

What is Wilderness

In 1964, in a nearly unanimous vote, Congress enacted landmark legislation that permanently protected some of the most natural and undisturbed places in America. The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines Wilderness as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, or man himself is a visitor who does not remain...[the land is allowed to retain] its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation." The Wilderness Act is one of the most successful U.S. environmental laws and continues to be the guiding piece of legislation for all Wilderness areas.

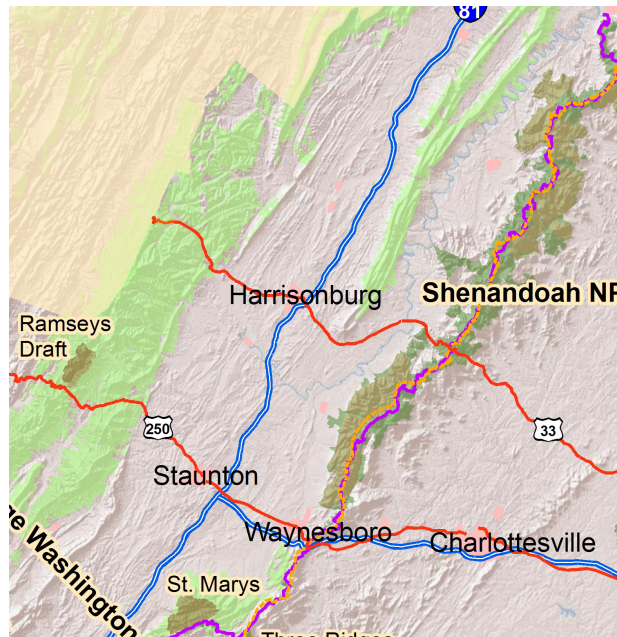
Wilderness Recreation and Preservation

In our National Forests (NF) and National Parks, federal law allows the following activities in Wilderness: hiking, fishing, camping, bird watching, and hunting (only in NF). Once so designated, Wilderness is protected from: timber harvest, road development, energy development (fracking, wind turbines, etc.), and communication towers.

Virginia Wilderness Committee

Since its formation in 1969, the Virginia Wilderness Committee (VWC) has been the driving force behind all federal legislation that permanently protects Virginia's most outstanding wild areas. Our hard work has resulted in the designation of 24 Wilderness areas (totaling 215,253 acres) and three National Scenic areas on the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests and Shenandoah National Park. These are some of the most scenic and biologically diverse places with some of the best hiking and camping in the whole Commonwealth.


Three Wilderness Areas all within a one-hour drive of Harrisonburg.



**Remember, if you can pack it in,
you can pack it out. Leave no trace.**

**Group size is limited to no more than
10 people in Wilderness.**



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Find us and Like us on 

Explore Virginia's WILDERNESS near Harrisonburg



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Shenandoah Wilderness
Ramsey's Draft Wilderness
St. Mary's Wilderness

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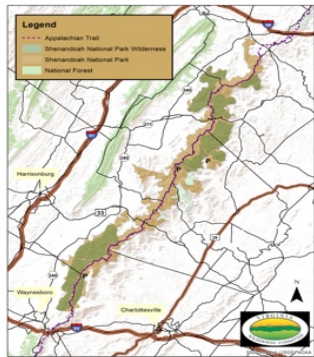
Shenandoah Wilderness

The closest entrance to Shenandoah National Park (SNP) is Swift Run Gap in Elkton (about 20 miles).

The main road that runs the span of SNP's 105 miles is Skyline Drive. The campgrounds, lodging options, gift shops and food, and a majority of hiking trailheads are either directly off



of, or near, this main road. In SNP, 42% of the 200,000 acres are designated as Wilderness, and there are nearly 175 trail miles located within designated Wilderness.



can with smartphone or directions to trailhead, detailed hike descriptions, printable maps, and more photos.



Recommended Wilderness hikes:

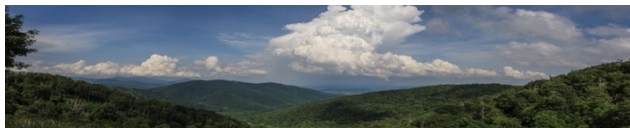
Rose River: Skyline Mile 49.4; 4-mile loop; moderate difficulty. Park at Fishers Gap Overlook parking.

Trayfoot Mountain-Paine Run Loop: Skyline Mile 87.4; 9.6-mile loop; strenuous difficulty. Park at Blackrock Gap.

Old Rag: Skyline Mile 40; 9-mile circuit; strenuous difficulty.

Things to know before you go:

- Visitors must have an entrance permit, which can be purchased from Rangers or at Fee Stations.
- A (free) backcountry permit is required for backcountry camping. Consult nps.gov/shen
- Pets are not permitted on some trails in SNP.
- Parking: There is parking available at trailheads.
- Gas service: Gas stations can be found in Elkton
- Cell service: Limited



Ramseys Draft Wilderness



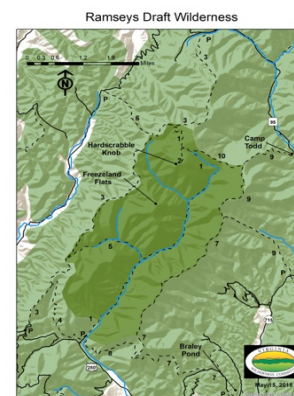
In order to escape from it all, head to Ramseys Draft in western Augusta County, 20 miles west of Staunton and less than an hour from Harrisonburg.

Ramseys Draft offers solitude, numerous creek crossings, and rugged terrain. From Harrisonburg, take 42 South to 250 West, go 14.5 miles to Mountain House Picnic Area, on Right.

Recommended Wilderness hike:

Ramseys Draft Trail:

7.3 miles (one-way); moderate to strenuous difficulty. Park at Mountain House Picnic Area. The trailhead is located 100 yards up a dirt road from the Picnic Area, identified by a signboard. At 0.6 miles the trail enters the Wilderness boundary.



Scan for directions to trailhead, detailed hike descriptions, printable maps, and more photos



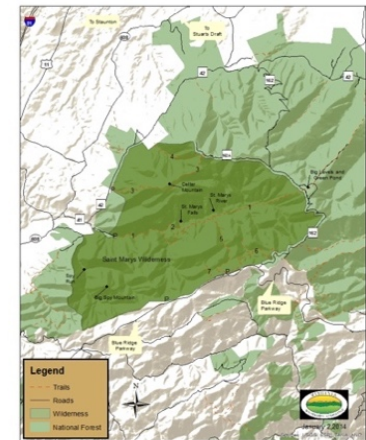
Things to know before you go:

- Ramsey's Draft Trail crosses the stream many times and can be impassable during high water.
- Sometimes stream bed is completely dry, other times, shoes that can get wet are recommended.
- Trails are not blazed.
- It's part of the Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries' Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail.
- Parking: There is a paved parking area at the picnic area, 100 yards from the trailhead.
- Gas service: There is a gas station at the intersection of 42S and 250W.
- Cell Service: None; will be lost shortly after you merge onto U.S. 250W.

St. Mary's Wilderness

Offering waterfalls, fern forests, open meadows, valley vistas, and high mountain wetlands, in less than an hour's drive from Harrisonburg.

From 81S take exit 213A onto US-11S, turn Left onto Dabney's Rd, turn Left onto SSR 608 (Cold Springs Rd), then turn Right onto St. Mary's Rd, the Wilderness's access rd. Trailhead parking is at the end of this road.



Recommended Wilderness hike:

St. Mary's Trail: 3.4-mile (one-way) to the waterfall; easy difficulty. Follow the path up the river for 1.2 miles to a fork: take the left fork another 0.3 mile to the waterfall.

Things to know before you go:

- The pool at the base of the falls makes a great swimming hole.
- Trails are not blazed, but easy to navigate.
- Gas service: Several gas stations at exit 213A.
- Cell service: Limited.

Scan for directions to trailhead, detailed hike descriptions, printable maps, and more photos.

