



Thornton River - Northern SNP, Virginia

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
10.5 mls	★	★	★	★	★
Hiking Time: 5.0 hours plus a half hour for lunch Elev. Gain: 2,180 ft Parking: Park at the Elkwallow Wayside parking area. 38.73858, -78.30950					

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)



This hike winds along scenic Thornton River, one of the Shenandoah National Park's North District's prime attractions, passing remnants of old homesteads left over from before the Park's creation. There are also small pools on Thornton River, and a nice vista on Piney Ridge. The trail starts and ends at Elkwallow Wayside on Skyline Drive, making it easy to pick up supplies or some cool refreshments at the end of a summer's day hike.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** - From the eastern end of the Elkwallow Wayside parking area, cross Skyline Drive to join the .
- ▶ **Mile 0.9** - The AT comes to a four-way intersection with the Range View Fire Road. Turn right onto the Range View Fire Road and in 150 feet take a second right onto the blue-blazed Piney Ridge Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 2.8** - Piney Ridge Trail descends along the ridgeline to an intersection with Fork Mountain Trail. Keep right onto Fork Mountain Trail and continue to descend along the ridge.
- ▶ **Mile 4.0** - Fork Mountain Trail passes through a grove of redbuds before ended at a T-intersection with the yellow-blazed Thornton Hollow Trail at the foot of Fork Mountain. Turn right and take Thornton Hollow Trail down into the valley below.
- ▶ **Mile 4.6** - In 0.6 miles the Thornton Hollow Trail meets Thornton River Trail and Hull School Trail at a four-way intersection with the white-blazed Appalachian Trail (AT). Turn right onto Thornton River Trail as it begins to climb back up the valley. There are several crossing points of Thornton River over the next 0.5 miles - after heavy rains or snowmelt these crossings may require getting your feet wet. Many small streams and tributaries run alongside the trail. Scattered flowering crabapple trees can be found along the valley, which are often a sign of old settler homesteads.
- ▶ **Mile 5.0** - The trail passes a series of intact stone walls left over from before the SNP that once marked farm fields.
- ▶ **Mile 6.4** - Another relic from before the Park - a rusted and overgrown car chassis sits beside the trail as a reminder of the valley's previous inhabitants.
- ▶ **Mile 7.4** - Thornton River Trail ends at a parking lot on Skyline Drive. Continue straight ~100 yards along Skyline Drive and cross to an AT connector trail. Follow the connector trail uphill to reach the AT.
- ▶ **Mile 7.7** - The connector trail ends at the AT. Turn right onto the AT to head north towards Elkwallow Wayside.
- ▶ **Mile 9.8** - After a sharp bend the AT intersects with Jeremy's Run Trail on the left. Keep right and continue following the AT.
- ▶ **Mile 10.0** - Keep left and pass by a side trail that goes to the Elkwallow picnic area on the right.
- ▶ **Mile 10.4** - Keep right at a split in the trail to take a short connector trail back to the Elkwallow Wayside parking lot.
- ▶ **Mile 10.5** - Return to the trail start at Elkwallow Wayside.