

Backbone Mountain, MD, 3,360 ft. – May 29, 2005, HP #3: No Long-Distance Views

Friday May 27th, work surprised me when we were released early for the Memorial Day long weekend. As such I decided to get away on an outdoor adventure and I invited Yenny to join me. The last-minute plan involved visiting Blackwater Falls State Park in the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia and also finding the highest point in Maryland.

Packing took some time, raising the concern of hitting Friday evening long weekend traffic. So, I called Yenny back and we decided to forego Friday night camping. Instead, early Saturday morning we met at my place - I had moved from Arlington to Herndon VA for a better paying job about thirteen months prior – and we headed west from there.

At Moorefield WV, with a whole day ahead of us, we detoured off the direct line to Blackwater Falls, and followed the same roads I had use when I visited Seneca Rocks and Spruce Knob almost four years earlier. Needing a break from the serpentine drive, spontaneously we decided to hike to the top of Seneca Rocks. This time I took some nice photos from within the “realm of the climber” area above the impressive cliff faces.

We also popped over to Spruce Knob, mimicking my West Virginia trip four years prior. After taking in the impressive views from the summit platform, and snapping a few photos, we headed north across the Canaan Valley - covering 55 miles from the West Virginia highpoint to Blackwater Falls State Park.

It was raining when we arrived and too late in the evening to visit the falls. So, we headed into the Monongahela Forest in search of campsite. With difficulty a suitable spot was eventually located. Auspiciously, the rain broke long enough for us to catch an amazing sunset as the sun settled behind the wooded mountains of Tucker county.



Sunday morning, we climbed Olsen’s tower and then drove into Davis WV for an early lunch. Following lunch, we made it to the beautiful Blackwater Falls, named for its amber waters tinted by red spruce needles and the tannic acid of fallen hemlocks. The falls are an impressive fifty-seven feet tall.

From Blackwater Falls we headed toward the West Virginia/Maryland state line and Backbone Mountain. From highway 219, the trail to the Maryland highpoint is a rough logging type road just over a mile in length. Since my SUV was equipped with four-wheel drive, we drove up most of the way, walking only when the driving became extra rough.



The highpoint, at an elevation of 3,360 feet, is called Hoyer-Crest and contains a large sign on a metal post. Hoyer-Crest is named in remembrance of the First World War Captain Charles Hoyer, a descendant of early settlers to the area, and founder of the Garrett County historical society. Hoyer was also a veteran of the Spanish-American War.

Backbone Mountain crosses the border of Maryland and runs into West Virginia, earning its name because the thirty-nine-mile-long ridge which it spans is often rugged and rocky. Predictably, thick tree coverage on the summit did not allow long-distance views.

In 2005 the Highpointers Club had not yet installed one of their benches seen at many of the minor elevation highpoints today. Although attached to the post of the Hoyer Crest sign was a mailbox and we signed the logbook found inside.

Heading back down, we encountered an obstruction - a car parked across the logging road. Luckily, my vehicle was able to barely squeeze by, gaining access to the highway. Seventy plus miles later we entered the George Washington Forest at Wardensville, WV where we located the campsite we had turn down on Friday.

Memorial Day we enjoyed the peaceful solitude and remoteness of the area as we cooked on an open fire. Imagine our delight when a rafter of wild turkeys passed by! It was four o'clock in the afternoon when we drove into Herndon, wrapping up an eventful and enjoyable long weekend, with my third highpoint reached.

