steady climb of around 1700' in about 4.4 miles to the Knob from the VA311 parking area so you will get a good workout. On a clear day you will have some of the best views in the Southern Shenandoah Valley. Due to its popularity you will not be alone on this hike, but the overhang of McAfee Knob and its views make up for the lack of solitude.

From the right side of the A.T. parking area, cross over VA311 and pick up the white blazed A.T. north. In about 0.3 miles there will be an information kiosk on the left. Continue on the A.T. crossing four wooden walkways prior to reaching the Johns Spring Shelter on the right in 0.8 miles.

There will be another five wooden walkways before reaching the Catawba Mountain Shelter in 1.4 miles. In less than 0.1 miles before the shelter on the left, you will notice a spring with a white pipe protruding from some rocks with a constant stream of water (note: always treat water from unknown sources). Staying on the A.T. for another 0.1 miles arrive at two good camp sites, the A.T. bears to the left just before the camp sites.

Remain on the A.T., crossing an old fire road and going through a high voltage power line clearing. In 0.3 miles past the power line clearing there will be the first good overlook on the left looking down to the Catawba Valley. Go 0.5 miles further up the trail to the McAfee Knob Spur Trail. Turn left, and in about 30 yards you will reach the top of the Knob with some outstanding views and of course, McAfee Knob protruding out well beyond the rest of the cliffs. There are significant drop offs so be careful.

For your return trip; retrace your steps and head south on the A.T. back to the parking lot for a round trip total of 8.8 miles.

For a more leisurely return route, consider taking the un-blazed old fire road which you crossed on the way up (the trail map uses this route). About 1.4 miles from the Knob, turn right onto the old fire road, staying on it until you reach VA311 in 2.6 miles. Pass a gate/barrier just before reaching VA311. The A.T. Parking will be to your left as you cross VA 311. Using this route is 0.5 miles shorter than using the A.T. both ways.

Camping/Backpacking Note: If you are doing McAfee Knob as an overnight backpack, from the McAfee Knob spur trail turn left onto the A.T. heading north for about another 6/10 of a mile until you reach the Pig Farm Campsite with room for about 4 good sized tents. In less than 1/10 of a mile after that you will reach the Campbell Shelter with ample campsites and a Privy. The water source is a creek about 1/10 of a mile behind the shelter following a path under the power line and ending up on a fire road. There are also some good campsites in a grassy meadow on the way to the water source. A path from the Pig Farm Campsite also leads to this water source. Staying near the Campbell Shelter overnight made it possible to hike back up and see a beautiful sunset from McAfee Knob. No camping is allowed on the immediate area surrounding McAfee Knob.

The return trip back to the Route 311 parking area can be done by following the fire road past the water source and crossing the A.T. intersection in 1.6 miles. It is 2.8 miles from the A.T. intersection to the Route 311 parking area remaining on the fire road.