



Terrapin Mountain - JNF, Virginia

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
10.1 mls	4	2	4	5	1
Hiking Time: 5 hours and 40 minutes with 1 hour and 30 minutes of breaks Elev. Gain: 2,658 ft Parking: Parking for the Terrapin Mountain loop trail. 37.53088, -79.42825					

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)



By Trail Contributor: Zach Robbins

The Terrapin Mountain Trail in Jefferson National Forest is an excellent cold season option because of its abundant winter views and easy access on the eastern side of the Blue Ridge Parkway. It also has the benefit of lying due east of the largest Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia, protecting it from the harsh west winds in the winter. You can try the short but steep out-and-back to Terrapin Mountain, or tackle the full loop which mostly follows forest roads along Reed Creek and tributaries on the return. From two overlooks you'll have fantastic views of Apple

Orchard Mountain, Thunder Ridge, and the Peaks of Otter. If you choose to take the entire loop, you'll be treated to a surprise waterfall beside the trail near the end of the hike.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – Parking for Terrapin Mountain Trail [5] (*yellow blaze*).
- ▶ **Mile 0.4** – Intersection with the loop trail. If you turn left to hike the loop clockwise you will reach Reed Creek first. Continue straight towards Terrapin Mountain and immediately veer left at the giant rock cairn while the forest road continues right. You should see yellow blazes on trees ahead.
- ▶ **Mile 1.0** – After long, steep climb the trail makes a hard right turn away from the mountain onto a level track.
- ▶ **Mile 1.2** – Trail makes a U-turn to follow the ridgeline southwest while a faint trail continues northeast.
- ▶ **Mile 1.5** – Rock overlook on the north/right side of the trail. From here you will have 180° views from west to east including the FAA Radome on Apple Orchard Mountain, Thunder Ridge, Hunting Creek basin, peaks of the James River Face Wilderness, and Big Rocky Row.
- ▶ **Mile 2.0** – The trail levels out on a narrow ridge below a false summit. A faint "trail" follows the crest north along the rocky false summit for a few hundred yards. There are decent views of Terrapin Mountain and the eastern foothills.
- ▶ **Mile 2.7** – Huge boulders on the right side of the trail with a view north. After passing these massive rocks begin looking for the faint summit trail veering left away from the main trail.
- ▶ **Mile 2.8** – **IMPORTANT** trail junction - Y-junction with the main trail veering right while the summit trail to the top of Terrapin Mountain goes left and immediately climbs over boulders. The trail heading right looks like the only trail here and the faint summit trail on the left is very easy to miss.
- ▶ **Mile 3.0** – Summit of Terrapin Mountain. The trail turns right heading downhill to meet the main trail. Go left for views from a rock overlook.
- ▶ **Mile 3.1** – A rock pinnacle juts out of the mountain with big southern views. Going from east to west you have a panoramic vista of No Business Mountain, the foothills surrounding the Big Otter River basin, the Peaks of Otter, Headforemost Mountain, Onion Mountain, Apple Orchard Mountain, and Thunder Ridge. Turn left on the trail heading steeply downhill from the summit.
- ▶ **Mile 3.3** – Y-junction with the main trail. Continue straight towards Camping Gap.
- ▶ **Mile 3.8** – The hiking trail turns left downhill ending at a T-junction with a forest road. Turn right following the road downhill towards the obvious grassy area beside the wide turn of Hunting Creek Rd at Camping Gap. **IMPORTANT** - Turn left from the grassy Camping Gap very briefly following Hunting Creek Rd then turn left at a trail sign for Reed Creek leaving the forest road. If you do not see this national forest sign beside the road soon after Camping Gap you have gone in the opposite direction.
- ▶ **Mile 4.3** – T junction with a forest road, double blazes indicate a left turn.
- ▶ **Mile 5.4** – Wet crossing of Reed Creek. There is a campsite beside the trail before the creek crossing.
- ▶ **Mile 5.6** – Rock hop over a tributary that spills into the forest road.
- ▶ **Mile 5.8** – A forest road spur on the left leads down to a nice series of cascades along Reed Creek.
- ▶ **Mile 6.3** – T-junction at a trail sign for the loop trail and Reed Creek Rd. The main forest road continues straight eventually becomes Reed Creek Rd. Turn left here and encounter the second wet crossing over Reed Creek.
- ▶ **Mile 7.3** – Rock hop over Meadow Creek.
- ▶ **Mile 7.7** – Rock hop over tributary to Meadow Creek. Immediately to the left of the crossing is a 20 foot waterfall over a wide cliff.
- ▶ **Mile 8.3** – Rock hop over tributary.
- ▶ **Mile 8.7** – Rock hop over tributary.
- ▶ **Mile 9.2** – Rock hop over tributary.
- ▶ **Mile 9.8** – T-junction with Terrapin Mountain Trail loop. Turn right heading towards the parking area.
- ▶ **Mile 10.1** – Hike ends at the Terrapin Mountain Trail parking area.