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## Cove Mountain – Buchanan, VA

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
7.5 mls	★	★	★	★	★
<b>Hiking Time:</b> 4 hours with 30 minutes of breaks <b>Elev. Gain:</b> 1,950 ft <b>Parking:</b> Park at the pedestrian bridge on Jennings Creek Rd VA614. 37.52123, -79.62433					

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)

*By Trail Contributor: Jeff Monroe*



Only 10 minutes from the interstate, this loop packs a little bit of everything into only 7.5 miles: great views, a beautiful cove, the Appalachian Trail, a stiff climb, and even a waterfall! Most hikers doing this hike involving the two major trails loop back via a 15 minute road walk. This "local insider" version shows you how to avoid the road walk for more wooded bliss with a bonus waterfall which most hikers miss!

**Note:** This hike uses sections of non-maintained/non-blazed trail. Appropriate navigation skills and a GPS with the provided hike route are recommended.

The trailhead is accessed by exiting Interstate 81 at the Arcadia exit and heading east over the James River and into the Jefferson National Forest on Jennings Creek Road. Pass signs first for the Forest Service's North Creek Campground and then the Middle Creek Picnic Area, and look for a brown hiker sign and pedestrian bridge on the right. Park off the side of the road when you see these.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – The trailhead is a wooden pedestrian bridge over Jennings Creek at an elevation of just over 1000 feet. You are briefly hiking on the blue blazed Little Cove Mountain Trail, which will be your return trail. Just on the other side of the bridge is a campsite. This campsite was once the site of an Appalachian Trail shelter, as your first 100 yards of this hike is an old part of the Appalachian Trail. Back in the late 1970's or early 1980's, The A.T. was rerouted about a mile further west to avoid hikers walking along Jennings Creek Road. The old A.T. trail bed heads uphill almost invisibly to your right a little further down the trail, but that section of trail is no longer maintained.
- ▶ **Mile 0.1** – The trail splits here. Go uphill to the right onto an unblazed trail, as shown in the photo. You will return on the trail to the left. This direction is recommended as the trail is easier to follow this way.
- ▶ **Mile 0.3** – Look for rocks on your left, and head down for a view of a beautiful waterfall of Cove Creek immediately below the rocks.
- ▶ **Mile 0.4** – Cross a small stream (your last water until the end of this hike), then pass the first of three old woods roads you will encounter on this portion of your hike. In each case, take the uphill route, which should be obvious as the trail is more worn in the correct option. The first two times, you will go to the right, and the third time will be to the left; always the uphill option.
- ▶ **Mile 0.8** – The trail ends at a "T" intersection when you reach a wide woods road that is the Glenwood Horse Trail (blazed orange). You will turn right here. (Turning left on the Glenwood Horse Trail takes you in 3.1 miles to the Little Cove Mountain Trail, which you can take left back to your vehicle for a less strenuous and less interesting 6.3 mile loop hike.) If you are taking this loop clockwise and returning to your vehicle from here, there is an old style trail marker which designates the trail – silver paint and some ax choppings to a tree – found a few feet to the left of the Glenwood Horse Trail and just to the right of the unmarked trail. There is no trail sign.
- ▶ **Mile 1.0** – The Glenwood Horse Trail narrows dramatically here and becomes an actual trail rather than a grassy woods road. Starting here, the trail follows an old Appalachian Trail alignment to the current A.T. If your eyes are really sharp and you look both ways over the next half mile, you might even see an old A.T. blaze on a tree trunk that has been painted brown to hide it.
- ▶ **Mile 1.5** – After clinging to the sides of steep slopes for half a mile, the Glenwood Horse Trail intersects with the Appalachian Trail. The intersection is marked by signs prohibiting bicycles on the A.T. and by decaying fencing to keep horses off the A.T., but there is no intersection trail sign. Look for the white A.T. blazes, and turn left, heading uphill. (To the right, the A.T. heads downhill 1 mile to the Jennings Creek Road, about a 15 minute walk west of your vehicle. The Glenwood Horse Trail continues straight ahead, heading towards the town of Arcadia.)
- ▶ **Mile 1.8** – After climbing somewhat steeply, the Appalachian Trail intersects with the Buchanan Trail. Stay left on the white blazed A.T.
- ▶ **Mile 3.3** – Shortly after passing a small campsite on your right, the trail encounters some rocks with a nice view to the southwest.
- ▶ **Mile 3.5** – A side trail drops down to the A.T. Cove Mountain Shelter. The shelter has a new privy, a new picnic table and a new roof, but the shelter itself was taken apart from its original location at Marble Springs in the James River Face Wilderness, and reconstructed here back in the early 1980's. This is a nice place to stop for a snack, but this shelter has no water source nearby.
- ▶ **Mile 4.1** – Pass through an area with multiple nice views to the west of the town of Buchanan, Purgatory Mountain, and the James River.
- ▶ **Mile 4.6** – Nice views down into the Cove Creek valley, courtesy a July, 2008 forest fire in this area. You will note that the forest is coming back, as the area is now covered in Virginia Pine that will obscure this view in the next few years.
- ▶ **Mile 4.8** – The A.T. intersects with the Little Cove Mountain Trail at the high point of the hike, 2575 feet. Turn left here onto a blue blazed trail, and begin descending to your vehicle. (The A.T. continues here southbound for two miles to Virginia Route 43, near Bearwallow Gap and the Blue Ridge Parkway, a few miles south of the Parkway's Peaks of Otter resort.)
- ▶ **Mile 5.7** – Trail crosses gravel road that is part of the Glenwood Horse Trail. Be sure to check out the old, beat up Forest Service informational sign justifying nearby clear cuts to the forest. The gated road on the far left connects to early parts of this loop. You will continue on the Little Cove Mountain Trail, found to the right as you descend to the road. Look for the blue blazes.
- ▶ **Mile 6.4** – A woods road crosses the trail. Continue straight.
- ▶ **Mile 7.0** – The trail merges onto an old woods road as the trail descends into a lush valley formed by Little Cove Creek.
- ▶ **Mile 7.2** – The trail crosses Little Cove Creek, and shortly afterwards crosses Cove Creek before passing a campsite and merging with the trail taken at the beginning of this hike.
- ▶ **Mile 7.5** – Return back to Jennings Creek Road and your vehicle.