

Seize the Day

FORGET THE LONG HAUL AND SAVOR SOMETHING SHORT AND SWEET

BY JULIE JUDKINS

Inviting and welcoming all of America to experience and fall in love with the people's path means highlighting adventures other than the legendary Georgia to Maine thru-hike journey. Fortunately, opportunities to experience the Trail are abundant. Here are some favorite "easy access" hikes — shared by Trail enthusiasts for those wanting an introduction to the Trail as a day hike, or those looking for what Benton MacKaye deemed "respite from the urbanization of the east." These hikes are all in close proximity to urban areas, and are located in or near an official A.T. Community.

Front Royal

THE TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL sits only three miles from the Trail's intersection with Route 522, so it's a regular stop for many thru-hikers, especially after exiting or right before entering Shenandoah National Park. To access the A.T., I use trails in the G.R. Thompson Wildlife Management Area. This section of the A.T. is very easy for people from the Washington, D.C. metro area to access, as there are several parking areas only a few miles off of Interstate 66.

My most-traveled and favorite hike begins at the parking area about four miles up State Route 638. The loop hike is a little over two miles, making it perfect for families, beginners, bird-watchers, or botany lovers. This area is well-known for its abundance of spring wildflowers, and, in the fall, people come to see the changing leaves. At nearly 1,900 feet, the trailhead can be 10 degrees cooler than the temperature in the valley below, so come prepared with a warmer layer, even in the summer. Before heading up the mountain stop at the Giving Tree farm stand to pick up a cool drink and some snacks. From the parking lot, walk past the information kiosk onto the Ted Lake Trail and take a left turn onto a short unmarked spur trail. When the trail ends, take a right onto the Verlin Smith Trail (also unmarked). You will soon see the white blazes of the northbound A.T. on your

left. Turn right (southbound) onto the A.T. Follow the white blazes for about a mile, until you see signs for the Manassas Gap Shelter. Take this short side trail to explore the shelter, stop for lunch, or refill your water from the piped spring (using a water filter). Return to the A.T. along the same trail, and head southbound again (left turn). Walk about 100 feet to the marked intersection with the Ted Lake Trail. Turn right (west) to return to the parking lot in about 0.8 miles.

After the hike, head back toward Linden, west on Route 55 (John Marshall Highway), where you can get some great grub at the Apple House. And of course Front Royal offers several restaurants, coffee shops, and gift shops on Main Street.

From left: The "green tunnel" of the A.T. heading south toward Manassas Gap; Hikers take a break at Manassas Gap Shelter near Front Royal. Photos by Alyson Browett



1 hour from
Washington, D.C.

HIKED BY

A.T. Community
Ambassador for Front
Royal/Warren County,
Virginia and Potomac
Appalachian Trail
Club member,
**ALYSON
BROWETT**

2

TOTAL HIKING MILES
VIRGINIA



1 hour from
New York City

HIKED BY

Harlem Valley
A.T. Community
Ambassador and
volunteer Trail and
shelter maintainer with
the New York-New
Jersey Trail Conference,
**DONNA
CHAPMAN**

6.6

TOTAL HIKING MILES
NEW YORK

Harlem Valley

ONE OF MY FAVORITE HIKES in the area is from New York State Route 22 to Cat Rocks. This hike is easily accessed by either car or the Metro-North Railroad. On weekends and holidays you can take the train directly to the Appalachian Trail — the stop is the only one of its kind. If you come during the week you can disembark in Pawling and take a cab to the A.T. crossing on NY Route 22.

Your hike begins on the board-

walk, which crosses the Great Swamp and the Great Swamp River where you may be treated to a flurry of birdlife, and if you are lucky, a glimpse of one of the many beavers that live in the area. After crossing the bridge you will follow the white blazes as you ascend Corbin Hill (elevation: 760 feet) followed by a lovely field that in the warmer months contains wild flowers and butterflies. Once you begin to descend you will have a view of Cat

Rocks in the distance as you pass the Dover Oak, which is said to be the largest white oak on the entire A.T. with a girth of more than 20 feet. This is followed by a vigorous climb up to Cat Rocks with breathtaking views of the Harlem Valley, surrounding farmlands, and the northbound Appalachian Trail. After enjoying the view and a snack you will retrace your route back to NY Route 22 for a total hike of 6.6 miles.



1 hour from
Roanoke or Lynchburg

HIKED BY

Appalachian Trail
Conservancy's
education and
outreach coordinator
**KATHRYN
HERNDON**

7.6

TOTAL HIKING MILES
VIRGINIA

Glasgow

WHEN PICKING OUT A GREAT day hike, sometimes you have to choose between views and water features. This hike has both: starting at the James River and following the tumbling Rocky Row Run creek before climbing up to spectacular views from Fuller Rocks of the James River Face Wilderness and the A.T. Community of Glasgow.

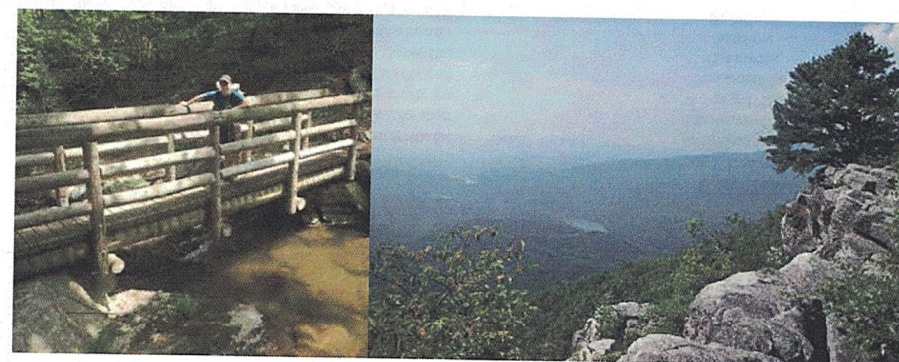
When you say "James River," most Virginians think of a wide, flat waterway that meanders through Richmond and Williamsburg on its way to the Chesapeake Bay. If that's the only part of the river you know, you've got to see the James as it rushes through a narrow gorge, before passing under the longest foot bridge on the A.T.,

and joins the Maury River. This hike takes you from the river to Fuller Rocks along the A.T. and back the same way. The total distance is 7.6 miles, so be sure to bring plenty of water and snacks.

Park at the A.T. trailhead by the James River Foot Bridge on VA-501 and head north on the A.T., which means carefully crossing highway 501 and looking for the white blazes on the other side. For the first mile you will follow Rocky Row Run, enjoying the sound of its clear, cold water rushing to meet up with the James. Cross Hercules Road (VA-812), then a blue-blazed trail to John's Hollow Shelter at 1.8 miles. The next two miles are strenuous, but rewarding. Get ready

for a series of 21 switchbacks that become increasingly rocky and rugged as you ascend. The forest changes as you gain elevation, from lush hardwoods near the river to hardy table mountain pines clinging to the rock faces near the top. When you emerge at Fuller Rocks, you'll likely be greeted by spectacular views of the James River Face Wilderness. When you're ready, turn back the way you came and head back to the river. Don't forget to stop in Glasgow while you're in the area, where you'll find great pizza at Scottos; and taking a picture with the town's famous foam dinosaur is something of a hiker tradition.

Clockwise from below: View of the James River Face Wilderness from Fuller Rocks; Crossing Rocky Row Run bridge — photos by Kathryn Herndon; The A.T. boardwalk over the great swamp river in New York (accessible by Metro-North Railroad's Harlem Line). Photo by Donna Chapman



TRY OUT THE A.T. IN ONE OF THE 14 STATES IT PASSES THROUGH

GEORGIA MOUNTAIN CROSSINGS AT NEELS GAP

(1.5 hours from Atlanta)

The building, Walasi-Yi Interpretive Center, was created by the CCC, is the only building that the Trail goes right through, and is in the A.T. Community of Union County, Georgia.

NORTH CAROLINA NANTAHALA OUTDOOR CENTER

(1 hour 15 min. from Asheville)

Amp up your outdoor adventures and add in a zipline, a rafting trip, or a ride on horseback (not on the A.T.). Choose your adventure and amenities. There is even a phenology site and a monarch waystation if you want to be a citizen-scientist while you're there.

TENNESSEE/NORTH CAROLINA CLINGMANS DOME

(1.5 hours from Knoxville)

Nestled in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Clingmans Dome is the highest point on the entire A.T., where the Trail reaches an elevation of 6,625 feet near the summit. Need we say more?

VIRGINIA DAMASCUS

(2 hours from Roanoke)

The most famous Trail town of them all, Damascus is the gateway to the Mount Rogers National Recreation area in the Blue Ridge Mountains and offers family fun with easy hikes, camping, biking, and B&Bs. And the Trail runs directly through it.

WEST VIRGINIA HARPERS FERRY

(1 hour 15 min. from Washington, D.C.

and Baltimore, Maryland)

A beautiful town — and A.T. Community — full of history (including John Brown's raid and the Civil War), great hiking with views of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers, and the ATC's Headquarters and Visitor Center.

MARYLAND WASHINGTON MONUMENT STATE PARK

(1 hour 15 min. from Washington, D.C.)

Washington Monument State Park, located on South Mountain, offers the opportunity to see the original monument (about 500 feet off the A.T.) dedicated to George Washington and built by the people of Boonsboro in 1827.

PENNSYLVANIA BOILING SPRINGS

(2 hours from Philadelphia)

The picturesque A.T. Community of Boiling Springs offers something for every season, from hiking the A.T. through lush nearby farmland to fly fishing on Yellow Breeches Creek. Enjoy a stroll around Children's Lake before heading into the ATC Regional Office and Visitors Center to say "happy trails" to staff.

NEW JERSEY HIGH POINT STATE PARK

(1.5 hours from New York City)

The highest point in New Jersey is easy to access and on the A.T. The High Point Monument, at 1,803 feet, can be climbed (only 220 stairs) for views of the Pocono and Catskill Mountains, and three different states.

NEW YORK TRAILSIDE MUSEUMS AND ZOO AT BEAR MOUNTAIN STATE PARK

(1 hour from New York City)

The Trail goes directly through this historic park and zoo with sweeping views of the Hudson River. Learn about local geology, Native American history, and see live reptiles. And don't miss the bear den exhibit, which is also situated on lowest point on the entire length of the A.T.

CONNECTICUT LIONS HEAD

(1.5 hours from Hartford)

Magnificent views are the reward for a hike to the rocky outcropping atop Lions Head. After completing your calorie-burning trek, head over to a bakery or bistro in the charming New England town of Salisbury, less than a mile away.

MASSACHUSETTS MOUNT GREYLOCK STATE RESERVATION

(2.5 hours from Boston)

Another peak to bag is the highpoint in Massachusetts. At 3,491 feet, Mount Greylock offers 360-degree views and a 100-foot-tall lighthouse with an observation deck. After your stroll, head on over to Bascom Lodge for some snacks and chat with some A.T. hikers.

VERMONT KILLINGTON PEAK

(1 hour 40 min. from Burlington)

The second highest peak in Vermont, Killington offers views of three different mountain ranges (Green Mountains, White Mountains, and Adirondack Mountains). A gondola ride will elevate you to the 4,220-foot peak.

NEW HAMPSHIRE MOUNT WASHINGTON STATE PARK

(2.5 hours from Portland, Maine)

At 6,288 feet, this peak takes you to the highest spot in all of New England. Mount Washington is notorious for its horrible weather, receiving hurricane-force wind gusts almost a third of the year, and of course its famous weather station, the Mount Washington Observatory. From the Trail, the Cog Railway will take you right to the top.

MAINE RANGELEY AND THE RANGELEY REGION

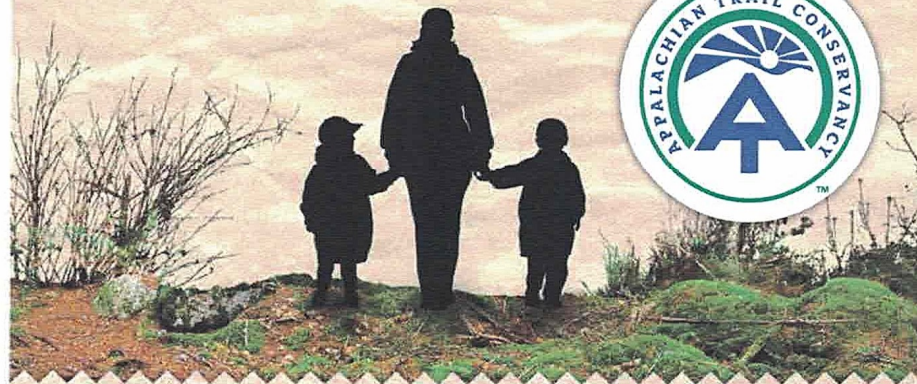
(2 hours from Bangor)

The A.T. Community of Rangeley is situated among some of the state's highest peaks and a chain of lakes that connects over a thousand square miles of natural beauty. Just nine miles from the Trail crossing at Route 4, Rangeley is an important stop along the Trail.



September 26, 2015

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy invites families of all ages and hiking abilities to get outside and experience the adventure of being active on the Appalachian Trail.



Held on National Public Lands Day, Family Hiking Day is an opportunity to introduce your children to America's premier footpath, and all of the benefits that come from being active and spending time outdoors.

To plan an A.T. hike for your family visit: appalachiantrail.org/FamilyHike