

Description: This is a moderate 30 mile back pack trip utilizing the trail systems of the Black Moshannon State Forest and Park of Pennsylvania. Several years ago Ralph Seeley came up with the idea of developing a trail that would circumnavigate the entire Black Moshannon Forest. The route would traverse approximately 40 miles of trails transporting the hiker through mature hardwood forest, sections struggling to recover from past cuttings, beautiful trout streams, scenic vistas, Pine plantations, Rhododendron thickets, Hemlock groves and finally, the bogs of Moss-Hanne. To provide variety and shorter routes the Moss-Hanne and Shingle Mill Trails would be added as cross connectors right through the heart of the state park. Volunteer trail building crews from all across PA were assembled. In 2003 the project, now known as the Allegheny Front Trail, was completed. The skill, effort and engineering that was required to make this happen is akin only to that found in the beaver that constantly change the topography of this fantastic hiking venue.

This outing starts in the center of the park, follows the Shingle Mill Trail north to pick up the Allegheny Front Trail (AFT) which is then followed in a clockwise direction to re-enter the park on the Moss-Hanne Trail which is then followed back to the starting point. I break the trip down into 3 equal 10 mile segments. Day 1 is mostly walking along beautiful streams and creeks with one modestly challenging climb. The focal point of day 2 is a challenging ridge walk with great vistas. There is a 3 mile segment of steep ups and downs on the rockiest trail I've ever been on but the views are satisfying rewards. Day 3 features a relatively easy romp through the bogs and swamps of Moss-Hanne. The stone bridges and long boardwalks make this segment a pleasure.

Directions From I-99 North:

1. At the end of I-99 merge onto PA350 North to Philipsburg.
2. In about 13.7 miles follow the signs to US322 (Right turn).
3. Turn left onto PA504.
4. Cross bridge over Black Moshannon Lake.
5. Immediately turn right onto Julian Pike. Mooring area #1 is immediately on the right. Drive approximately 0.25 miles to Ranger Station and inform them of your intentions. If they are closed leave a note with vehicle description and tag#, persons in your group and emergency contact info under the office door. Return to mooring area #1 and begin the trip.

Trail Notes: All trails are signed and blazed. There are a couple of woods roads (active and inactive) that are crossed and noted in this description. AFT sign posts with pertinent distances are installed at every road crossing. Feel free to start/end this hike at any of these locations keeping in mind water sources, camping areas and park camping policy. Park policy asks that hikers not camp within a mile of the park boundary. For this outing the northern limit is Huckleberry Road. The eastern limit is 1 mile east of Julian Pike which happens to be the campsites at/near Smay's Run Trail/Road.

Day 1: From Mooring Area #1 proceed north on Julian Pike. Cross Rt 504 and follow Black Moshannon Rd for 0.42 miles. Turn left onto a gated service road. Cross Black Moshannon Creek on a bridge and immediately turn right onto blue blazed Shingle Mill Tr.

At 1.72 miles from joining the Shingle Mill Trail cross Huckleberry Road. Although all of Shingle Mill Tr is beautiful the best part is the section north of Huckleberry Rd.

Note the campsites marked on the map. The largest area is actually on the other side of the creek at a dog leg just before the trail ascends steeply on a well-constructed piece of side-hill trail. In 1.83 miles from Huckleberry Rd join the orange blazed AFT. Turn right.

In another 0.81 miles the AFT crosses Black Moshannan Creek on a bridge and passes in front of a green cabin/cottage to cross Benner Run on yet another bridge. Turn left after crossing the bridge and follow Benner Run for 1.38 miles before re-crossing the run on another bridge. There are a couple of small campsites between the two crossings. It's possible that more sites might be found on a slight rise to the right of the trail if you can work through the thick Leatherleaf plants that seem to blanket the entire forest.

Shortly after the last crossing pass and unsigned blue blazed trail on the right. This follows Benner Run further upstream and may provide yet more camping opportunities. Stay on the AFT and climb up and over the next ridge to Hull Run. There are two water sources here but offers little in the way of campsites.

In 2.89 miles after leaving Benner Run cross a gravel woods road. In another 0.33 miles join the Rock Run Ski Trail. Turn right here. The trail will be marked with both orange and blue blazes. In 1.03 miles descend to Rock Run. You can either camp here, just above the bridge for the Rock Run Connector Tr or walk uphill for another 0.5 miles to a nice bench along a huge beaver dam/pond.

Day 2: Continue up Benner Run. There are a couple of small but nice campsites at water's edge along this section. Cross Rock Run and at 1.96 miles from the Rock Run Connector bridge meet the junction with the upper portion of Rock Run Ski Trail. Turn right onto orange blazed AFT.

Soon find yourself walking along the headwaters of Benner Run. There are several potential campsites along this section. Cross Benner Run and walk across an open meadow to a Red Spruce plantation. At 1.26 miles from leaving the Rock Run Ski Trail come to a grassy woods road. Turn left onto the road following the orange blazes. In another 0.3 miles leave the road turning left onto a footpath. Re-enter the meadow and cross a grassy maintenance road for a set of radio towers over your left shoulder. In another 0.15 miles arrive at Rt 504.

Cross Rt 504. In 0.13 miles cross another woods road. The path itself will become a well rutted road as it descends steeply. In another 0.21 miles make an abrupt right turn up a rocky foot path and in 0.51 miles come to a partly obscured overlook. Descend steeply and ascend several times visiting the vistas along the way. The last vista is signed "Ralph's Magnificent Vista" in honor of Ralph Seeley. Leave the last vista and scramble through an area known, for obvious reasons, as "Rock City".

At 0.60 miles from Ralph's Magnificent Vista cross Underwood road. In another 1.62 miles cross Smay's Run Trail. This is a good spot to call it a day. A slightly more secluded campsite is just a few more yards down the trail at the bridge that crosses the run.

Day 3: Continue west on the AFT. In 1.1 miles cross Julian Pike and join the Moss-Hanne Trail. It will be blazed with orange triangles and is a mix of foot path, old woods roads, rock bridges and wonderful boardwalks. In 2.6 miles pass a spur trail

that leads out to Shirk's Rd on the left and then the continuation of the AFT. Turn right to stay on the Moss-Hanne Tr with its orange triangles.

In another 1.02 miles cross the apparently abandoned Airport Trail. In another 1.28 miles cross a small backwater. Here the trail goes un-blazed to the left into a Pine plantation and to the right (blazed) towards the lake. Turn right here.

In another 2.09 miles join the Indian trail that comes in from the left. Turn right, following the dual blazes for 0.25 miles (orange triangle and red circle). The Indian trail will turn left. Continue on the Moss-Hanne Trail to its junction with the Bog Trail in another 0.43 miles.

Follow the boardwalk around to the launch ramp on West Side Road. Turn right onto West Side Road and in 1.16 miles arrive back at Rt 504. Cross the bridge and return to your cars.