

PREPARATIONS

The most effective way to prevent mishaps is to adequately prepare for the trip. Be aware of the hazards inherent in hiking or camping. Knowledge of the area, weather, terrain, limitations of your body and equipment, plus a little common sense can help to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. Plan your route so you won't overexert yourself. A group trip should be designed for the weakest member of the group.

Let friends or family members know of your plans and estimated return time. Be sure to check back in with them to avoid unnecessary alarm.

Carry a map and compass and know how to use them. Plan your route and consult your map frequently during travel.

For maps and additional information contact:

USDA, Forest Service
Glenwood & Pedlar Ranger Districts
P.O. Box 10, 27 Ranger Lane
Natural Bridge Station, VA 24579
Phone: (540) 291-2188

www.southernregion.fs.fed.us/gwj/glenwood-pedlar_rd

Office Hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.,
Monday through Friday.

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Hiking Trails in the James River Face



Glenwood & Pedlar Ranger Districts
George Washington & Jefferson
National Forests

ABOUT THE WILDERNESS:

There are two designated wilderness areas on the Glenwood Ranger District, The James River Face (over 8900 acres) and The Thunder Ridge (over 2300 acres).

The Forest is charged by Congress to manage these wildernesses to protect the natural conditions and provide a place for solitude and primitive types of recreation.

Elevations in the James River Face range from 650 feet at the James River to 3073 feet at Highcock Knob. Elevations in Thunder Ridge range from 1320 feet at the northwest corner to 4200 feet at Apple Orchard Mountain.

There is an unusually broad diversity of vegetation in these areas, especially in the James River Gorge, including several threatened and endangered species of plants. Wildlife includes deer, bear, turkey, grouse, fox and many other game and non-game species.

LEAVE NO TRACE
PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT

The popularity of wilderness travel combined with improper travel and camping techniques, is creating major human impact problems. To retain a high quality backcountry experience and unrestricted freedom, each individual must be responsible to minimize the impact of his or her visit.

APPALACHIAN TRAIL (AT) ~ (hiking trail only)

10.3 miles of the Appalachian Trail runs through the James River Face Wilderness and is considered a strenuous hike. Elevation change is from 2369 at Petites Gap to 3073 at Highcock Knob to 720 where the AT crosses the James River at Rt. 501/130 foot bridge.

Starting on the Appalachian Trail at Petites Gap Road (FDR 35), at 2.7 miles Sulphur Spring Trail will intersect. At 4.5 miles the Belfast will intersect with the AT. As the trail continues on there are some great scenic views.

Matts Creek shelter is located 7.7 miles from Petites Gap Rd. And 2.6 miles from the James River Bridge. The shelter can sleep up to six (6) and is a three sided structure facing the river. The area includes a picnic table, a large fire ring and an outhouse.

The trail from Matts Creek Shelter goes down and follows along the James River to the James River Foot Bridge. Where the trail crosses the James River. There is a moderate sized parking area located here off routes 501/130 at Snowden.



Hiking Trails in the James River Face Wilderness

BELFAST TRAIL ~ (hiking trail only, NO horses allowed on this trail)

2.8 miles long; elevation change 1000 feet to 2650 feet.

From Va. Route 130 at Natural Bridge Station, turn south on VA. Route 759. Go 3.2 miles to intersection with Va. Route 781, Petites Gap Road. Turn east (left) and go 1.5 miles to beginning of trail at footbridge across Elk Creek. Room for parking about five compact cars at beginning of trail or more room on the left a little further down the road. Cross Elk Creek on footbridge, pass site of old Boy Scout Camp and start ascent. At about 1½ miles, pass Devils Marbleyard on left, a large scenic outcrop of loose boulders. Some short sections of Trail Steep and difficult. At 2 miles, reach top of ridge. At 2.54 miles, Gunter Ridge Trail intersects from the left. At 2.8 miles, intersect Appalachian Trail.

GUNTER RIDGE TRAIL ~ (Hiking trail only, NO horses allowed)

5.0 miles long; elevation change 800 feet to 2500 feet. From Va. Route 130 at Natural Bridge Station, turn south on Va. Route 759. Go 0.9 mile and turn east (left) on Va. Route 782. Just past Jellystone Campground, the paved road makes a sharp right turn. Stay on paved road and continue about 0.3 mile to horse trail parking lot.

BALCONY FALLS TRAIL ~ (hiking and horse trails)

4.1 miles long; elevation change 800 feet to 2250 feet. From Va. Route 130 at Natural Bridge Station, turn south on Va. Route 759. Go 0.9 mile and turn east on Va. Route 782. Where the paved road makes a sharp right turn, just past Jellystone Campground, keep straight ahead onto the gravel road. Go about 0.7 mile on Va. Route 782 and FS Road 3039 to the parking area (trailhead) at the Locher Tract at the end of the road. The trail crosses the corner of Locher Tract and then follows an old woods road about 1.2 miles. It then climbs, with switchbacks through frequent timber type changes from pine to mixed hardwoods. At 2.3 miles, enter James River Face Wilderness. Scenic views from the top of the ridge include the town of Glasgow and the James River Gorge. The trail ends where it joins an old fire road, which is now the Sulphur spring trail.

NOTE: Horses are permitted on Balcony Falls trail which can be ridden in connection with the Sulphur Spring and/or Piney Ridge Trails. For horse access to this trail, continue on paved road about 200 feet past horse trail parking area and turn left on logging road (FS 3110). Go 1.75 mile to intersection with Balcony Falls Trail. Turn left and go 0.1 mile to boundary of James River Face Wilderness and 3.1 miles to intersection with Sulphur Spring Trail.



"Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires!"

SULPHUR SPRING TRAIL ~ (hiking and horse trail)

6.6 miles long; elevation change 1425 feet to 2600 feet. From Va. Route 130 at Natural Bridge Station, turn south on Va. Route 759. Go 3.2 miles and turn east (left) on VA. Route 781. (At 1.5 miles pavement ends and at 1.8 miles road designation changes to FS Road 35). Go 3.2 miles to trailhead ~ room for parking 3 or 4 cars. The trail ascends on an old roadbed. At 0.25 mile pass Sulphur Spring on left of Trail. At 2.9 miles cross Appalachian Trail. About 125 feet further on Sulphur Spring Trail the Piney Ridge Trail intersects on the right. Easier grade along next section of trail. At about 5 miles good views of James River gorge. At 5.2 miles, trail parallels the Appalachian Trail. Grade generally descending on balance of trail. The trail will cross the AT again approximately 6 miles. At 6.6 miles, Sulphur Spring Trail ends with end of old roadbed and Balcony Falls Trail begins.

NOTE: Horses are permitted on this trail which can be ridden in connection with the Balcony Falls and/or Piney Ridge Trails.

PINEY RIDGE TRAIL ~ (Hiking and Horse Trail)

3.5 miles long; elevation change 900 feet to 2450 feet. About 3.5 miles north of Big Island, (or 2.3 miles south of James River), turn west off of US Route 501 on to FS Road 54, a gravel road. Go about 0.6 mile, bear right (uphill) on to gravel logging road. Trailhead parking 500 feet up logging road. The trail follows Piney Ridge, between Snow Creek and Peters Creek, entering the James River Face Wilderness at about 1.8 miles. Trail ends at intersection of Sulphur Springs Trail about 125 feet north of Appalachian Trail in Marble Spring Area.

NOTE: Horses are permitted on this trail, which can be ridden in connection with the Sulphur Spring and/or Balcony Falls Trail.

