



## James River Face Wilderness - Glasgow, Virginia

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
16.9 mls	★	★	★	★	★
<b>Hiking Time:</b> 9.5 hours over 2 days <b>Elev. Gain:</b> 2,900 ft <b>Parking:</b> Blue Ridge parkway Sunset Field parking: 37.50788, -79.52391 <b>Parking:</b> James River footbridge parking: 37.59687, -79.39137					

This is a challenging hike due to the length and requires some logistics in setting up a car shuttle as it is a one way hike on the A.T. We recommend doing this hike from south to north on the A.T. as there is more down than up but even going down for a long time can have its own issues: knees, ankle, toes, blisters, etc. At the end of write up see Backpack Notes on doing this hike alternatively as a 2 or 3 day backpack trip.

Leave 1 car at the James River Foot Bridge AT Parking lot then drive to the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP) via Route 501 and head south on the BRP towards Sunset Field (MP 78.4, N 37.50788, W -79.52391).

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – Elev 3438', the trail begins at the sign by heading down the paved path toward the Appalachian Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 0.2** – Elev 3329', at intersection bear right onto the Appalachian Trail and very quickly cross over Parkers Gap Road. Continue climbing 900' until you reach the FAA Radar Dome on Apple Orchard Mountain.
- ▶ **Mile 1.6** – Elev 4225', reach the meadow in front of the FAA Radar Dome, great views of the Shenandoah Valley to the west. Continue through the meadow, enjoying the views and then reach The Guillotine. This begins a mostly long descent until you reach Petites Gap. Note: This used to be the site of Bedford Air Force Station which was operational from 1954 to 1975. This website has some photos of what it looked like when it had buildings, you have to scroll until the 6th photo to see them. You will enter Thunder Ridge Wilderness just before The Guillotine.
- ▶ **Mile 1.8** – Elev 4045', The Guillotine, a popular place to take a photograph on the AT. Mostly downhill to Petites Gap from here
- ▶ **Mile 2.4** – Elev 3914', Cross BRP MP 76.3
- ▶ **Mile 2.7** – Elev 3937', Thunder Hill Shelter
- ▶ **Mile 3.6** – Elev 3620', Cross BRP MP 74.9, this is the last crossing of the BRP although you will be close to it at Petites Gap.
- ▶ **Mile 4.0** – Elev 3563', Thunder Ridge Overlook, a beautiful stone wall overlook with a great view, towards the North is the Devil's Marbleyard.
- ▶ **Mile 5.9** – Elev 3309', Harrison Ground Spring, spring is on the right and uphill a short distance on a spur trail. We met a trail maintainer the day we hiked this and he said he has never seen this spring dry.
- ▶ **Mile 7.3** – Elev 2369', Petites Gap, USFS 35. Tough climb up to High Cock Knob, 700' in 1.2 miles. As you begin the climb you are now in the James River Face Wilderness.
- ▶ **Mile 8.0** – Elev 2815', nice view on left.
- ▶ **Mile 8.4** – Elev 3093', High Cock Knob, head down towards Marble Spring.
- ▶ **Mile 9.4** – Elev 2410', Marble Spring. If backpacking, this is your Day 1 Campsite, the spring is towards the back of the campsite and downhill. After the James River Face Wilderness Area was established in 1976, the Marble Spring Shelter in that area was removed, and later taken by helicopter to Cove Mountain, near Bearwallow Gap.
- ▶ **Mile 10.0** – Elev 2492', Sulphur Spring Trail (south crossing), stay straight on the AT
- ▶ **Mile 10.7** – Elev 2539', "Helicopter Pad", there is an unmarked trail to your right to go up to the saddle with good views to the SouthWest, before this became over grown, there used to be good views to the North East also.
- ▶ **Mile 11.8** – Elev 2677', Belfast Trail, bear right onto the AT.
- ▶ **Mile 12.3** – Elev 2628', Sulphur Spring Trail (north crossing), stay straight on the AT
- ▶ **Mile 13.0** – Elev 1959', Big Cove Branch, cross creek and head to Matt's Creek Shelter. Heading down to Matts Creek, you will start to see glimpses of the James River flowing through the Blue Ridge Mountains, in geologic terms this is referred to as a "water gap"
- ▶ **Mile 14.9** – Elev 901' Matt's Creek Shelter, cross Matt's Creek to reach shelter. There used to be a bridge over Matts Creek in front of the shelter. Over the next mile or so are some great swimming holes.
- ▶ **Mile 15.0** – Elev 898', Matts Creek Trail, stay straight on AT. In about 0.7 miles you will reach the James River and then parallel hike it until you reach the Foot Bridge.
- ▶ **Mile 16.7** – Elev 718', James River Foot Bridge, the longest foot bridge on the AT. Cross bridge to reach Parking Lot and second car.
- ▶ **Mile 16.9** – Elev 700', James River AT Parking Lot, drive back to Sunset field to pick up the other vehicle.

### Backpack Notes:

1. 2 day/1 night backpack, your Day 1 campsite is at Marble Spring, mile 9.4. Day 2 your backpack ends at the James River AT Parking Lot
2. 3 day/2 night backpack, continue across Route 130 heading north on the AT, reach the Johns Hollow Shelter in about 2 miles and spend 2nd night here.
3. Day 3 continue north on the AT up over Fuller Rocks, Big Rocky Row, Bluff Mtn, Punch Bowl Shelter, and finally reach the Blue Ridge Pkwy and small parking lot (Coordinates 37.6738,-79.3345, BRP Milepost 51.7) where your 2nd car will be.
4. Mileage: Day 1 – 9.4 miles, Day 2 – 9.5 miles, Day 3 – 9.3 miles.