

Mill Ridge - Pump Gap - Appalachian Trail Loop

5 Miles - Easy Hike with very little elevation change

Hiked March 21, 2009

Directions to Trailhead: Drive from the city limits of Greeneville toward Asheville, NC on SR70 locally called the Asheville Highway. At the state line the road becomes NC 208. After driving 23 miles you will reach a junction with highway US 25-70. Take the right toward Hot Springs. From the junction drive steeply up a grade for 1.9 miles and turn right just before reaching a bridge over the highway. This area is known as Tanyard Gap and the Appalachian Trail crosses the highway on this bridge. You will also drive across this bridge and up a dirt road for about a mile to reach the Mill Ridge Trailhead Parking Lot which is well marked.

From the trailhead, proceed around a Forest Service gate. The trail is marked with a sign that reads Mill Ridge Bike Trail and follows a Forest Service Logging Road around a beautiful mountain top known as Mill Ridge. At the time of the hike there was a lot of logging activity present for the first few miles. There are nice vistas into the hillsides of North Carolina along this road. After covering a little over two miles there is a road coming in from the left. You ignore this road, follow the trail sign and continue on the main trail to the right. After two and a half miles, there will be another road split but no sign this time. Continue to the right although the left fork may appear to be the main road.

After hiking 3 miles, you will come to another trail sign for the Mill Ridge Trail. You can continue for another half mile on this steep uphill rocky section back to the trailhead if you wish. If you want a longer hike of 5 miles, you will leave the Mill Ridge Trail at this point and continue on an old Forest Service Road to the left. You will hike almost exactly one mile on this old road until you reach a Trail Sign for the Pump Gap Trail which crosses the road. Take Pump Gap to the right and follow the yellow blazes for nearly a half mile to reach the junction with the Appalachian Trail. Pump Gap continues straight ahead, so be sure to take the AT to the right and follow the white blazes. If you want a short side trip at this point, continue for 100 yards on the Pump Gap Trail to a small cemetery on the hillside.

Return to the AT, and head north back toward the trailhead. You will pass a beautiful pond formed by a small dam. There is a bench at each end of the pond and this is a great place for a lunch break. From the pond it is a very short uphill to the road and an intersection with the original Mill Ridge Trail. Turn left here and follow the road and white AT blazes to the trailhead. You will pass a sign telling about the former use of the Mill Ridge area.

Synopsis of Hike

Mile Elevation Description

0 2653 Trailhead Mill Ridge Bike Trail

2.12 2423 Road from the left. Continue to the right.

2.63 2343 Road from the left. Continue to the right

3.00 2249 JCT. Take Old FS Road to Left. Mill Ridge Trail continues to right.

4.01 2284 JCT. Take Pump Gap Trail to right.

4.38 2460 JCT. Appalachian Trail. Follow AT to right (North)

4.76 2524 Mill Ridge Pond.

4.95 2576 JCT. Road and Mill Ridge Trail. Take road to left.

5.04 2653 Trailhead.