

CAT GAP LOOP (Trail #120)

Mileage: 4.4 miles

Difficulty: Moderate

Blaze: Orange

Approximate Elevation Change: 1,000 feet



Trailhead Location

From the Pisgah District Ranger Station/Visitor Center parking lot, turn right onto US 276; proceed approximately 3½ miles to FS 475 (signed for Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education and Pisgah Forest Fish Hatchery) and turn left. Continue 1½ miles to Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education. The trail starts from the parking lot of that facility.

Trail Description

Pass through the gate on the gravel road near the main building; the trailhead is on your right just past the bridge. The trail crosses John Rock Creek, and then soon converges with Cedar Rock Creek, where there is a pleasant cascade and a popular primitive campsite on the left. It then passes Picklesimer Fields, near the intersection with Butter Gap Trail (#123); early summer is a good time to see the blooms of mountain laurel in this area. [***Note: Cat Gap Loop is open (seasonally) to mountain bikes, but only from the described trailhead to the intersection with Butter Gap Trail.**] The trail then climbs moderately to Cat Gap to join the Art Loeb Trail. Turn left and proceed about 100 feet before leaving the Art Loeb Trail and dropping steeply toward Horse Cove. [Note: If the Art Loeb Trail is not on your itinerary, the rather uninteresting and steep climb to it may be largely avoided by taking the Cat Gap Bypass (#120A), which is to the left about ¾ mile from Picklesimer Fields.] The trail then becomes moderate and rocky as you pass large hemlocks and tulip poplars. After crossing the gravel road in Horse Cove, the grade becomes easy. The last mile is a pleasant walk along the Davidson River to return to the parking lot. Spring is a good time to see Pink Lady's Slippers along the river.



Pisgah National Forest

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