

Mill Ridge to Hot Springs on the Appalachian Trail

5 Miles Shuttle Hike - Moderate Hike with very little elevation change

A very nice hike with great vistas, good footing and little elevation gain.

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Directions to Trailhead: Drive from the city limits of Greenville toward Asheville, NC on SR70 locally called the Asheville Highway. At the state line the road becomes NC 208. After driving 23 miles you will reach a junction with highway US 25-70. Take the right toward Hot Springs and drive up and down a steep mountain for approximately five miles. Upon reaching the bottom of the mountain, take the right just before crossing the bridge into the town of Hot Springs. Drive down a short hill and take the left, driving under the bridge. Park in the lot just beyond the bridge. This area is used for rafting parking, so you may need permission during the season. Leave a vehicle here and retrace your drive to the top of the mountain where there is a bridge crossing the highway with an AT Marker. Drive past the bridge and take the first left, drive up and cross this bridge. This area is known as Tanyard Gap and the Appalachian Trail crosses the highway on this bridge. Continue up the dirt road for about a mile to reach the Mill Ridge Trailhead Parking Lot at the left of the first fork. The trailhead is well marked and has parking space for about four vehicles.

From the trailhead at Mill Ridge, go back down the road and follow the AT white blazes crossing a small grassy bald with a sign about former agriculture in the area. After .2 mile, you will reach the junction with the Mill Ridge Trail on your left. You will take the right, leaving the road and follow the AT steeply downhill to Mill Ridge Pond a beautiful scenic area during high water conditions. At the time of this hike, the pond was very low and not particularly attractive.

Continue on the AT and reach the first intersection with the Pump Gap Loop Trail after hiking nearly a mile. The trail at this point is nearly level, the footing very good, and you will experience a wonderful "walk in the woods." You will reach Pump Gap and the second intersection with the Pump Gap Loop Trail after covering a mile and three quarters. Upon leaving Pump Gap, you will climb a couple of strenuous but short hills but the footing remains very good. Then you will circle the hillside to reach the top of Lover's Leap Ridge. Here the pathway becomes almost flat and vistas of the French Broad River are very picturesque.

When you have covered almost four miles, you will reach the intersection of the Silvermine Trail at Lover's Leap with panoramic views of the town of Hot Springs and the French Broad River Watershed. Here, there are two rocky outcroppings what make a great place to eat lunch and take pictures.

If you wish to shorten your hike or have problems with heights, you can take the Silvermine Trail to the parking lot.

If you continue on the Appalachian Trail you will be entertained to wonderful vistas while descending on a series of rocky switchbacks to the French Broad which you will reach after covering four and a quarter miles. Continue along the riverbed for another quarter mile to reach the trailhead at Hot Springs.



SYNOPSIS OF HIKE

Mile	Elevation	Description
0	2490	Trailhead Mill Ridge Bike Trail
.2	2531	Junction with the Mill Ridge Trail on left. Take the right leaving the road.
.28	2474	Mill Ridge Pond.
.83	2389	First Junction with Pump Gap Loop Trail.
1.73	2096	Pump Gap. Second Junction with Pump Gap Loop Trail.
3.80	1795	Junction with Silvermine Trail at Lovers Leap.
4.21	1391	French Broad River.
4.56	1392	Trailhead at Hot Springs.

