

AT – Hogpen Gap to Rocky Mountain (Unicoi Gap) Trail

Departure Destination: Hogpen Gap,

From the city of Helen, travel North on GA-75 1.4 miles north of the Chattahoochee River bridge. Turn left on Alt 75 S at the large flea market. Continue south 2.3 miles and then turn right on the Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway a.k.a. GA-348. Continue winding northward on GA-348 for approximately 7 miles where you will find the large parking area for Hogpen Gap.

Car Drop Location: Unicoi Gap

9 Miles north of Helen on GA-75. Large parking area.

Rating: Moderate

Distance: 15.6 Miles

Emergency Numbers: 911

Land Management Office:

Ranger Station: Chattooga River District

Dave Jensen - District Ranger

809 Highway 441 South

Clayton, GA 30525

Phone: 706.782.3320

Fax: 706.782.2079

Office hours: Monday - Friday 8:00-12:00 open

Water Availability:

4.2mi – spring

4.6mi – stream

9.2mi – spring

11.3mi - spring

USGS Quadrangles: Cowrock

Local Police Union County Sheriff 706.439.6066 1:00-4:30 open

Local Police White County Sheriff 706.865.0911

Nearest Hospital Union General Hospital 706.745.2111

Poison Control National Center 800.222.1222

Note: Some of the roads taken to reach the trailhead overlap the popular bicycle route known as Six Gap. Please be mindful of cyclists and share the road politely. They have as much right to the road as the rest of us. [s](#)

Description

AT Section 4 Description: Section 4 of the Appalachian Trail is, by a considerable margin, the shortest and easiest section in the Peach State. With a modest 13.6 mile length, add another 2 miles for the hike up Rocky Mountain, this stretch of footpath lies entirely within the Mark Trail Wilderness and boasts mild grades sprinkled with just enough moderate climbs and descents to keep things interesting. It makes an excellent two-day backpacking trip.

If you've hiked sections 1 through 3 you should already be familiar with the pattern of the AT in Georgia. You huff up a mountain, catch your breath through a gap, huff up a mountain, and so on. This section is no exception to the rule. In fact, it adheres strictly for the first 4.2 miles from the trailhead at Hogpen Gap (3460 ft). From the parking area, the trail climbs the eastern ridge of Strawberry Top and then, you guessed it, dips to Sapling Gap at 3480 ft and 1.6 miles. The AT then ascends from the gap along an easy to moderate tread to the summit of Poor Mountain (3640 ft) at 1.9 miles. From Poor Mountain, the AT drops to Wide Gap at 3180 ft and 2.5 miles, and then begins climbing along a similar moderate grade to the summit of Sheep Rock Top at 3.6 miles at 3550 ft. At mile 4.2 the trail dips to Low Gap at 3020 ft. Low Gap Shelter can be found 0.1 miles to the right of the trail with a fairly reliable spring. From the shelter, the trail continues northeast along an old roadbed. For the next 3.8 miles, the grades are unexpectedly mild and allow the hiker to enjoy a leisurely walk through a mature hardwood forest along the eastern side of Horsetrough Mountain. The brief interlude ends at mile 8.0, and the AT resumes its mountain, gap, mountain profile. Here the AT leaves the roadbed and jumps 0.2 miles up a knob. It drops sharply from there and then ascends 0.6 miles along another knob. After bounding over the knob, the trail dips to Chattahoochee Gap at 9.2 miles (3500 ft). About 200 yards to the right of the gap may be found Chattahoochee Spring, which is the official source of the well-known Chattahoochee River. Left of the gap, the Jacks Knob Trail runs a blue blazed 4.5 miles to the parking lot on Brasstown Bald near the summit.

From the gap, the trail bends off the ridge to the right then skims the southern hillside of Jacks Knob until reaching Red Clay Gap at 9.8 miles and 3440 ft. The trail crosses to the other side of the ridge and enters a hardwood forest along the northern slopes of Spaniards Knob. The footpath here is rocky and footing may be precarious at times. The trail strolls through the cool moist forest, flanked on either side by legions of dead chestnut trees.

At mile 11, the trail drops to Henson Gap at 3580 ft. The blue-blazed side trail to Blue mountain shelter can be found at 11.4 miles. From the shelter path, the trail rises 1.2 moderate miles first along a steady grade, then more strenuously along the ridgeline to the summit of Blue Mountain, pausing only twice to dip slightly along the way.

From the views of Blue Mountain, the trail plummets along a loose and rocky treadway to Unicoi Gap at 13.6 miles and the parking area.

Cross the road, drop your packs at the car; grab your water and snacks. Start heading up the trail to the top of Rocky Mountain for a final view and brief lunch before returning back down to Unicoi Gap. *This short excursion can be ignored unless looking to meet a 15 Mile requirement for Backpacking MB.*

Highlights

9.2 mi - Chattahoochee Spring. This is the actual beginning of the Chattahoochee River, which quenches the ever-sprawling thirst of the Atlanta Metro area. The clarity of the water here can be attributed to the lack of silt and industrial pollution that is more commonly found in the downstream urban paradise.

