Keys Gap/Buzzard Rocks is one of the lesser utilized sections of the Appalachian Trail as it passes through Loudoun County Virginia. With the better known Raven Rocks to the south, and Loudoun Heights to the north, the Keys Gap/Buzzard Rocks hike is a nice alternative to the crowds. Buzzard Rocks has good views to the south with the Massanutten Mountains in the distance, as well as views when the leaves are off the trees of the Shenandoah River. Also stop by the David Lesser Shelter with side picnic area and swing chair.

Mile 0.0 – From the parking area at Keys Gap join the Appalachian Trail (AT) at the far end of the parking area and information kiosk. Head south, immediately crossing VA-9. The first 0.5 miles of the AT can be muddy after rains. Follow the AT as it begins to ascend Blue Ridge.

Mile 1.0 – Pass a campsite on the left of the trail, and then continue uphill to the ridge.

Mile 1.23 – Arrive at the ridge, with Loudoun County to the east and Jefferson County to the west. The ridgeline is the border of Virginia and West Virginia. Continue along the ridge for another 0.44 miles where the AT crosses an old fire road.

Mile 1.67 – Climb to the top of a rise on the ridge.

Mile 2.02 – Pass a transmission tower on the right, with nice views of Loudoun Valley when the leaves are off the trees. Pass around the west side of the ridge and descend slightly to the intersection of the blue blazed David Lesser Shelter Trail.

Mile 3.1 – Descend to the David Lesser Shelter. There is a separate sheltered chair swing next to the main shelter, as well as a large group campground 50 yards below the shelter. A seasonal spring is also located below and to the right of the shelter. Return to the AT and continue south.

Mile 3.4 – The AT will climb a large section of stone steps then continue for 0.5 miles to the intersection of the blue blazed Buzzard Rocks Trail.

Mile 3.9 – Turn right and follow the blue blazed trail down to the Buzzard Rocks overlook.

Mile 4.05 – From Buzzard Rocks there are views south of the Shenandoah National Park and Massanutten Range. Retrace your route on the AT north to Keys Gap.

Mile 7.7 – Arrive back at the Keys Gap parking area.