



North River Gorge - Todd Lake, Virginia

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
12.5 mls	★	★	★	★	★
Hiking Time: Elev. Gain: Parking:	6 hours with 1/2 hour for lunch 2,070 ft Park on the left side on FR 95 in the 15 car parking area. 38.35928, -79.17580				

The only loop hike that follows a river in the Todd Lake area of the GWNF, this hike has several nice view points, as well as a 4.2 mile hike along the banks of North River. The best time of the year for this circuit is in the late summer or early fall, when the river is lower. With eight fords of North River, it can be a challenge when the water is high.

From the parking area head down the yellow blazed connector trail as it descends steeply to the purple blazed North River Gorge Trail in 0.1 miles. Turn left on the purple blazed trail and ford North River in 200 yards.

NOTE: You are required to ford North River 9 more times in the final 4.2 mile section of this hike. If the river is high, it could take significantly longer than the 6 hour hike time to complete.

After fording North River the purple blazed trail turns right, and a yellow blazed connector trail turns left down river. Turn left on the yellow blazed trail, and in 0.2 miles arrive at the intersection of the white blazed Wild Oak Trail.

Turn right uphill on the white blazed trail for 0.3 miles where it meets the intersection of the 100 yard out/back lookout trail. Take the lookout trail for the best vista on the hike. After returning to the white blazed trail, continue uphill as the trail becomes increasingly steep for another 1.6 miles before arriving at the final two good vista points on the hike. The first is to the east and Harrisonburg VA, and the second in another 100 yards, to the west.

From the ridge and second vista, continue another 0.8 miles over the hike high point on Lookout Mountain, then descend to the saddle in the ridge and intersection of yellow blazed trail TR513. Continue uphill on the white blazed trail for 1.2 miles passing over another rise and arrive at the un-maintained Bear Draft Trail. Continue straight on the white blazed trail for 0.3 miles, where the trail turns right downhill following a narrow Forestry Service (FS) road for 0.2 miles to the intersection of a wider FS road.

Turn right downhill following the the FS road as it winds down to the valley in 2.0 miles. Where the FS road veers left, near the valley floor, turn right onto an unmarked grass covered FS road, and in 100 yards pass through a closed gate. Follow the FS road down to the banks of North River, and intersection of the purple blazed North River Gorge Trail.

Turn right on the purple blazed trail and in 0.3 miles make the first of 9 fords across North River. There are several nice campsites on the trail, the first just after the second ford, and a large group campsite after the 8th ford 3.6 miles from the first campsite. From the large group campsite, after the 8th ford, continue on the right side of the river to the intersection of the yellow blazed trail in another 0.1 miles.

Re-cross North River staying on the purple blazed trail for 200 yards, then turn right uphill on the yellow blazed trail for the remaining 0.1 miles back to the parking area.