



Rock Castle Gorge - Floyd, VA

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
10.7 mls	★	★	★	★	★
Hiking Time: 6.5 hours plus a half hour for lunch Elev. Gain: 2,490 ft Parking: Parking on Rock Castle Rd. 36.80759, -80.33105					

If you are ever near Floyd, VA, be sure to put this hike on your to do list. There is a heart pounding climb at the beginning of the hike, some gentle hiking through meadows on top of the ridge and then mostly down for the last 4.0 miles. You will see an old Appalachian Trail shelter, chimney of an old homestead and then the Austin House beside Rock Castle Creek.

There are multiple places to start this hike along the Blue Ridge Parkway, but we recommend starting at the convergence of Rock Castle Creek and Little Rock Castle Creek in the gorge. Basecamp at the primitive camping area 0.25 miles upstream on Rock Castle Creek on fire road, and do it as a day hike.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – From the parking area cross barrier and bridge, continue straight on fire road and in 0.10 miles make a sharp turn to the right on to the green-blazed Rock Castle Gorge Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 0.5** – The trail starts to become much steeper, gaining almost 1100' in 1.0 miles.
- ▶ **Mile 1.5** – The tough part of the trail is over, in 0.3 miles cross two bridges.
- ▶ **Mile 1.8** – Cross two bridges.
- ▶ **Mile 2.8** – You will climb the first of four fence stiles and into a pasture. The last stile will be around the 7.0 mile mark. Be prepared to dodge some cows, a huge bull and of course their cow patties over the next mile. As the Blue Ridge Parkway becomes visible, you will see the entrance to the Rocky Knob Campground and Visitor Center on your right. Follow short trail posts with arrows through the pasture, the trail hugs the pasture close to the Blue Ridge Parkway for the most part. There are great views over the next 4 miles.
- ▶ **Mile 3.4** – Tree coming out of rock, we stopped here for lunch.
- ▶ **Mile 3.7** – Reach Saddle Overlook, in 0.1 miles bear left at fork intersection. The trail is evident but there are no blazes as you go over Rocky Knob.
- ▶ **Mile 4.0** – Former Appalachian Trail Shelter, the AT was relocated to the west in the 1950's. Continue on other side of shelter by the chimney following ridge line as other unmarked trails go right towards the parkway. There are a couple of other good viewing areas just after the shelter on your left. The top of the incline is Rocky Knob. Green blazes will start again in about a 0.5 miles.
- ▶ **Mile 4.4** – T-intersection, bear left onto Rocky Knob Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 4.8** – Rock Castle Gorge Overlook.
- ▶ **Mile 5.1** – 12 O'clock Knob Overlook. Comfort Station, Picnic Area and bathroom is just across the Parkway. Trail is now blazed Green and Blue. Trails over the next mile will come in from the right, stay left.
- ▶ **Mile 5.7** – Cross a fence stile into another meadow and bolder field.
- ▶ **Mile 6.1** – Black Ridge Trail intersection, stay left on Green-blazed Rock Castle Gorge Trail. You are now in Grassy Knoll.
- ▶ **Mile 6.6** – Leave Grassy Knoll, go through a fence stile/gate. What goes up must go down, and you will be going down the rest of the way, and the first few miles will be steep.
- ▶ **Mile 7.7** – Go through boulders of bare rocks.
- ▶ **Mile 8.0** – Old homestead chimney ruins on left. Just after the chimney you will cross the first of four metal bridges.
- ▶ **Mile 8.1** – Intersection with fire road, bear left and follow Rock Castle Creek downstream.
- ▶ **Mile 8.9** – 2nd Metal Bridge
- ▶ **Mile 9.0** – 3rd Metal Bridge
- ▶ **Mile 9.2** – Austin House, privately owned, built 1916. Also there is an old barn just past the house.
- ▶ **Mile 9.5** – 4th Metal Bridge
- ▶ **Mile 10.4** – Primitive camp site. Permit required from Visitor Center or Rocky Knob Campground on the Parkway. You are not allowed to camp anywhere else on this trail besides this primitive camp site.
- ▶ **Mile 10.7** – Return to the parking area.