



McAfee Knob - Catawba, Virginia

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
7.8 mls	★	N/A	★	★	★
Hiking Time:	4.0 hours plus a half hour for lunch				
Elev. Gain:	1,740 ft				
Parking:	Park on VA311 at the Appalachian Trail parking area. 37.38010, -80.08956 Cross VA 311 where the Appalachian Trail crosses the road.				
	Note: In 2017 Roanoke County imposed stricter parking regulations. It is illegal to park on VA31 outside of the McAfee Park Service lot. Cars parked on VA31 can be ticketed or towed. If the lot is full alternate parking options include:				
	* Park and Ride lot in front of Orange Market on VA311				
	* I 81 Exit 140 Park and Ride				

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)



Part of the National Park Service, McAfee Knob is one of the most photographed spots on the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) as it winds its way through Virginia. Roanoke.com states: "In Virginia, McAfee Knob is the Appalachian Trail's poster and postcard image. Pick up an Appalachian Trail calendar and there's a good chance it's there." The Knob has an almost 270 degree panorama of the Catawba Valley and North Mountain to the West, Tinker Cliffs to the North and the Roanoke Valley to the East. If you are going to do this as a backpack and plan on camping at the Pig Farm campsite or Campbell Shelter the total distance will be 9.4 miles

Please Note: During the last several years the McAfee Knob area has seen a significant increase in hiker traffic. Please follow the Leave-No-Trace hiking etiquette. There are unique rules regarding group size, and camping for this area. Please visit the Roanoke Appalachian Trail club page for full rules and regulations.

this out/back hike is a steady climb of around 1700' in about 3.9 miles to the Knob from the VA311 parking area so you will get a good workout. On a clear day you will have some of the best views in the Roanoke Valley. Due to its popularity you will not be alone on this hike, but the overhang of McAfee Knob and its views make up for the lack of solitude.

From the right side of the A.T. parking area, cross over VA311 where the Appalachian Trail crosses the road and pick up the white blazed A.T. north. In about 0.3 miles there will be an information kiosk on the left. Continue on the A.T. and pass the Johns Spring Shelter on the right.

In less than 0.1 miles before the Catawba Mountain Shelter on the left, you will notice a spring with a white pipe protruding from some rocks. The water has dried up where there is a plastic pipe near the AT except in early spring or after very heavy rains. The spring goes underground and emerges in pools below the shelter. Follow blue blazes to the the pools. Continue downstream if necessary (note: always treat water from unknown sources). Staying on the A.T. for another 0.1 miles arrive at two good camp sites, the A.T. bears to the left just before the camp sites.

Remain on the A.T., crossing an old fire road and going through a high voltage power line clearing. In 0.3 miles past the power line clearing there will be the first good overlook on the left looking down to the Catawba Valley. Go 0.5 miles further up the trail to the McAfee Knob Spur Trail. Turn left, and in about 30 yards you will reach the top of the Knob with some outstanding views and of course, McAfee Knob protruding out well beyond the rest of the cliffs. There are significant drop offs so be careful.

For your return trip; retrace your steps and head south on the A.T. back to the parking lot for a round trip total of 7.8 miles.

Alternate Route: This section of the A.T. is heavily traveled, and has over 50,000 hikers a year. To avoid the crowds, at the mile 0.3 and information kiosk on the A.T., stay left and take the fire road 2.5 miles to its second intersection with the AT. Turn left at the chain across the fire road and climb that stone steps on the A.T. to begin the last 1.1 mile of your hike to McAfee. On your return trip, turn right when you reach the fire road and walk about 2.5 miles on the fire road. Veer slightly left when you reach the chain across the fire road, climb briefly, and stay right at the top to rejoin the southbound A.T. and return to the parking lot in 0.3 mile.

Camping/Backpacking Note: If you are doing McAfee Knob as an overnight backpack, from the McAfee Knob spur trail turn left onto the A.T heading north for about another 6/10 of a mile until you reach the Pig Farm Campsite with another campsite and a spring. The water source is 100 feet above the start of the trail path under the power line and ending up on a fire road. There are also some good campsites in a grassy meadow on the way to the water source. A path from the Pig Farm Campsite also leads to this water source. Staying near the Campbell Shelter overnight made it possible to hike back up and see a beautiful sunset from McAfee Knob. No camping is allowed on the immediate area surrounding McAfee Knob.