

Description: To begin with, the name Gunpowder Falls is a misnomer. There are no real falls, perhaps a little white water above Masemore Rd but no falls. It's still a pretty little river.

This is a 7.2 mile moderate figure-8 hike close to Baltimore that I like to walk in the winter when days are short, weather conditions are less than desirable and the urge to get out into the woods is overwhelming. Most of the hills are gradual. The two really steep ones are of short duration.

Directions to Gunpowder State Park from I-83 near Hereford:

1. From the south, Take I-83 North to Mount Carmel Rd.
2. Take Mount Carmel Road East to York Rd. (Bear right at end of I-83 ramp.)
3. Turn left (North) on York Rd.
4. As you pass Hereford High School on right, turn left onto Bunker Hill Rd.
5. Drive to the bottom of the hill. Turn Left into the new parking lot.

Trail Notes: From the parking lot begin walking up Bunker Hill Rd but very shortly turn left onto blue-blazed Bunker Hill Tr. There will be a "no Bikes" international sign posted there. Descend to a small stream and follow it east toward I-83. Just as you begin to hear the sounds of the highway the trail will leave the stream, turning right up the hill. Reach Bunker Hill Rd at 0.87 miles from the start.

Cross Bunker Hill Rd and walk up the driveway for the Gunpowder Archery Club and through a plantation of White Pine. This is the beginning of Mingo Forks Tr. As you reach the top of the hill (locked latrines to your left) the trail turns hard right from the drive onto a footpath (0.59 miles from Bunker Hill Rd).

Descend to the beginning of Mingo Branch. At the junction with yellow-blazed Mingo Ridge trail (0.21 miles from the archery range), continue downstream on Mingo Fork Trail. The trail will shortly go around the base of a hill and ascend along another fork of Mingo Branch.

Just before reaching private property come to a post and the other terminus of Mingo Ridge Tr (0.25 miles from previous junction). Turn right and climb 0.19 miles up a hill through some pines to a gas pipeline Swath. At the crest of the hill a woods road will cross the swath. Turn right onto the forest road and descend to the Gunpowder South Trail at 0.53 miles from gas line swath).

Bear left at the junction of Gunpowder South trail. Cross a stream at about 0.10 miles. The white blazed Gunpowder South Trail follows the river upstream. Come to Masemore Rd and the oldest steel bridge in MD (Circa 18XX) at another 0.42 miles.

Cross Masemore Rd and continue upstream, soon passing blue-blazed Highland Tr on your left.

In another 0.58 miles cross Falls Rd and almost immediately climb steeply for 40-50 yards to avoid a blowout of the bank. Quickly descend back to the

river. Shortly after you descend to the river you will come to a pretty long rock field. At this location there are some nice big rocks sticking out into the Gunpowder. This is about the best spot for lunch on this part of the river.

After lunch, continue upstream. Rely on the white blazes since there is little sign of a trail here. Shortly after the rock field a fisherman's path will continue along the bank of the river but the Gunpowder South Trail will bear to left and proceeds to climb up a hill.

At 0.79 miles from the crossing of Falls Rd it will again bear right and follow the river, but at a higher elevation for a while, to Pretty Boy Dam (Taking this out and back detour will add about 1 mile to the trip.) At this junction bear left onto blue-blazed Highland Tr. It flattens out on an old woods road.

Cross Falls Rd again at about 0.23 miles from the last trail junction. Pass through a high voltage power line swath in another 0.50 miles. Descend to a small stream and follow it to its headwaters. Cross the stream and climb a short hill. Descend along another old road to the junction with Gunpowder South Tr (0.047 miles from crossing the power line swath. Turn Right and retrace your earlier steps crossing Masemore Rd and the bridge over a run.

At the point where the trail reaches another stream and turns up hill (You came down this trail earlier) there are two options. You can either follow the white-blazed Gunpowder South Tr, passing the junction of previously traveled Mingo Branch Tr on the right, back to the restrooms and from there take a paved walk back to the cars or follow my preferred option to stay along the river for a bit longer as follows.

Cross the stream and follow an unmarked fisherman's trail (Shown as red on the map) that follows the river downstream. Just before a sharp bend in the river you'll have to climb a bit up the bank and follow an extremely narrow footpath through some Hemlocks. Descend again to the fisherman's trail on the other side of the bend. There may be one or two blow-downs to negotiate after your descent. The trail ends at the confluence of Mingo Branch and the Gunpowder. Crossing the branch usually is not a challenge. After you cross walk towards an impressive stand of evergreens with picnic tables and lantern poles under its canopy. There is no trail here but just keep walking towards the evergreens. This is Camp Wood. Follow the old road to your right out of the woods, up the hill and behind the restrooms (closed in the winter). Follow the paved path back to the parking lot.