



Tinker Cliffs/Andy Layne Trail - Mount Union, Virginia

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
7.7 mls	★	★	★	★	N/A
Hiking Time: 3.5 hours plus a half hour for lunch Elev. Gain: 1,945 ft Parking: Parking area off US779 (Catawba Rd.)					

Outstanding views, a tough climb, a cool creek cliff face, wobbly bridges, Scorched Earth Gap, and The Murder Hole are just a few reasons to hike Tinker Cliffs via the Andy Layne Trail. We were so close to this trail when we hiked Carvin Cove/Hay Rock that we knocked this hike out the same day. Tinker Cliffs is the third leg in the Triple Crown of great views/hikes in this part of Virginia, along with McAfee Knob and Dragons Tooth.

It's around 3.8 miles to the top, but be prepared for an exhausting trek. You'll go through Scorched Earth Gap to get there, then look down on the valley where the Murder Hole cave is. Read the stories linked above about how they got their names, very interesting.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – The yellow blazed Andy Layne Trail begins at the rear of the parking area on Route 779 (Catawba Road). You'll cross two fence stiles before reaching the first of two bridge crossings of Catawba Creek. In some places over the next mile the trail was overgrown but manageable as of 2011. The first couple of miles you will hear the hum of the Roanoke Cement Co, this is their land they have generously allowed hikers to cross, so to get to the top you will just have to put up with the noise :)
- ▶ **Mile 0.6** – Cross the 1st Catawba Creek Bridge, parallel Catawba Creek with unique cliff face on opposite side of creek, then reach the next bridge.
- ▶ **Mile 0.8** – Cross the 2nd Catawba Creek Bridge. Start the 200ft climb to the gate.
- ▶ **Mile 1.2** – Arrive at the gate, and as long as you stay on the trail you are granted permission to go around the "No Trespassing" sign from the Roanoke Cement Co. The trail bears to the left around the gate, and in 100 yards bears to the right. The next portion begins the tough part of the hike, gaining 900ft+ feet before reaching the Appalachian Trail. One section has no switchbacks for about 0.4 miles.
- ▶ **Mile 3.0** – Reach the white blazed A.T. and stay right/south, this area is referred to as Scorched Earth Gap. Continue 0.6 miles south on the A.T. for a beautiful view to the north.
- ▶ **Mile 3.6** – View to the northwest of Broad Run Mtn and to the Northeast of Fincastle.
- ▶ **Mile 3.8** – 1st view of Catawba Valley but a better viewing area is about 200 yards beyond.
- ▶ **Mile 3.85** – 2nd view of Catawba Valley. Great place for lunch and taking in the views. McAfee Knob is clearly visible to the south
- ▶ **Mile 7.7** - Retrace your steps to return to the parking area.

Note: If you're adventurous and need more miles, you could continue south on the AT to McAfee Knob, this would be approximately 18 miles roundtrip from the Andy Layne parking area.